

EMBEDDING THE ENVIRONMENT IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

These papers assess the need to embed the environment in sustainable development in Nigeria. It takes a look at development indicators of sustainable development in Nigeria. It contains an overview of embedding the environment in sustainable development in Nigeria where various strategies adopted and those suggested are outlined. This paper identified a number of interlinked objectives for embedding the environment in sustainable development and concluded with a call to improve statistical information and indicators in tackling environmental issues as they are essential in order to ensure that the objectives of sustainable development is met.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Environment, Economic Development, Embedding

Background to the Study

The natural environment is very giving. Every day, humans take advantage of resources from nature to meet their daily needs including fresh air, food and clean water. When human take only what they need, nature replenishes these resources and life is sustainable, Gillaspay (2010). However, if the natural environment is pushed beyond its limits because humans use resources too quickly, introduce pollutants into the environment or destroy nature in the pursuit of more economic and social prosperity, then nature has a hard time keeping pace. To this end, the world commission on environment and development came out with a report in 1987 called "our common future". This report often referred to as Brundtland report and is credited with coining the term sustainable development, which refers to the

development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As lucid as this concept can be, when we consider the fact that life is not only about survival. There are economic and social needs that must be met and these needs impact on the environment's ability to sustain itself. For instance if we look at the economy, of Nigeria we see that is dependent on society for certain things such as labour and a market to exchange goods and services. We also see that both the economy and society are dependent on the environment. This is because the environment provides them with raw materials, such as food, clean air and freshwater, as well as natural resources such as timbers and fossil fuels. The economy, society and the environment must work together if sustainable development must be achieved.

At this point, it will suffice to state that Rio 1992 was an important stocktaking of the world's progress towards achieving sustainable development. Certainly one of its key outcomes was the call to develop sustainable development goals. An important message was that this new set of goals should carefully consider and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development-environmental, social and economic. Therefore, the main thrust of this paper is to assess the importance of embedding the environment in sustainable development in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Sustainable Development

According to Ozor and Onuoha (2010) the term “sustainable development was brought into common use by the world commission on environmental development (the Brundtland commission) in 1987, calling for development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations”. The Brundtland Commission Reports highlighted the need to simultaneously address development and environmental imperatives. Since then, substantial work has been under taken, to draw out the operational implications of the concept of sustainable development. This was the main theme of the World Bank Development Report 1992. The bank's current work is not to generate theory of sustainability but rather to make concerted effort to integrate the view points of three disciplines: Economics, ecology and sociology. The economists seeks to maximize human welfare within the constraints of existing capital stock and technologies; the ecologist stress preserving the integrity of ecological systems viewed as critical for the overall stability of the global ecosystem; sociology emphasizes that the key actors in development are human beings whose patterns of social organization were crucial for devising viable solutions to achieving sustainable development. Aptly put, the sustainable development hub seeks to promote prosperity (economic objectives) through growth, equity and efficiency in all sectors of development. It seeks to support a people (social objectives) through

empowerment, participation of all stakeholders, social, mobility, cultural identity and various institutional developments, finally, it seeks to maintain the planet (ecological objectives) through improving the state of the ecosystem, biodiversity, conservation, ensuring adequate carrying capacity and responding in sustainable manners to other global issues.

The Rio de Janeiro Summit of 1992 drew a clear message that without better environmental stewardship, development will be undermined and without accelerated development in poor countries, environmental policies will fail. In Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, bush burning in the face of rising population growth are creating vicious cycles of soil degradation and impaired productivity, Ozor and Onuoha (2010).

Indicators of Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The definitions of sustainable development in Nigeria have a number of common elements, which can be used to indicate issues of sustainable development in Nigeria (Onuoha 2008). This is the natural environment and its resources - both renewable and non-renewable the Natural environment and its resources are impacted upon by the people who utilize them for and in their day to day living. This concept naturally involves economic processes, a social process and a political process. Sustainable development in Nigeria would deal with improving the quality of human life scores by Economically by:

1. Minimizing use or waste on non-renewable resources including minimizing the consumption of fossil fuels and sustainably with renewable resources where feasible. Also by reducing use, reusing, recycling and reclaiming scarce mineral resources;
2. Sustainable use of renewable resources - including using fresh water, soil and forests in ways that ensure a natural rate of recharge.
3. Keeping within the absorptive capacity of load and global sinks for wastes-including the capacity of rivers to break down biodegradable and the capacity of global environmental system to absorb green house gases.
4. A socially desirable way such as reducing population pressure on resources like food and water, regulating population growth rate, checking incidences of pests and diseases, enhancing the fulfillment of the peoples' cultural and spiritual needs.
5. A politically effective way of achieving sustainable development predicated on good governance. This would mean involving the people right down to the grassroots in making decisions and impact directly on their lives and interests in a transparent and accountable manner that will make for stability and unity of the policy and that would enhance the realization of the plans and set targets. Agricultural extension service with

the mandate of working with the local people can stimulate this process and ensure that local people are empowered to become self reliant.

Discussion

Embedding the Environment in Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Over the last decades Nigeria has adopted an imperative number of environmentally-related agreements. The environment is a prerequisite for socio-economic development. We know for instance that the viability of agriculture depends on the condition of its ecological foundation including healthy off-farm and on-farm biodiversity. As a developing country, Nigeria is struggling to embrace the concept of sustainable development. According to Akinbode (2002), the environment is the totality of the places and surroundings, in which we live, work and interact with other people in our cultural, religious, political and socio-economic activities for self fulfillment and advancement of our communities, societies or nations. It is within this environment that both natural and man-made things are found.

The promulgation of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency Decree No. 58 of 1988, signal attempts at contending with the ugly incidents of environmental problems for Nigeria. The responsibility for the protection and development of the environment in general and environmental technology including initiation of policy in relation to environmental research and technology and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing shall be the duty of the Agency to perform duties as stated in the provisions of the Acts, Ojealaro, Obabori and Ekpu (2009). At state and local government levels, section 24 of the federal environmental Act made provision for the establishment of the state and local government Environmental Protection Bodies. However, despite these laudable policies, cases of environmental abuses still persist these cases borders on unsanitary conditions or environmental pollution in the society and the attendant human and animal hazards. It also deals with issues such as waste disposal, sewage, water supply, sanitary maintenance of residential and work place, premises and pollution.

Coping with the incident of removal, collection and management of refuse in urban and rural areas have been issues that call for more concern. The mechanism of operation which relate to function of local government as set out in section 7, 4th schedule of the 1999 constitution which is on the function of local government is on provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal which have not worked out for the management of refuse disposal. For this reason, the idea of private participation was suggested, Ekpu et al (2009).

Another environmental matter that has called for embedding the environment in sustainable development in Nigeria in the case of ozone layer depletion. The world's government met to set the course for the global phase out of ozone depleting substances over the next decade and beyond. Series of conferences have been held in respect of this matter. One of such is the seventh meeting of the conference of the parties to the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer and in conjunction with the 17th meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer which had representation from Nigeria. Since the adoption of the Vienna convention in 1985 followed by the Montreal protocol in 1987, the international ozone regime has expanded to address almost 100 ozone-depleting chemicals, some of which also contribute to global warming.

According to Ibem and Daramola (2010), Environmental problems in Nigeria are multifaceted and are associated with the colonial antecedents of Nigeria from every indications, various administrations in Nigeria placed very little importance on environmental issues. Embedding the environment in sustainable development is for proper management of environmental resources and their harmonious relation with nature in order to give adequate attention for decades. The lack of political will within the public sector to address environmental issues remains one of most intricate problems in the country hence the need to include the environment in any and every developmental policy makings and decisions. An example of this is the continued gas flaring and oil spillage in the Niger Delta region, where environmental problems due to oil exploration have inflicted tremendous damage on the ecosystem health and livelihood of the people of the region. In the face of increasing urban population, there is inadequate supply of housing and infrastructure for the teeming population, as a result, the existing infrastructure and housing are over stressed, while unsanitary living conditions characterized by filthy environment, unclean ambient air, stinking and garbage filled streets and sub-standard houses continue to dominate the landscape of Nigeria. The concentration of more people in urban areas of the country has brought more pressure on the land space for the production of food, infrastructure, housing and industrialization. This affects the carrying capacity of the environment as each additional person increases the demand on the infrastructure and natural system and as a result creating ecological imbalance which comes with adverse environmental consequences such as hazards and disaster.

Several cases contribute to the need to include the environment in sustainable development. One of such is the loss of biodiversity. The world fact Book 2005 identified Nigeria as one of the countries with the highest rates of forest loss (3.3%) in the world. Since 1990, the country has lost about 6.1 million hectares i.e 35.7% of its forest cover (Ibem and Daramola 2010). The various species of plants and

animals that are required to establish and sustain the various food webs and claims as well, natural cycles are systematically being depleted and thus resulting in ecological imbalance and threatening the survival of man in the environment.

Conclusion

One of the greatest challenges in embedding environment in sustainable development will be to incorporate namely environmental, social, and economic. Each of these dimensions requires careful thinking and analysis about the role environment will play in sustainable development and how they will be interlinked. Key factor in embedding the environment in sustainable development is to ensure implementation in policies, accountability and compliance. Ultimately the effectiveness of embedding the environment in sustainable development depends on how well it is going to be integrated into institutional and governance frameworks at all levels. Effective government includes adequate follow-up and compliance systems with independent monitoring and evaluation, and effective financing of environmental friendly projects. From all that has been said, it is very important to include the environment in every developmental policy makings. It should be noted that a healthy and natural environment is critical for achieving sustainability. It necessitates, careful management of natural resources (i.e resources that are owned by economic agents and used in economic production) but also placing the carrying capacity of the ecosystem and global assets such as climate and oceans at the centre of our preoccupations so that there could provide society with goods and services of adequate quality in the long run without destroying the ecosystem.

Recommendations

This paper therefore recommends the following for embedding environment in sustainable development. First, maintaining the integrity of ecosystems through the efficient management of their natural resources; second, de-coupling environmental pressures from economic growth; third, enhancing the contribution of the environment to people's quality of life and finally, dealing with global environmental interdependence, through governance and co-operation. In all these areas, it will suffice to say that improving statistical information and indicators are essential in order to ensure that the broader objectives of meeting the needs of the present without undermining the possibilities of future generations from meeting theirs are met.

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