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Why Nigeria is not yet Sustainably Developed

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Abstract

Against the background of the recognized fact that man's activities in the environment have impact on the life of human beings, this paper presents an overview of the factors militating against the achievement of Sustainable Environmental Management in Nigeria making use of both Secondary data and personal observations.

The paper notes that Sustainable Environmental Management is far from being achieved in Nigeria because the activities of man still degrade the environment. The country can only be sustainably developed if it can pay attention to environmental sanitation and conservation. However, the hindrances to this were traced to poor funding, environmental management seen as the responsibility of government and non inclusion of environmental management in national development plan. The paper concludes by suggesting possible sources of sustainable fund for the country to move forward.

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1. Introduction

All biological life depends on a wholesome and well functioning ecosystem and the earth has no limit less supply of resources which must be proportionately shared by all living things [1] Human beings disobey the law of nature at their risk while human success results from co-operation with nature, fitting into the web of life [2]

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In Nigeria, Environmental Management has remained consistently bad over the years and the problem has become a monster that is difficult to solve in spite of all efforts from all arms of government. Consequently, the environment continues to deteriorate while environmental related diseases aggravate poverty [3]

Also, the population has risen rapidly to about 140 million going by the latest National Census (2006) without commensurate provision of infrastructure and supporting services to cope with the rising population. The implication is poor environmental sanitation which is visible in form of increase waste generation, over utilization of limited existing facilities, inadequate supply of potable water, poor land use, conversion of residential accommodation to commercial use, increase in urban slums and shanties on the edge of the city as a result of acute rural-urban migration and a general decline in the quality of human life.

The goal 7 of millennium development is to ensure environmental sustainability and achieving sustainability means ensuring that current actions do not lead to future declines in human well being. However, apart from the fact that environmental sustainability is far from being achieved in Nigeria in the different spheres of life, it is clearly evident that our current activities can lead to future declines in human well being if care is not taken.

It is against this background therefore, that the paper presents an overview of the factors militating against the achievement of Sustainable Environmental Management in Nigeria. The paper concludes by making suggestive solutions towards funding in order to achieve it.

2. Materials and Methods

The descriptive research method was used for the study. The study area is Nigeria, located in the Western part of Africa consisting of black races. The country was purposely selected for the study because it is a developing country struggling to achieve sustainable development. Data was collected from both secondary sources and personal observations.

3. The Environment

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary [4] defines environment as condition, circumstances, influences etc. affecting people's lives. It is the complex of physical, chemical and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determines its form and survival. According to Environmental Impact Assessment Act of 1992, the environment is defined as:

- Land, water and air, including all layers of the atmosphere
- All organic and inorganic matters and living organisms on, in and below the earth's crust.

However, these definitions do not include man's activities on earth. According to [5] the environment is the sum total influence which modifies and determines the development of life and character. This embodies the entire atmosphere and biosphere. The atmosphere is the layer of gases which envelops the earth, while the biosphere is a thin layer of solids, water and air, in which all lives exist. The built environment embodies all the land uses, associated infrastructure and recreational space which enhance the people's standard of living. This definition conforms to the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) Act (1988), which sees the environment to "include water, air, land and all plants and human beings or animals living therein and the interrelationship which exist among these or any of them". In the opinion of [6], the environment includes the ways in which the environmental media interacts with one another and the ways in which they interact with manmade environment and the fauna and flora which inhabit them. The environment should therefore be seen to cover the natural environment given by God for man's usage and the built environment designed and developed by man.

However, the primordial aim of development in the environment is to improve the quality of life and

enable people to realize their potentials and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment. Development is real only if it makes human lives better in all these respects. A development pattern that pays little or no regards to environmental issues is essentially a disaster right from the conceptual framework [3]. Sustainable development therefore, is the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is economic and social development that ensures that the environment is conserved to perform its various functions including the functions to humanity. It is development that is pro-people, pro-nature and pro-job [7].

Environmental management on the other hand according to [8] is the process of putting together those items of environmental nature where man exists so that man's penetration and exploitation do not have adverse effect on the environment. This is aimed at ensuring that the environment is free from abuse, and misuse that may result in pollution and degradation. It is aimed to promote development compatibility, balance urban land use value and upgrade the environment for present and future generation.

However, it is pertinent to note that sustainable environmental management can only be achieved through Environmental sanitation and conservation. Environmental sanitation as defined by the National Environmental Sanitation Policy is the principle and practice of effecting healthful and hygienic condition in the environment to promote public health and welfare, improve quality of life and ensure a sustainable environment. Thus, environmental sustainability can be measured with sustainable development indices, which measure the quality of human life and the quality of the environment. These indices are HUMAN DEVELOPEMNT INDEX, which are the barometer for measuring change in human welfare. They cover the following three dimensions of human well-being;

- Knowledge or educational attainment.
- Income and decent standard of living (as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capital in purchasing power (PPP) in US Dollars).
- Health – living a long and healthy life (as measured by life expectancy at birth).

For a nation, state or local government areas or society to be environmentally sustainable, it has to consciously develop policies that deliberately promote and enable individuals to achieve a high quality of live in ways that do not impact or degrade the environment. [9] advocate for Education of all concerned in the process of making environment more wholesome.

4. How Sustainable is Nigeria?

Nigeria environment is not yet sustainably developed because it has not achieved a high quality of life in that the activities of man degrade the environment. According to [9], it can be sustainably developed if attention can be positively focused at addressing problems in the following areas of environmental sanitation.

- Housing and urbanization
- Adequate potable water supply
- Management of urban drainage system
- School sanitation
- Noise pollution
- Energy and Environmental Sanitation
- Pest and vector control
- Disposal of the Dead (Human and livestock)
- Control of reared and stray animals
- Hygiene Education and Promotion
- Partnership
- Improved Governance

- Municipal Solid Waste Management
- Medical Waste Management
- Excreta and sewage management
- Food sanitation
- Market and Abattoir Sanitation

Also, there is the need for finance for sustainable environmental management in Nigeria as the non achievement of sustainable environmental management in Nigeria is partly attributed to poor funding. Environmental protection particularly in the developing countries has been grossly underfunded from the past. [10] observed that while the demand for fund for environmental protection is increasing, the actual financial resource allocations relative to other sectors have declined considerably. There are also considerable evidences to show that even the little financial input to environmental protection in most developing countries are not properly managed, thus, there are no corresponding outputs. The funds are often misdirected to other uses or embezzled. This situation is but a reflection of the poor economic management by the leadership in such countries. There are also considerable evidences to show that foreign aids and loans in these countries have decreased in recent years. The declining contribution from foreign donors and creditors has been attributed to poor accounting on the part of the recipients, declining economy of donor countries, poor debt servicing and low economic performance and credibility of developing countries.

Furthermore, in Nigeria, financing environmental management was seen as a primary responsibility of the government. But in recent times, government has been unable to shoulder this responsibility solely due to the increasing financial demand from other sectors of the economy. Examples of Federal government ministries and agencies involved in environmental management are Ministry of Environment, Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). At the State level, environmental agencies include State Environmental Protection Agency, (SEPA) and Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources while local governments operate through the Department of Community Development, Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Often, these government agencies have laudable plans and programmes but many of the programs fail because of problems of finance and its management. The crucial issue of flow of financial input expected from the government is not reflected in the plan and the extent to which they conflict with meeting the other national priority objectives. Government has not placed priority attention on the activities of these agencies in areas of environmental protection. Rather government prefers to channel substantial financial resources to targeted popular programs such as poverty alleviation.

Lastly, in Nigeria, government is yet to regard environmental management as a priority in National development. They start with an enabling legislation and standards. Environmental agencies are set up but with insufficient operating resources. Political support is generally weak. Often, in these countries, political attention on environmental problems comes only after a catastrophic event. For example, serious attention on environmental protection started in Nigeria only after the Koko toxic waste incidence in 1988. [11] examined the roles of the tiers of government in environmental management and ways to co-ordinate the roles. Federal government plays some roles through its ministries and parastatals. Federal government sets policies, provides funds and supervises states and local councils on environmental protection projects. It secures fund from external sources and channels the fund to the lower governments. This supervisory roles are more on externally funded projects as well as projects with in-built implementation and monitoring strategies that are strictly adhered to as required by the conditions of contracts with aid agencies. Despite this wide scope of functions by government, environmental management suffers low budgetary allocation in Nigeria. There is little or no evidence of increased government budgetary allocation to infrastructure and environment related sectors in the country in recent years.

5. Solutions to funding Environmental Management in Nigeria

The possible sources of sustainable fund for environmental management in Nigeria according to [12] are discussed below:

- Federal Government Budgetary Allocation
- Fund from States and Local Government Authorities
- Fund from the Oil Revenue
- Eco-Tourism fund
- Fund from Environmental Taxes
- Fund from Pollution Abatement
- Forestry Rent
- Fund from the Oil Sector
- Fund from Corporate Organizations
- Fund from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)
- Fund from Volunteer Organizations
- International Donor Agencies
- Fund from Bilateral Agreements
- Fund from the Local Communities

6. Conclusion

This study has shown that Sustainable Environmental Management is yet to be achieved in Nigeria. This is because government is yet to regard Environmental Management as a priority and also, due to lack of fund. If the various sources of finance explored in this write –up can be utilized, this will go a long way in improving the environmental conditions of the country. However, everybody has a role to play in this regard as all stakeholders have to work together for the betterment of Nigeria.

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