



## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*In Nigeria, there is an increased level of environmental issues associated with living in the environment. However, successive Nigerian administrations from the colonial era paid little attention to this environmental issues resulting to environmental degradation. The paper examines environmental management and sustainable development in Nigeria. The concept of Environmental management and sustainable development were examined and applied to the Nigerian context. The findings of this paper show that environmental sustainability policy gaps, inadequate implementation of existing environmental policies and practices that exist which militate against environmental sustainability. The paper presents some useful recommendations that are aimed at sustaining environmental issues in Nigeria.*

**Keyword:** Environmental management, sustainable development, environmental policy.

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental management and its sustainability remain critical to sustainable development. The imports of this assertion are that the environment remains critical to National development and it is pivotal to its sustainability, (Anijah-Obi, 2001). A significant land mark on environmental consciousness came up around the globe at the United Nations conference on human environment held in Stockholm in the year 1972. Countries especially the developing ones were persuaded that long term environmental management and sustainability could be realized through the instrumentality of sound environmental management. Again, sustainable development that is inextricably linked to the environment was popularized by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report of 1987 titled, "Our Common Future". The report notably emphasized the inevitability of a new development path in sustainable human progress to be achieved. This new emphasis led to a focus on topical issues like population energy industry, human, settlement, quality of life and productive use and effective

management of environmental resources.

However, issues on environmental sustainability have painted epitome of failure in the regards contrary to the advocacy.

The nexus between environmental management and sustainable development, degradation and environmental pollution have been stressed over time as the environment and development have remained a topical issue before the government, non-governmental organizations policy analyst and scholars.

An important landmark on environmental consciousness came to the world in 1972. At the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, countries, particularly developing ones, have become convinced that long-term environmental sustainability could be realized through the instrumentality of sound environmental management. Once again, sustainable development that is inextricably architrave for the environment has been made popular by the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) entitled "Our Common Future". The report highlighted in particular the inevitability of a new development path in sustainable human progress to be achieved.

This new emphasis has led to focus on current issues such as the energy industry of the population, man, settlements, quality of life and productive use and the effective management of environmental resources.

However, issues related to environmental sustainability have represented an epitome of failure against defense.

The link between environmental management and sustainable development, degradation and environmental pollution has been emphasized over time as the environment and development have remained a topical problem before the government, political analysts and scholars of non-governmental organizations. In Nigeria, contemporary issues on environmental management and sustainable development have attracted serious concern mainly because of policy gaps, poor development agenda and lack of political will to enforce environmental policies, (Kelly & Florence, 2014). This ugly scenario has led to environmental degradation. Environmental degradation means damage to the biosphere as a whole due to human activities.

### **CONCEPTUAL ISSUES ENVIRONMENT**

The environment is the natural and first social conditions surrounding all mankind including future generation (World Bank, 1991). According to Etuonovbe and Didiugwu (2017), the environment is made up of biophysical components and processes of natural environment of land, water and air. The concept of sustainable development recognizes that development and environment are not mutually exclusive but are basically independent, complementary and mutually reinforcing each other. This complex relationship explains why it has always been difficult to give an operational content to the concept of sustainable development. Sustainability has become the central focus in development studies currently. He echoes notes of

intergenerational equity in environmental resource utilization, (Ejumudo & Nwador, 2014).

### **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

Environmental management (EM) is the process of managing environmental issues associated with an organization's activities (Ejumudo & Nwador, 2014). The authors hold that EM includes the diverse activities and approaches that are very crucial in managing the environmental performance of governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions. This concept, they say, is based on continuous improvement of an organization's environment performance over time. As such, an organization's environment management system changes in line with its operations as well as external influencing factors such as environmental legislation, changes in technology and market pressures. This dynamic leakage allows organizations to improve their environmental performance at a rate and to the level relevant to them (Ejumudo & Nwador, 2014).

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Sustainability has gained currency in development related studies. The concept of sustainable development is diverse in meaning and application due to its use on different professional frame works under investigation, (Crowther, Seifi & Moyeen, 2018). Thus, many technical, environmental, economic, human resource and material based values amenable to the concept of sustainability. The evolution of sustainability concept is traceable to the combination of Rome Report entitled "Limit to Growth" published in the early 1970; the Brundtland Report or "Our Common Future" published in the 1980's and the "Agenda 21", a Declaration of 8 Summits held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1992. These three events made significant contributions to the development of the concept of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development according to International Union

for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 1980) was first used and developed in One World Conservation Strategy. Areas covered in the document included:

- The maintenance of genetic diversity
- The Maintenance of ecological processes and
- The sustainable use of resources.

Sustainable development that hinges on equitable and a balance approach to development is geared towards one balancing of the interest of different groups of people within the same generation and among generations. Poverty eradication has been viewed as a critical problem to sustainable development. This is so, not only been mortal- dimensional. It is also a menace to peace and sustainability across the world. The effect of poverty is both asymmetric to development and coherently destructive to all economic, social and environmental goals that are germane to and constitute the cornerstone of sustainable development. According Karpagam (2008) sustainable development is directly concerned with increasing one natural standard of living of the poor at the grass root levels which could be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, educational services, health care, sanitation and the light. Again, peace (cited in Karpagam, 2008) posits that sustainable development is a vector of desirable social objectives such that increase in real income per capital and empowermedelent in health and nutritional educational achievement, access to resources, a fair distribution of income and increase in basic freedom. Sustainable development is that which leaves our total patrimony including natural environmental assets, intact over a period (Ejumudo & Nwador 2014).

According to Tietenberg (2009) sustainable development is the willingness and the ability of one present generation to devise a means of using depletable resources such that future generations at a minimum will be left no

worse off than current generation. As for the world acceptance of the concept of sustainable development, no single definition is yet available that is acceptable to all the concept of sustainable development as seen to be diverse in application and meaning depending on the orientation and professional frame work being used. Sustainable development is said to aim at among others, maximizing the net benefits of economic development, subjecting to maintaining the stock of all environmental and natural resources asserts (physical, human and natural) over time.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The effective management of natural resources is the key to attaining sustainable development in all sectors of the global economy. In line with Global and National agencies advocacy, the trust of natural resource management is to support environmental services, promote the sustainable management and use of lands water and genetic resources and to strengthen research and development on endeavours, the pressing need at hand is to utilize our natural resources in a sustainable manner with a focus on minimizing their depletion and pollution. Ejumudo and Nwador (2014) have argued that the welfare of human societies and the quality of life is directly linked to sustainable use of the natural resources. *Agenda 21* Chapter four (4.5) has duly recognized this concern globally, where it stated that “Special attention should be paid to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption and to the efficient use of those resources consistent with the goal of minimizing depletion and reducing pollution.” At two UN conventions dealing with conservation of natural resources: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) this broad issue has been captured. The attention to these concerns

was inspired by the growing global commitment to sustainable development and represented a dramatic step forward in the conservation of biological diversity. However achieving sustainable development without drastically, disrupting the environmental balance of nature is the challenging problem facing mankind today. All sustainable efforts studies should incorporate the technological, legal, political, environmental, economic and ethical dimension in their policy direction and responses.

Since sustainable development centers on maximizing and optimally distributing the net benefit of economic development, it requires appropriate natural resources management strategies that will accommodate conservational rules to maintain the regenerative capacity of resources and guide technological change so as to switch from non-renewable resources where ever physically possible and to develop a phasing policy for the necessary use of non-renewable resources, (Brukefield, 2006).

### **RULES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Ejumudo and Nwador, (2014) have argued that the fundamental implication of the concept of sustainable development that one may understand from definitions involved inter-generational equity is that the present generation should bequeath to the next generation a stock of quality of 'life assets', no less than were inherited. According to Karpagam, (2008), in Ejumudo and Nwador (2014), this can be interpreted to mean:

- a. The next generation should inherit a stock of environmental assets no less than that inherited by the previous generation.
- b. That the components of the inherited stock should be manmade

assets, natural assets and human assets.

The first postulation point at all capital assets: manmade and natural, while the second includes human capital besides natural and manmade capital. Sustainability of development process may be verified standing on the classification of capital. A constant capital stock role as a criterion for sustainability has been proposed, (Ejumudo & Nwador, 2014). A prerequisite for sustainable development is that a nations stock of capital should decline true time.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The first Nigerian legislation on Petroleum predated exploration activities or efforts in Nigeria, it was known as the Petroleum Ordinance of 1899, this was followed by the Mineral Regulation (OIL) Ordinance of 1907. These provided the basic legal framework for the development of petroleum and it natural resources (Omorogbe, 2001). The colonial and post-colonial Nigeria framework in the oil industry have been no less an extension of the 1914 Mineral Act which trusted all powers of resources (solid and liquid) on the state as Omoweh (2006) rightly stressed.

Another environmental related policy was the land use decree of 1978 to which the written and rigid 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) still holds tenaciously. The Section 315 (5d) of the Constitution holds that the Land Use Act is among the enactments that cannot be invalidated by the Constitution and its provisions. In accordance with the Constitution, the provisions of the Land Use Act shall continue to apply and have full effect in accordance with the tenor of other provisions of the Constitution. This singular decree of 1978 resurrected in the 1999 Constitution while empowering the state, also disempowered the oil producing regions

to the benefits of the multinational oil firms. It is important to note that nowhere else in Nigeria has the impact of the land use Decree manifested, in all its ramifications and inequities, as in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which happens to be the main oil-producing region. The land use decree also sort accommodation for the oil companies who need land for virtually all its operations. These partly explain the logic behind the content of the land use decree which also provided a buffer for the oil giants to be more reckless in their operations. This singular act explains why Shell, can afford to flare gas on daily basis since 1956 when it discovered oil in Niger delta region of Nigeria and yet be shielded by the state over litigations on land where oil is explored (Omoweh, 2006).

Nigeria states introduced another environmental policy tagged “the harmful waste decree of 1988, which facilitated the establishment of Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA)”. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) came into effect through decree 58 of 1988 and 59 (amended) of 1992. FEPA was charged with the overall responsibility for the environmental management and protection, bio diversity and natural resources conservation. Its objectives include securing for all Nigerians, a quality environment adequate for their health and wellbeing , conservation and use of the environment and natural resources for the benefit of mankind, restore, maintain and enhance ecosystem and ecological process essential for the functioning of biosphere and biological diversity, raised public awareness and promotes understanding of essential linkage between environment and cooperate with the countries , international organizations and agencies to achieved optimal use of natural resources and effective prevention of trans-boundary environment pollution.

Ejumudo and Nwandor (2014) observed that FEPA has perfumed abysmally if bench marked with the above mentioned objectives.

As a result of this enforcement gap the federal government in line with section 20 of the 1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, established the Natural Environmental Standard and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA). This agency is charged with the responsibility of enforcing environmental laws , regulations and standard in deterring people , industries and organizations on polluting and degrading the environment, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development of Nigerian's natural resources in general and environmental technology including coordination and liaison with relevant stakeholders within and outside Nigeria on matter of enforcement of policies and guidelines . The environmental agencies that are disadvantaged are further handicapped by a federal government that is trapped in the web of politics of accommodation and alliance, lack the requisite technology expertise and operates within fewer technology.

## **CONCLUSION**

The importance of environmental management in the sustainable development of both developed and underdeveloped societies cannot be over emphasized. This is because environment management has the utilitarian value of creating the conditions that are germane and critical to intra-generational and inter-generational principles and underlie sustainable development globally. The fact that environmental management in Nigeria is arguably poor is a possible explanation for the serious sustainable development problems and challenges that exist in the country. Sustainable environmental development is not just a concept but also a process and means to an end. It demands an understanding of development imperatives and an attitude of mind to make it work to support human security and peace through

the conservation of natural resources for sustenance of livelihoods and ultimately economic development of Nigeria. There is equally the need for appropriate conservation and reservation policies that will enhance sustainability. This will involve educating the people and encouraging them to alter their destructive attitude and disposition towards their environment.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To realize environmental management and sustainable development in Nigeria, sectoral policies, environmental laws and regulations are important but cannot alone be expected to deal with the problems of environment and development. Since the limited environmental protection effort of the Nigerian government is impaired by the poor predisposition responses and participation by the oil companies, other co-operate bodies, communities, and individuals, it is not obvious that most of the development challenge the world faces are not amendable to solutions from any single agency or group, there is the need for elaborative efforts by all state holders in the Nigerian society toward the promotion of sustainable development.

The Nigerian government has to change her ineptitude, deliberate action and lack-luster that has constrained the creation of a climate that will encourage valuable partnerships which will drive sustainable development efforts and plans in Nigeria through environmental management.

Again, the genuine adoption and holistic application of a multi-dimensional approach that will embody all essential methods have been recognized for the control of activities that damage the environment as an imperative. These essential methods moral suasion which is an appeal to reduce pollution in the brother interest of the society, regulation that require polluters to cut back their emissions to maintain certain level of environmental quality or to install a specified treatment of procedures market processed or

pricing or fiscal technique that includes efficient change or pollution tags, subsidies, refundable deposits, pollution permits and allocation of property rights as well as government investment programs.

There is equally a need for appropriate conservation and preservation policy that will enhance environmental sustainability. There is also the need for deliberate effort aimed at prolonging the life span of environmental resources through the preservation, re-use and recycling of resources as well as material substitutions that cannot be over emphasized. There is the call for strict enforcement of environmental laws for a necessary and mandatory effort aimed at engendering a new regime of environmental management and sustainable development in Nigeria. Emission reduction for instance cannot be realized except resources are devoted to its enforcement. To this end, government at various levels as managers of the environment should enhance their budgetary provision and expenditure on environment protection and management that are pivotal to the goal of sustainable development.

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