Research Journal of Botany

ISSN 1816-4919

Academic Journals Inc.

www.academicjournals.com

Research Journal of Botany 1 (1): 30-43, 2006
ISSN 1816-4919

Studies of Plants Used in Ethnomedicine in Ethiope Council Area of Delta State, Nigeria

[1]M. Idu and [2]B.C. Ndukwu
[1]Department of Botany, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
[2]Department of Plant Science and Biotechnology, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract: Studies were carried out to inventorize, assess and document plant species and plant products used in ethnomedicine by the indigenous people of Ethiope Council Area, Delta State Nigeria. The studies revealed that a total of 53 species spread into 31 angiosperm families were used traditionally for various medicinal purposes. The studies further revealed that the indigenous people have developed various ways of identifying, harvesting, processing, storing and administering preparations from these plants. It was also observed that the cultivation and conservation of these plants is receiving increased attention by the people. The relevance of these observations in the efforts towards documenting indigenous knowledge and use of plants especially in the area of traditional health care system is discussed.

Key words: Ethnomedicine, indigenous people, Ethiope Council

Introduction

The attempt by mankind to use plants and plant products to cure diseases and relieve physical suffering is as old as creation (Mume, 1973; Baker, 1976; Mirutse *et al*., 2003). Indigenous peoples in all ages had some knowledge of plants and through systematic trial and error approach applied them to various uses. Thus the earliest attempts at use of plants for medicines were based on speculation. In fact most tribes believe that diseases were due to the presence of evil spirits in the body and could be driven out only by the use of poisonous or disagreeable substances calculated to make the body unpleasant place in which to remain (Mirutse *et al*., 2003). These authors reported that this primitive era was followed by the period of the herbalists and encyclopaedists, which propagated the doctrine of plant signatures as a means to cure illnesses.

African traditional healing system, also known as folk medicine, native medicine, herbal medicine and ethno medicine have received appreciable attention (Sofowora, 1982, 1984; Gbile, 1986; Gill, 1992; Idu and Olorunfemi, 2000; Louwi *et al*., 2002). The extensive literature on the subject indicates clearly that traditional medicine practice occupies a very prominent place in the treatment of diseases in the African culture.

The administration of the native or traditional drugs has been in the hands of native herbalists who are quite often old people in the rural settings. According to the history of Nigeria traditional medicine (Gill and Akinmumi, 1986), thousand of plant species have been used for centuries in the practice of herbalism and our herbalists for their presumed pharmacological properties know many of them.

Corresponding Author: Idu, M., Department of Botany, University of Benin, P.M.B. 1154, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria Tel: +2348023455669

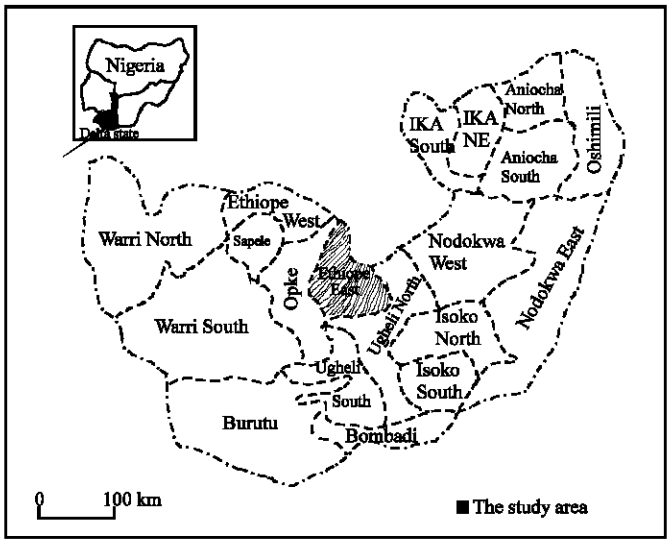

Fig. 1: Map of Delta State showing the Study area

There is palpable anxiety across the globe that with the passage of time, these old people die without transferring this vital knowledge to future generation who are mistakenly engrossed with modernity (Cunningham, 1994).

The present work is part of a response to seek ways of rapidly capturing information on ethnomedicinal practices and uses of plant species the indigenous people of Ethiope Council in Delta State of Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

This study was based on interviews with local herbal practitioners based in five major villages namely Eku, Abraka, Oria, Okpara and Orerokpe, which make up Ethiope Council (Fig. 1).

Different categories of people were visited and interviewed on the types of medicinal plants used in the area. Also, their local names were noted. Herbalists, traditional healers and elderly people who had some knowledge of the medicinal values of plants were mostly interviewed. Specific questions such as plant parts used, dosage, preparation of drug and ailment cured were asked and the information obtained and recorded.

The plants were identified using floras and books covering the area including those of Akobundu and Agyakwa (1987) and Gill (1988).

Voucher specimens of all the plant used were collected, processed and deposited in the University of Benin Herbarium.

Results

The studies observed that a total of 53 plant species distributed into 31 angiosperm families were used for varying ethnomedicinal purposes in the study area. The record of information on the 53 species including their botanical names, family names, local names and parts used, dosage and biodynamic properties are further enumerated.

Botanical name: *Drancaena mannii* Bak.
Family: Agavaceae
Local name: Orie-erivwin
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to cure different kinds of ailment Leaf is crushed in water; the juice extracted is cooked with rabbit or squirrel. The dose taken is usually different depending on the kind of ailment.

Botanical name: *Sansevieria liberica* Gen. and Labr.
Family: Agavaceae
Common name: Bowstring hemp
Local name: Erevwen-Eban
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration This plant is used to treat asthma and sexual weakness. The fresh leaf is boiled along with uririe, allowed to cool and a cupful of the filtrate is taken twice daily.

Botanical name: *Achyranthes aspera* L.
Family: Amaranthaceae
Common name: Devil's horsewhip
Local name: Irie
Part used: Leave
Ailment cured and mode of administration: It is used to hasten delayed labour and stomach disorders. The leaf is washed with uririe (alligator pepper) and used to rub the tummy of the pregnant woman. This is every effective and almost immediately the baby comes out. This is taken once daily and used to treat stomach disorders. When taken too much it can cause abortion.

Botanical name: *Amaranthus spinosus* L.
Family: Amaranthaceae
Common name:Prickly amaranthus
Local name: Iseruen
Part used: Leaves
Ailment cured and mode of administration: This is used to treat abdominal pains, throat and mouth ulcers. The decoction of the leaf is prepared with one tablespoon of salt. A glass of the mixture is taken three times daily for 3 days.

Botanical name: *Magnifera indica* L.
Family: Anacardiaceae
Common name:Mango
Local name: Imagolo
Part used: Stem bark, leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration This is used to treat malaria, diarrhoea and diabetes. The stem bark and leaves along with the bark of *Alstonia boone*i, fallen leaves of *Carica papay*a, *Azardiracha indica* and *Morinda lucida* boiled and drank thrice daily for three to four days against malaria. The powder of young leaves is used to treat diarrhoea and diabetes. The smoke from the burning leaves is inhaled for hiccup and throat disease. The ash from the leaf is used to treat burns.

Botanical name: *Dennettia tripetala* Bak .F.
Family: Annonaceae
Common name: Pepper fruit
Local name: Imako
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration This is used to treat fever. Fresh leaves are boiled along with the leaves of mango plants. It is taken twice daily for three days.

Botanical name: *Xylopia aethiopica* (Dunal) A. Rich.
Family: Annonaceae
Common name:Ethopian Pepper
Local name: Urheri
Part used: Leaves, stem bark, fruit
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat eczema (skin diseases), cough. The leaf and stem bark are dried and made into powdered form. Palm oil is added to the powder, mixed and applied to the infected places. The opened dried fruit without seed is burnt, grounded into powder and mixed with palm oil. This is used to treat cough. One tablespoon is recommended twice daily.

Botanical name: *Alstonia boonei* De willd
Family: Apocynaceae
Local name: Ukpukuhu
Part used: Root and stem bark
Ailment cured and mode of administration: This is used to treat swollen foot. The bark of the root and stem is pounded, uhie (a dye) added and the mixture is rubbed on the swollen foot twice daily until the foot comes down.

Botanical name: *Aspilia africana* (Pers.) C.D. Adams.
Family: Asteraceae
Common name:Haemorrhage plant
Local name: Isahrasa
Part used: Leaves
Ailment cured and mode of administration: It is used to stop internal bleeding. The leaf is boiled, the leaf together with the decoction is put in a basin and a woman who is suffering from internal bleeding sit on it and this stops the bleeding. This is done in the morning and evening.

Botanical name: *Chromoalaena odorata* (L) K.R
Family: Asteraceae
Common name:Siam weed; awolowo weed.
Local name: Ishero
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration :This is used to treat toothache. The leaf is chewed and this helps to relieve the pain and also treat the toothache. This is done for three days.

Botanical name: *Emilia sonchifolia* (L.) DC.
Family: Asteraceae
Common name: Yellow tassel flower
Local name: Orho-Orua
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat throat infections, clear the eyes and help children walk. Juice from the fresh leaves is used to clear the eyes. The leaf with guinea corn and limejuice is used to treat sore throat. The leaf extract is rubbed on the limbs of children to make them walk.

Botanical name: *Synedrella nodiflora* (L) Gaertn.
Family: Asteraceae
Local name: Ogbugho
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to stop bleeding. The juice from the leaf is applied to fresh cuts and wounds to stop bleeding.

Botanical name: *Vernonia amygdalina* L.
Family: Asteraceae
Common name: Bitter leaf
Local name: Origbo
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat stomachache, itching conditions and ringworm and to heal wounds. The leaf extract with a pinch of salt is used to treat stomachache. The leaf extract is used to rub the body in itching condition and ringworm. The extract from the leaves is also used to heal deep wounds after two to three days' treatment.

Botanical name: *Newbouldia* Laevis P. Beaux.
Family: Bignoniaceae
Common name: Tree of life or life stick
Local name: Ogiriki
Part used: Stem bark
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat barrenness, painful menstruation and threatened abortion. The bark of the tree together with pepper-soup spices (Ethiopian pepper) is grounded. It is taken twice daily.

Botanical name: *Carica papaya* L.
Family: Caricaceae
Common name: Pawpaw
Local name: Eto-Oyibo
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat malaria. Dried leaves of pawpa*w,* guav*a,* neem leaves, lemon grass leaf with ukpukuhu *(Alstonia boonei*) are boiled together and allowed to cool. A cupful is taken three times daily for four days. The patient may also bath with the water.

Botanical name: *Combretum grandiflous* F. Hoff.
Family: Combretaceae
Local name: Ikedike
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat jaundice. Decoction of the leaf is used to bath twice daily for three days.

Botanical name: *Kalanchoe pinnatum* (Lam.) Oken.
Family: Crassulaceae
Local name: Ebe-Okponkpan
Common name:Resurrection plant.
Part used: Fresh leaves and root
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat cough and navel wounds of newly born baby. Juice extracted from mildly flame- heated leaf is mixed with local ash and salt. This is then applied to the navel of baby until the wound heals. The root is cooked and the decoction is cupful taken twice daily to treat cough.

Botanical name: *Lagenaria siceraria* (Molina) Standl.
Family: Cucurbitaceae
Common name: Bottle gourd
Local name: ahwore
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat liver problem The leaf juice is extracted and a glassful is taken three times daily for four days.

Botanical name: *Momordica charanta* L.
Family: Cucurbitaceae
Common name: African Cucumber
Local name: Udjiro
Part used: Whole plant
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat convulsion. The whole plant is cooked and two spoons given thrice daily. The water is used to bathe the patient and juice from the leaf is put in the eyes to relieve convulsion. The fresh leaf is tied around the neck of children to relieve convulsion

Botanical name: *Alchornea cordifolia* (Schym. and Thonn.)
Family: Euphorbiaceae
Local name: Osokpo
Part used: Leaves
Ailment cured and mode of administration: This is used to reawaken an unconscious person. The leaf is grounded and used to rub the body of an unconscious person to waken him up. The perceived stinging property of the leaf is believed to accomplish this waking up.

Botanical name: *Alchornea Laxiflora* (Benth) Pax and K.Hoff.
Family: Euphorbiaceae
Local name: Urievwu
Part used: Stem
Ailment cured and mode of administration: This is used as chewing stick to keep the teeth healthy because of its antimicrobial properties.

Botanical name: *Jatropha Curcas L*
Family: Euphorbiaceace
Common name: Boundary Stick
Local name: Ishakpa
Part used: Roots and leaves
Ailment cured and mode of administration: It is used to cure chronic gonorrhoea and headache. The root plus native chalk, ogogoro (local gin) and tobacco leaf is used for the gonorrhoea. All these are put inside a bottle; the ogogoro helps to extract the active constituents from these materials. The patients are always advised to drink a glassful twice daily for 3 days.

Botanical name: *Manihot esculenta* Crantz.
Family: Euphorbiaceae
Common name: Cassava
Local name: Imidaka
Part used: Leaves.
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to prevent cutlass from entering someone (but the person must be an Indigene of the study area). The juice from the leaf is extracted and drank over some incantation to prevent the entering of cutlass.

Botanical name: *Phyllanthus muellerianus* (O.Ktz) EK
Family: *Euphorbiaceae*
Local name: *Obuko Iyeke*
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat back worm. The juice extract from the leaves is mixed with local dry gin and a half-cup is given for two days to expel worms.

Botanical name: *Riccinodendron heudeloth* (Baill)
Family: Euphorbiaceae
Common name: Water cane
Local name: Eke
Part used: Stem bark
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat labour pain and elephantiasis. The bark is grounded and applied topically to relieve labour pains and elephantiasis.

Botanical name: *Baphia nitida* Lodd.
Family: Fabaceae
Local name: Orhua
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated cured and mode of administration: This is used to prevent miscarriage or abortion in women. The leaf is crushed and applied to the lower part of the abdomen twice daily for two days.

Botanical name: *Dialium guineense* Willd
Family: Fabaceae
Common name: Black or velvet tamarind
Local name: Ohiorama
Part used: leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat fever. Fresh leaves are boiled and the decoction is used to bath the patient suffering from fever. This is done twice daily for three days.

Botanical name: *Hymenostegia afzelii* Oliw. Harms
Family: Fabaceae
Local name: Upa
Part used: twigs
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat toothache and to clean teeth. The twigs are chewed for toothache

Botanical name: *Piptadeniastum africanum* (Hoof F.)
Family: Fabaceae
Local name: Owangan
Part used: Stem and root barks.
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used as snuff and stimulant of nervous system. The root and stem barks are grounded into powdered form and used.

Botanical name: *Mammea africana* Sabine
Family: Guttiferae
Local name: *Urherame*
Part used: Root barks.
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat skin disease and syphilis. The root bark is cooked and the patients suffering from any skin disease and syphilis is bathed with decoction by the plant.

Botanical name: *Ocimum gratissimum* L.
Family: Lamiaceae
Local name: Ira
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat stroke. The liquid extracted from the leaf together with the white liquid from snail and the person's urine is used to treat stroke. Half a glass is taken twice daily. Awere *(Tridax procumbe*n), the leaf and flower are pounded with black pepper and *Ishasha* (spice). It is used to wake the dead nerve cells of the patient.

Botanical name: *Solenostemon monostachys* (P. Beauv)
Family: Laminaceae
Local name: Ariophe
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat convulsion, tuberculosis, stomachache and to clear the eye. The juice from the leaf is put into the eye to clear it. The leaf is crushed and honey is added and used to treat tuberculosis. The leaf is boiled with a spice, black pepper (*Piper guinensis*), used to treat stomachache. This is taken thrice daily.

Botanical name: *Allium sativum* L.
Family: Liliaceae
Common name: Haemorrhage plant
Local name: Garlic
Part used: Bulb
Ailment cured and mode of administration: This is used to treat pile, appendicitis and hernia. Six to seven bulbs of the garlic are sliced inside a bottle with dry gin (ogogoro) and allowed for 3 days before use. One glass is taken twice daily for three days in the treatment of piles. The bulb is dug very early in morning and cut into smaller sizes and put into a bottle, an onion bulb, 7 seeds of *egwoye* and ogogoro are then added. A glassful is taken twice daily for three to four days to treat appendicitis and hernia

Botanical name: *Gossypium hirsutum* L.
Family: Malvaceae
Common name: Cotton
Local name: Orur
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to relieve menstrual pain. The leaf is ground with black pepper (uririe) and boiled in water. A cupful is taken three times daily.

Botanical name: *Dissotis rotundifolia* (SM) Triana
Family: Melastomataceae
Local name: Ukuerovwo
Part used: Leaves or whole plant
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat stomachache and diarrhoea in children. The leaf is cooked with alligator pepper *(Aframomum meleguata*) and a cupful is taken once daily for two days. Half a glass is given to children.

Botanical name: *Azadirachta Indica* A. Juss.
Family: Meliaceae
Common name: Neem tree
Local name: Dongoyaro
Part used: Seed
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat pile. The seed is usually burnt, powdered and mixed with sugar. A full tablespoon is taken twice daily. A glass of water is then latter drank to dilute the mixture. This is very effective for pile.

Botanical name: *Bosqueia angolensis* Ficalho.
Family: Moraceae
Local name: Otukhurhu
Part used: Leaf and stem bark
Ailment treated and mode of administration This is used to treat diarrhoea. The leaf and stem bark is boiled and a cupful of this decoction is taken once daily for 2 days.

Botanical name: *Chlorophora excelsa* (Weths) Bth.
Family: Moraceae
Common name: Iroko tree
Local name: Uno
Part used: Stem bark
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to heal wounds. The bark of the plant is powdered and applied on the wound.

Botanical name: *Musanga cecropioides* R.Br
Family: Moraceae
Local name: Ukhorube
Part used: Root barks
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat tapeworm and dysentery. The root bark is cooked and the decoction is given to the patient suffering from dysentery and tapeworm.

Botanical name: *Musa paradisiaca* L.
Family: Musaceae
Common name: Plantain
Local name: Orhe
Part used: Bark
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat barrenness. The bark of the plantain and black pepper are pounded and cooked with electric fish. A spoonful is taken morning and evening while the fish is licked and dried. This is done for seven days; on the seventh day the fish is eaten.

Botanical name: *Psidium guayava* L.
Family: Myrtaceae
Common name:Guava
Local name: *Igobe*
Part used: Leaves.
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat fever. Fresh leaves of Igobe and pawpaw are boiled and the water is used to bath the patient with fever

Botanical name: *Bambusa vulgaris* L.
Family: Poaceae
Local name: Okpo
Common name: Bambu
Part used: Young shoot
Ailment treated cured and mode of administration: This is used to treat gonorrhoea. The young shoot is sliced and cooked with local gin together with tobacco leaf and native salt. A glassful is taken twice daily for three-four days.

Botanical name: *Cymbopogon atratus* (DC) Stapf.
Family: Poaceae
Common name: Lemmon grass
Local name: Iti
Part used: Leaves and roots

Ailment treated and mode of administration: It is used to treat cough, malaria fever, chest pains and to stimulate the nervous system. The leaves together with onion bulbs are boiled and honey added. This is taken thrice daily for three to four days. The fresh or dried roots are chewed to stimulate the nervous system.

Botanical name: *Citrus aurantifolia* (Christm.) Swinlge.
Family: Rutaceae
Common name: Lime
Local name: Evwe
Part used: Fruits and leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat impotency in men and to remove hatred from other persons. Ten to twelve limes is sliced and put inside a bottle, local gin is added and a cupful of the mixture taken twice daily for 1 week. Seven leaves of the lime are boiled together with native palm kernel cream used in bathing to remove hatred.

Botanical name: *Citus limon* (L) Burm F.
Family: Rutaceae
Common name: Lemon
Local name: Itie-akpaenfi
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat malaria. The leaves are boiled together with mango and guava leaves. One cupful of the decoction is taken three times daily for three to four days. The steam from the decoction is also inhaled.

Botanical name: *Fagara leprieurii* (Guill and Perr) Engl.
Family: Rutaceae
Local name: Ujo
Part used: Stem and root barks.
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to relieve toothache. The stem and root bark is powdered and applied on tooth thrice daily.

Botanical name: *Fagara zonthoxylum* Lam.
Family: Rutaceae
Common name: Oriata
Local name: Ujo
Part used: Root
Ailment treated and mode of administration: Used for general body weakness and toothache. A cupful of the warm extracts of the root is drunk twice daily for three days.

Botanical name: *Blighia sapida* Konig.
Family: Sapindaceae
Local name: Ukpe rerhen (oghighen)
Part used: Roots and stem barks
Ailment treated cured and mode of administration: This is used to treat fever and infections of the tongue. The root and stem bark is cooked with uririe and native salt. A cupful is taken twice daily for three days.

Botanical name: *Hannoa klainbana* Pierre and Engl.
Family: Simaronbaceae
Local name: Ofor
Part used: Stem and root barks.
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat hypertension and fever. The stem and rook barks are cooked in water and the liquid extracted taken. A cupful is recommended twice daily for three days.

Botanical name: *Solanum nigrum* L.
Family: Solanaceae
Common name: Black Nightshade
Local name: Ebe-akpe
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to treat convulsion, redness of the eye, skin diseases, gonorrhoea and liver enlargement. The juice from the leaf is used to treat convulsion, clear the eye, cure gonorrhoea and liver enlargement. The leaf is crushed and used to treat skin disease.

Botanical name: *Cola nitida* Schott and Engl.
Family: Sterculiaceae
Common name: Kola
Local name: Evwe
Part used: Cotyledon
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to prevent boil. Native cola, which is put in arua leaf, followed by some incantations and then chewed.

Botanical name: *Fluerya aestuans*(L) Ciaud ex .Miq
Family: Urticaceae
Common name: Tropical nettle weed
Local name: Ovie risokpo
Part used: Leaves
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This plant is used to make the foetus develop well. The leaf is crushed with a mortar and native chalk. The paste is applied over the lower abdomen of the pregnant woman so that the foetus can be well developed.

Botanical name: *Curcuma longa* L.
Family: Zingiberaceae
Local name: Iblue
Part used: Rhizome
Ailment treated and mode of administration: This is used to treat yellow fever, malaria and typhoid fever. The content of the rhizome is extracted with local gin and cupful of the extract is taken twice daily for three days.

Discussion

This study has once more shown the relevance of traditional medicines in the health care system of indigenous peoples. The work has demonstrated that traditional herbal medicines are still prominently used in the treatment of all kinds of diseases in the study area. Some of the species such as *Drancaena mannii* are used in the treatment and management of more than one ailment.

The use of most of the herbal preparations described in this work against malaria confirms the prevalence of this disease in tropical Africa. Nearly one third of the total number of herbs including: *Curcuma longa, Magnifera indica*, *Cymbopogon citratus*, *Demethia tripetal*a, *Dialium guineense*, *Psidium guasava* L., *Blighia sapinda konig*, *Carica papaya*, *Citurs limon* are used in the treatment of the disease.

The Ethiope indigenes use species such as *Newbouldia laevis*, *Musa paradisiaca* and *C. aurantifolia* to cure bareness females and impotency in males. Also the leaves of *Achyranthes aspera are* used to hasten delayed labour. The leaves of *Fluerya aestuans* are used to make the foetus in the womb develop well.

Convulsion is a very common ailment especially in children below ten years, contributing significantly to infant mortality. Consequently the people have found some notable herbs such as *Momordica charantia* and *Solenostemon monostachys* very useful in handling this condition.

Apparently due to its high astringency property, species of *Alchornea cordifolia,* is used extensively to revive unconscious persons. *Hannoa klainbana* stem and root barks have provided remedy to the dreaded conditions of hypertension and associated illnesses.

Plants have varying medicinal applications among different peoples. For instance Moody *et al* . (1998) had reported the use of *Alchornea laxiflora* for the cure of gingivitis and other inflammatory conditions in Ibadan. However this study observed that this species is used as chewing stick to maintain healthy teeth due to its perceived antimicrobial properties. Also, Osifo (1992) reported that the Benin people of Edo state use the leaves of *Phyllanthus amarus, Bryophyllum pinnatum* and *Portulaca oleracea* in the treatment of convulsion. This study observed that the neighbouring Ethiope indigenes use species of *Momordica charantia* and *Solenostemon monostachys* to treat the same condition.

The study further revealed that the people of Ethiope use species of *Bambusa vugaris* and *Solanum nigrum* in treating gonorrhoea, which is a bacterial infection. This plant however is mostly used for staking and house construction in virtually all parts of Nigeria with little knowledge of its medicinal value. The report of the use of seeds of *Azadirachta indica* against pile is new. The common knowledge of even in literature has been the use of the leaves of the species in the treatment of malaria (Okpanyi and Ezeukwe, 1981).

This study observed that the use of herbs and herbal preparations is a big business among the indigenous people. In view of this and the current global efforts at poverty alleviation the development of this huge trade could become a veritable instrument of wealth creation among the people.

The study also observed that the harvesting and use of these plants especially those in the wild are uncontrolled. This is already posing serious threats to many of the species. Thus the cultivation of these plants for drug production locally will not only reduce scarcity in the future but help in their conservation. This will also reduce the efforts spent by traditional herbal practitioners to travel into the bush to find their herbs (WRI, 1993).

Finally, this study has contributed in providing information on customary knowledge and use of plants by indigenous people. Moreover as mankind moves speedily away from the use of synthetic products to natural ones, data such those provided by this study will become very invaluable in charting the new course.

References

Akpobundu, T.O. and C.W. Agyakwa, 1987. A Handbook of West Africa Weeds. 11TA Pub, Ibadan, Nigeria, pp: 521.

Cunningham, A.B., 1994. The role of ethnobotany and customary knowledge in the conservation and use of plants. In: Safeguarding the Genetic Basis of Africa's Traditional Crops. Ed., Putter, A., CTA, Netherlands.

Gbile, Z.O., 1986. Ethnobotany, Taxonomy and Conservation of Medicinal Plants, University of Ibadan Press, Nigeria, pp: 230.

Gill, L.S. and C. Akinmumi, 1986. Nigeria Folk Medicine; Practices and Beliefs of Ondo People. J. Ethnopharmacol ., 18: 257-266.

Gill, L.S., 1988. Taxonomy of Flowering Plants. Illupeju Press Ltd. Benin City, pp: 338

Gill, L. S., 1992. Ethnomedicinal uses of plants in Nigeria. Uniben Press, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, pp: 276.

Idu, M. and D.I. Olorunfemi , 2000. Plants used for medicinal purposes by the Koma people of Adamawa State, Nigeria. Indigenous Knowledge and Monitor. 8:18

Louwi, C.A.M, T.J.C. Regnier and L. Korsten , 2002. Medicinal bulbous plants of South Africa and their traditional relevance in the control of infectious disease. J. Ethnopharmacol., 82: 147-154.

Mirutse, G., A. Zemeda, E. Thomas and W. Zerihum, 2003. An Ethnobotanical Study of Medicinal Plants used by the Zay People in Ethiopia. J. Ethnopharmacol., 85: 43-52.

Moody, J.O., O.O. Ogundipe and H.A. Odelola, 1998. Biological Activities of *Alchornea laxiflora* extracts. In Moody, J.O., E. Ajaiyeoba, J.O. Adeboye and O.O. Ogundipe, (1st Eds.,). Proceeding International Workshop on Herbal Medicinal Products. University of Ibadan press, Nigeria, pp: 320.

Mume, J.O. 1973. Traditional Medicine in Nigeria Jom Nature Cure Centre, Agbarho, Nigeria, pp: 112.

Okpanyi, S.N. and G.C. Ezeukwe, 1981. *Azardirachta indica.* J Plant Med., 41: 34-53.

Osifo, N.G., 1992. A system of Traditional health Care vol 2, Neras Publishers Limited Ibadan, pp: 106.

Sofowora, A.E., 1982. Medicinal Plants and Traditional Medicine in Africa. John Wiley and Sons, NY., pp: 256.

Sofowora, A.E., 1984. The State of Medicinal Plant Research in Nigeria. Ibadan, University Press, Nigeria, pp: 283.

WRI, 1993. Biodiversity Prospecting using Genetic Resources for Sustainable Development world Resources Institute NY.