

ABSTRACT:

Purpose: This paper seeks to review the state of desertification in Nigeria, historical trends and past national efforts as well as ongoing programs for combating the fast-spreading desert conditions in the arid zones of the country. **Design/methodology/approach:** The approach has been carried out through a comprehensive review analysis and detailed assessment on several methods of approach which includes archival materials as well as published government documents, field observation and learned background information of the working and funding dynamics of the program to combat desertification. **Findings:** The findings of this paper reveal that the failure of the past government effort in combating desertification in Nigeria is a result of the policies and the programs not having been designed to adequately tackle the problem of drought and desertification and of the phenomena being treated as sectoral issues rather than an integrated whole. **Practical implications:** This paper has practical implication for anyone interested in sustainable management of drought and desertification in the arid and semi arid zones of the world. **Originality/value:** The paper has articulated success and failure of the government programs in combating the twin environmental problems of drought and desertification in Nigeria and also shows that government could significantly combat desertification through sustainable management of its projects/programs if adequate resources are employed.