



## Socio-economic assessment of wood artifact products in Oyo state, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Wood carving industry has passed through many stages of development, from a purely primitive structure to a near-modern business. The industry has been in existence for over one hundred years but have suffered a stunted development due to neglect by policy makers. Wood carving is an important and long established traditional artifact industry in Ibadan metropolis and Oyo township. The industry has a very rich cultural background that has influenced in no small way, its organization, products and survival. Socio-economic assessment of wood artifact products in Oyo state, Nigeria was carried out with a view to determining the value of the enterprise. Structured questionnaires were administered on the wood carvers. Purposive sampling method was adopted in selecting the respondents. Forty questionnaires were given to wood carvers of which thirty two (80 per cent) were duly filled and returned. The study showed that a large number of people are engaged in the industry which has a high potential for employment and fuller utilization of timber resources. The product quality is greatly affected by the carvers' skills as well as the tree species used. Results showed that the industry is profitable with an average Gross Margin of ₦333,274.50 and an average Net Return of ₦328,304.50 annually per enterprise. The wood carving industry is beset with some problems, prominent among these are lack of finance for expansion, narrow market, cultural belief and poor business organization. It is recommended that the carvers must of necessity team up as a cooperative society for a proper development of the industry which in turn would foster government assistance to provide incentives for wood carving industry in Nigeria.

**Key words:** Industry, production, wood, gender, education.

### Introduction

Wood handicraft industry is one of the industries whose raw material inputs and outputs are predominantly made up of wood and the production process is manual<sup>1</sup>. It is a craft which has long been practised in Nigeria for many centuries. It is the general belief that this and other crafts practised in the country dated back to prehistoric times. The exact time, of course is difficult to conjecture. However, since it is a traditional/cultural art, one can, therefore, guess that its practice date to the development of village groupings<sup>6</sup>. Wood handicraft provides a thorough training in those mental and physical processes which call for sustained effort and attention. It provides thought and criticism, and tests in a practical manner the value of such thought. It develops the power of imagination and visualization, more particularly the creative and inventive faculties, along with the powers of artistic expression, it does all these things – but only on one condition that craftsmanship be thought for its own sake and not merely as a narrow form of practical education or as a pleasant recreation of dullards<sup>9</sup>. Wood, generally, speaking is the tough, fibrous supportive and water conducting substance beneath the bark of trees and shrubs. Wood is one of the most abundant renewable raw material in the forest. It is in the forefront of the world's industrial raw materials. Its ability to have different physical, mechanical and chemical properties as well as diverse colours has made wood the most versatile raw material for various uses<sup>5</sup>. Recent work summarized in the

background paper on small scale industries has shown that small scale forest-based processing enterprises form a very large part of the overall forest products processing total in employment terms<sup>3</sup>. As early as 1938, Duckworth, the editor of the government owned Nigeria magazine, as quoted by Fasuyi<sup>4</sup> had observed that many of the old crafts, especially those of wood carving and brass casting faced a great danger of dying out owing to lack of financial support from both the government and citizens. It was also stated that any help rendered to such activities usually comes out of the industries and crafts. The objectives of the study were to assess the cultural values of various artifacts in the study area; determine the level of purchase and use of artifacts with a view to ascertaining the level of demand; determine the costs of setting up the wood artifact enterprise and benefits that are accrued to the producers; and identify the problems militating against artifact enterprise. It is revealing to note that there is a general lack of statistical data on the activities of wood handicrafting as well as other crafts in the country. Appraisal of their contributions to the Nigerian economy is therefore lacking probably due to intellectual and policy neglect of these industries. From the foregoing, it is evident that there is an urgent need to apply new approach in the study of wood artifact industry in particular with more emphasis on the economic implications rather than the cultural.

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₦ is the Nigerian currency sign (₦135 = US\$ 1).

## Methodology

**Study area:** The study areas for this project are Ibadan metropolis and Oyo town in Oyo State, Nigeria. The state is located between latitude 7°22' and 9°17' North; and longitude 1°02' and 2°44' East. Two geographical seasons are identifiable in the state. They are the rainy season starting from late March to end of October and the dry season stretching from November to early March. The mean annual temperature varies between 21.1°C and 31.1°C. The annual rainfall is within the range of 800 mm in the derived eco-zone to 1500 mm in the rainforest belt. It is bimodal with peak in July and September. Ibadan tyhe capital of Oyo State, is in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. The metropolis has a population of 2,228,663 <sup>7</sup>. It is 750 m above sea level and has two distinct seasons: the rainy season runs from March to October while the dry season runs through November to February. The metropolis comprises eleven local government areas, namely: Ibadan South-East with headquarters at Mapo, Ibadan South-West with headquarters at Oluyole Estate, Ring road, Ibadan North-west with headquarters at Onireke, Ibadan North East with headquarters at Agodi, Ibadan North with headquarters at Bodija, Akinyele with headquarters at Moniya, Egbeda with headquarters at Egbeda, Ido with Headquarters at Ido, Oluyole with headquarters at Idi-Ayunre, Lagelu with headquarters at Lagelu and Ona-Ara with headquarters at Akanran. Ibadan is located on Longitude 3°54' E and Latitude 7°23' N, covering a total land area of 130 km<sup>2</sup>. The city of Ibadan can be divided into 3 zones based on historical progression, traditional inner core, transitional area and sub Urban periphery <sup>8</sup>. Oyo town has a total population of 260,898 people <sup>7</sup>. Oyo town is made up of three local government areas namely: Oyo West local government, the Oyo East local government and the Atiba local government. Oyo town has derived Savanna with both favourable rainfall and adequate soils. Large area of the vegetation has been degraded by fire and farming into open Savanna. Hence the place is usually swept by fire which has resulted in the area having a lot of fire tolerant tender tree species. Local variations in vegetation pattern are found due to soil variation where occasional rocky hills break the monotony of flat surfaces. The annual rainfall is about 1133 mm. There are two rainfall peaks (May – June and September – October).

A purposive random sampling technique was employed based on the information given by wood carvers because there is a limited number of wood carving industries. Structured questionnaires were designed for the study. Twenty two questionnaires were administered to wood carving industries in Ibadan while ten were administered to wood carving in Oyo town. Two procedures used to administer the questionnaire were oral interpretation of the questions in the questionnaire to illiterate respondents and self administration by the literate respondents. The techniques used in analyzing the data and responses to the questionnaires were descriptive statistics such as tables, frequency counts and percentages. Cash analysis such as gross margin and net return were also employed.

Gross Margin (GM)= Total value of production(Revenue)- Variable costs of production

Net Return = Gross Margin – Fixed Cost

## Results

**Age distribution of wood carvers:** Table 1 shows that 46.88 per cent of the respondents were between 40-49 years, followed by 25 per cent that corresponds to 50-59 years. A total of 9.37 per cent respondents were over 60 years of age. There were no respondents that were less than 20 years in the study areas.

**Table 1.** Percentage age distribution of wood carvers.

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<20	0	0.00
21-30	2	6.25
31-40	4	12.50
41-50	15	46.88
51-60	8	25.00
> 60	3	9.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2002.

**Educational status:** Table 2 indicates that 43.75% of the wood carvers had secondary education, 21.88% tertiary education and 15.62% primary education. A total of 18.75% of respondents had no formal education.

**Table 2.** Percentage education distribution of wood carvers.

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	6	18.75
Primary Education	5	15.62
Secondary Education	14	43.75
Tertiary Education	7	21.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Gender distribution of wood carvers:** Table 3 reveals that 90.62% of the respondents were males while only 9.38% were females.

**Table 3.** Percentage gender distribution of wood carvers.

	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Male	29	90.62
Female	3	9.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Marital status of wood carvers:** Table 4 indicates that 96.88% of the respondents were married while 3.12% were single.

**Table 4.** Percentage marital status of wood carvers.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Single	1	3.12
Married	31	96.88
Others	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Religion of wood carvers:** Table 5 indicates that 56.25% of the respondents were Moslems while 43.75% were Christians.

**Table 5.** Percentage of religion of wood carvers.

Religion	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Christian	14	43.75
Moslem	18	56.25
Traditional Belief	0	0.00
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey

**Years of Experience in Wood Carving:** Table 6 shows that 31.25 per cent of the respondents had 21-30 years of experience, followed by 11-20 years which corresponds to 25 per cent. The least years of experience were 0-10 and 50-60 years, 6.25% each.

**Table 6.** Years of experience in wood carving.

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage(%)
0-10	2	6.25
11-20	8	25.00
21-30	10	31.25
31-40	6	18.75
41-50	4	12.50
51-60	2	6.25
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Structure of wood carving industry:** The wood carving industry is classified into small, medium and large scales based on the number of people engaged and capital investment in production as follows: small scale: less than 5 employees; medium scale: more than 5 but less than 10 employees; large scale: 10 employees and above.

Table 7 indicates that majority of the establishments were operating as small scale enterprises accounting for 90.63 per cent of the total number with 21 employees. The medium scale enterprise ranked second with 9.37% while there was no large scale enterprise in the study areas.

**Table 7.** Percentage distribution of wood carving enterprises showing the scale of production.

Size	Number of Establishments	Percentage (%)	Employees	Percentage (%)
Small	29	90.63	21	56.76
Medium	3	9.37	16	43.24
Large	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	32	100	37	100

Source: Field Survey, 2002.

**Acquisition of wood carving skills:** Table 8 shows that most of the enterprises in small scale operation are family business units (75%) which are guarded jealously and would not form any partnership or would welcome any interference from anybody

outside their family. This is very peculiar character of the wood carving industry in the study areas. A total of 25% of the producers acquire their skills through formal education. However, the increasing number of people depicts a tendency towards modernization that encourages partnership.

**Table 8.** Percentage of wood carvers with skills.

Skill Acquisition	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Inherited acquisition	24	75
Formal acquisition	8	25
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Organization of wood carving business:** The sole proprietorship is a business owned by a single individual who decides on his capital and the extent of his operation without any interference from outside. Table 9 indicates that 71.88% of the carving establishments in the study areas were operated under sole ownership due to their cultural orientation. 18.75% of the wood carvers operated under partnership while 9.37% falls in between sole proprietor and partnership.

**Table 9.** Percentage of organizational operations.

Ownership	Number of Establishments	Percentage (%)
Sole Proprietorship	23	71.88
Partnership	6	18.75
Others	3	9.37
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey

**Source of capital:** Table 10 indicates that 78.12% of the wood carvers raised their capital from personal savings while 21.88% is from financial institutions. There was no financial aids received from the government.

**Table 10.** Percentage of source of capital for investment in wood carving.

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Loan	7	21.88
Personal Savings	25	78.12
Government Aids	0	0.00
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2002.

**Basic tools used in wood carving industry and their price:** Table 11 shows various tools and carvers at work (Plate 1) required in the enterprise and the number of the tools depends

on the number of workers (Plate 2).

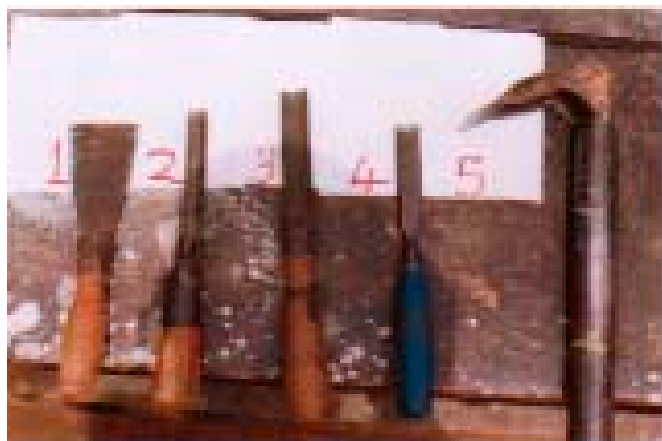
**Table 11.** Tools and their average cost.

Tools	Average Cost (in Naira) ₦
Chisel (One set)	3,500
Hand Saw	1,000
Sharpening Stone	1,200
Spoke Shave	750
Matchet	1,000
Knife	200
Hand Axe	200
Tape Rule	150
File	2,000
Clamp	2,000
Wood Hammer	100
Adze	500
V Gouges	700
U Gouges	700

Source: Price per Item supplied by Respondents in Year 2002

**Sources of supply of raw materials for wood carving industry:**

Table 12 indicates that 50% of the respondents obtained their wood materials from the sawmills while 43.75% from wood



**Plate 1:** Some Simple Tools used for Carving

- Specimens  
 1-U Flat;  
 2-V Gouge  
 3- U Gouge  
 4- Flat Chisel  
 5- Adze



**Plate 2:** Two Carvers at work while one of the authors was interviewing and recording.

traders. However, 6.25% respondents acquired their wood in the surrounding bush free of charge.

**Table 12.** Percentage distribution of sources of supply of wood.

Sources	Wood Supply	Percentage(%)
Sawmills	16	50.00
Wood Traders	14	43.75
Surrounding Bush	2	6.25
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2002.

**Wood species utilized by wood carvers:** Different wood species used in wood carving industry are shown in Table 13.

**Table 13.** Trade names of wood species and their botanical names.

Trade Name	Botanical Name
Ebony	<i>Diospyros spp.</i>
Iroko	<i>Milicia excelsa</i>
Ire	<i>Funtumia elastica</i>
Omo	<i>Cordia millenii</i>
Emi	<i>Butyrospermum paradoxum</i>
Opepe	<i>Nauclea diderrichii</i>
Oro	<i>Antiaris africana</i>
Mahogany	<i>Khaya ivorensis</i>
Teak	<i>Tectona grandis</i>
Afara	<i>Terminalia ivorensis</i>
Asin	<i>Chenopodium ambrosioides</i>
Erimado	<i>Ricinodendrum heudelotii</i>
Gmelina	<i>Gmelina arborea</i>

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Wood species and their finished products:** Table 14 shows different wood species and their finished products. The beauty of the finished products are enhanced artificially by application of certain additives. The finishing materials employed by carvers include sand paper for smoothening, glue, shoe polish, oil and paints. The choice of colours depends on the natural colours of the tree species used. For example, polish is used to shine Ebony products (Plates 3,4 and 5).

**Table 14.** Different wood species and their finished products.

Wood Species	Finished Products
Ebony	Fish figure (Plate 3), Carved stool (plate 4)
Iroko	Carved door (plate 5) and Ayo game (Plate 6)
Omo	Ori Olokun (Plate 7)
Opepe	Chair (Plate 8)
Afara	Festac Head (Plate 9)

Source: Field Survey, 2002.

**Export of carved products:** Table 15 reveals that 37.5% of the wood carvers export their finished products while 62.5% do not.

**Cost components of wood carving enterprises:** The cost of wood carving production includes all the expenses incurred on



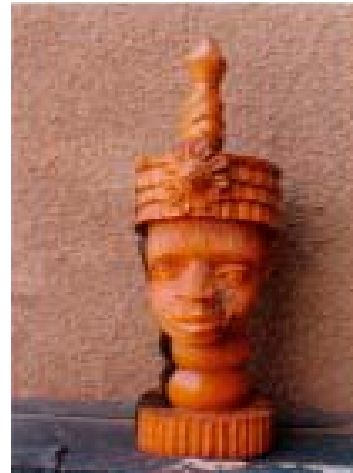
*Plate 3:* A Fish Figure



*Plate 6:* A Crocodile carved “Ayo Game”.



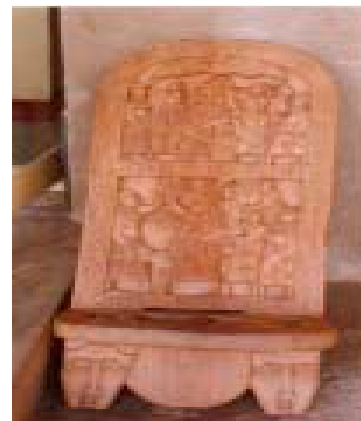
*Plate 4:* A Carved Stool



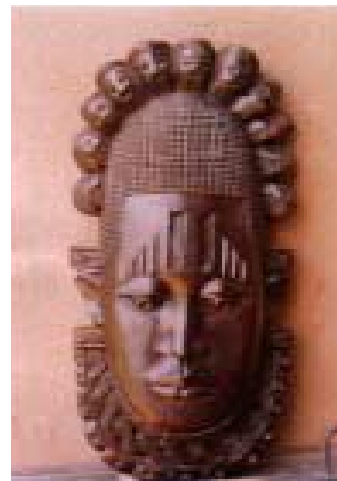
*Plate 7:* A Carved Image of Ori Olokun.



*Plate 5:* A Carved Door with the Image of an Apostle.



*Plate 8:* A carved relaxing chair.



*Plate 9:* A carved festac head.

rent, tools, raw materials, finishing materials and transportation. The costs include purchase of chisels, handsaw, matchet, knife, hand axe, file, wooden hammer, V-gouges, clamp, sharpening stone, spoke shave and Adze which are fixed costs; cost of wood, labour expenses in carrying out the wood carving work, cost of rentage, finishing materials and transportation cost constitute variable costs.

**Table 15.** Percentage distribution of export carved products.

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
The products are exported	12	37.5
The products are sold internally	20	62.5
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2002.

Tables 16 and 17 show the average costs of the various cost items given by the wood carvers. Table 17 shows that wood constitutes 57.16% of the variable costs. However, labour varies with its availability and also the quantity of output.

**Table 16.** Average cost values of fixed cost items.

Item	Average Cost (₦)
Chisel (one set)	3,500
Hand saw	1,000
Sharpening stone	1,200
Spoke shave	750
Matchet	1,000
Knife	200
Hand Axe	200
Tape rule	120
File	2,000
Wood hammer	100
Adze	500
V-gouge	700
U-gouge	700
Total Fixed Cost	12,000

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Table 17.** Average cost values of variable cost items.

Item	Average Cost ( ₦ )	Percentage(%)
Wood	188,875.00	57.61
Labour	90,375.00	27.56
Rent	15,637.50	4.77
Finishing material	8,713.00	2.66
Transportation	24,250.00	7.40
Total Variable Cost	327,850.50	100
Total Cost	332,820.50	

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Estimation of revenue from sales finished products:** Revenue from sales was obtained via asking the respondents to state the total revenue from the sales of their products in year 2001. The average of the revenue was obtained thus: total revenue for all the 32 enterprises = ₦ 21,156, 000.00; total revenue per

enterprise = ₦ 661,125.00.

**Average depreciation values of fixed cost items:** The annual depreciation values indicate the actual amount spent per year of the fixed cost items. In Table 18, the total annual depreciation is ₦ 4,970. Therefore, total cost of production is the total annual depreciation value plus the total variable costs. i.e. ₦ (4,970 + 327,850) = ₦ 332,820.50.

**Table 18.** Average depreciation values of fixed cost items.

Item	Acquisition cost (₦)	Expected Life (Years)	Annual Depreciation (₦)
Chisel (one set)	3,500	4	875
Hand saw	1,000	2	500
Sharpening stone	1,200	3	400
Spoke shave	750	2	375
Matchet	1,000	4	250
Knife	200	2	100
Hand axe	500	5	100
Tape rule	120	1	120
File	2,000	2	1,000
Clamp	4,000	10	400
Wooden hammer	100	2	50
Adze	500	5	100
V-gouge	700	2	350
U-gouge	700	2	350
Total	16,270		4,970

Source: Field Survey, 2002

**Gross margin:** The gross margin of an enterprise is the difference between the total value of production and the variable costs of production. The average total value of production (revenue) is ₦ 661,125.00 and the total variable cost of production is ₦ 327,850.00. Therefore, the gross margin = ₦ (661,125.00 – 327,850.50) = ₦ 333, 274.50.

**Net Returns:** The net return is gross margin less fixed cost. Therefore, Net Return = ₦ (333, 274.50 – 4,970) = ₦ 328,304.50 per annum/enterprise.

## Discussion

The findings revealed that majority of wood carvers fall within the age group of 40-49 years. The most productive age (20-39 years) representing the active youths are very few in the wood carving business. The reason may be unawareness of the profitability of the business or that the business is too labour intensive. Education has an impact on the processing of the different finished products. Majority of the wood carvers have formal education in both secondary, tertiary and primary institution. This may have positive attitude towards using forest products sustainably because some people always consider forest as inexhaustible. There is a clear indication that wood carving is mostly the preserve of men in the study areas. This is corroborated by Ali <sup>2</sup> that 95 per cent of the wood carvers in Borno State, Nigeria are men while only 5 per cent are women. Virtually all the wood carvers are married. This is attributable to the fact that they have families to support them and engage in wood carving to supplement their incomes. Both Moslems

and Christians are engaged in wood carving business. There is only little difference in the number of Moslems and Christians involved in the wood carving. This shows that wood carving business has no religion barrier in the study areas. Majority of the wood carvers fall into small scale enterprises while only a few are engaged in medium size. No large scale industry was recorded in the study because the industry is still masked with little or no development.

Organization is a very important part of any business. It determines to a great extent the quantity and quality of products produced in any industry. Three major types of business organization were encountered in the study areas. They are sole proprietor, partnership and mixed proprietor and partnership. Presently, sole proprietorship is taking a lead in the wood carving enterprise while partnership is just developing gradually. Capital raising in wood carving industry has been solely from personal savings. Financial institutions have been fairly okay in loaning the wood carvers. However, government has not been assisting the sector with financial aids and this may probably reduce the number of latent labour in the country to venture into wood carving. The prices of the wood carving finished products are not arbitrarily fixed but are influenced by a number of factors. The prices are to some extent determined by the forces of demand and supply and there is a consensus that the prices are influenced by the quality of wood, complexities entailed in finished work, the cost of production and aesthetic appeal of the products. Majority of the finished products are exported and that generate foreign exchange to the reserve of Nigeria. A number of foreigners used to visit the study areas to purchase the finished products as souvenir for friends and for their interior decorations.

The enterprise is very profitable. Although, a few wood carvers are in operation. The average producer is able to cover his operating expenses. On average, a wood carver makes a net return of ₦328,304.50 annually.

The problems facing the wood carving industry in the study areas include epileptic finance, unavailability of raw materials, narrow markets and some cultural beliefs.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

There have been some developments in the present day wood carving industry as compared to what obtained in the past. However, when we measure the productivity of the wood carving sector in this era of our industrial development, its contribution to Gross Domestic Product is insignificant. The limited growth of the industry is due to lack of funds and enterprising business acumen. In spite of lack of employment of modern machines for mass production of finished products, a better organization of the industry with primitive machines can transform the enterprise into a highly localized profit making venture. Such a re-organization will considerably enhance its employment potential and so provide more jobs to young latent secondary school leavers who roam about the streets in search of gainful employment. The wood carving industry has rich cultural significance with strong tourist attractions and should be a pride to any nation. With all cultural reawakening in Nigeria, it is ironical that government has not taken steps in modernizing the wood carving industry or providing any

financial assistance. Although, the study revealed that the industry is profitable, it has not attained a reasonable and profitable level of production. Despite these shortcomings, the wood carving industry is a business with good prospects given the necessary assistance and proper direction.

The wood carving industry in Nigeria has a potential to contribute significantly to the economic development. In this respect, a lot is needed to be done to improve the present situations. The following are recommended in achieving the desired goals if implemented.

i. *Formation of cooperative societies:* The state government, as a matter of urgency, should dispatch some commercial officers of the state Ministry of Commerce and Industry to help those carvers in the state to form cooperative societies, providing money and materials for the erection of the required building. If cooperative societies are formed, this could induce the carvers to pool their resources together and with effective managerial system could easily provide enough working capital for a viable industry. The cooperative system will make it possible for quantities of the carved wood products for overseas and local markets to be met.

ii. *Art school for vocational training:* The federal, state and local governments should show keen interest in the development of the wood carving industry as a source of employment and a means of development in Nigerian economy. Thus, art school sponsored by the three tiers of government should be opened as this would provide vocational training to some of Nigerian teeming population.

iii. *Exhibitions:* The government in collaboration with wood carvers should arrange regular exhibitions of the carved objects both at home and abroad and with the use of mass media, internet and website will give adequate publicity to this industry.

iv. *Government partnership:* It is advisable that government and wood carvers become partners in progress for high efficiency and profitable production by providing some of the needed capital and effective management.

v. *Location of wood carving industries in the peri-urban and rural area:* The current trend of establishing the wood carving industries in the peri-urban as well as rural centers should be encouraged. The carvers should be encouraged to team up and establish such industries in the peri-urban and rural areas. In this way, they will not only pool their resources together for rapid development of the industry but would win government's recognition as an industry which in turn would lead to increase infrastructural facilities in the rural areas. Generally, it is obvious that government has a lot to do for the development of the wood carving industry and it seems now to be the last hope of our carvers for the improvement of this important traditional industry. Indeed, government's support for the wood carving industries is long overdue. Without such supports, competition from cheaper mass production of imported goods would quickly threaten the livelihood of our wood carvers. We all must help to resuscitate wood carving industry which has considerably enhanced our identity as a people.

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