

THE ROLE OF NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IN REDUCING NATURAL RESOURCES DEPLETION

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Nigeria is a nation endowed with large and diverse natural resources which has considerable potential with respect to economic development. Natural resources are material source of wealth made up of biotic and abiotic resources which in summary include forests and forestry products, water and the marine organisms, air, lands, material deposits that occur in a natural state which has economic value and are useful and necessary to human being.

Biodiversity degradation, environmental pollution/depletion of natural resources have been issues of growing concern in Nigeria hence these resources are the main source of economic growth and sustainability.

The federal government of Nigeria in an effort to manage the depletion of natural resources passed a legislation which provides the legal framework for the implementation of policies on environmental protection, natural resource conservation and sustainable development. Some of these policies include the command-and-control approach. This involves direct regulation with monitoring and enforcement system that makes use of regulatory instruments such as standard permits, licenses and capital punishment. The government also established reserves in different parts of the country. In this arrangement, large portions of land were set apart by the government with the objective of conserving biotic resources such as wild plants and animals protection from extinction and to produce timber on sustainable basis. The natives were paid royalties on the reserved areas and were allowed some portions for burial purposes and worshipping of their gods. (Adeyoju, 1975). Similarly, the government welcomed partnership with stakeholders towards establishing and developing game reserves and national parks where biological diversities were kept and reared. This effort saw the emergence of some large game reserves in Nigeria like the Yankari Game Reserve, Nekede Zoo, Oyo National Park etc. Taxes were waved off for individuals in this venture. Again, indiscriminate burning of bush, vegetation destruction and pollution of water was restricted by the Nigerian government. All these will lead to protection of biological diversity and natural resources of our country.

Pollution is a threat not only to natural resources but also to human existence and the society *шт путукфд*. Thus, the Nigerian government through the established agencies had made frantic efforts towards the pollution control management system established in the country. For example, the government introduced measures to reduce, if not eliminate air pollution from gas flaring. Devices for gas reuse became a necessity, required by Government to be installed at industrial companies. This device would prevent methane from reaching the atmosphere. After burning, gas is converted to heat, water and CO₂ which reduces pollution effects. Other industrial companies were demanded to install pollution abatement and waste regulation facilities in such a manner as would be determined by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency of Nigeria (FEPA). These facilities will take care of gaseous particles, liquid or solid untreated discharge.

As a tool of pollution prevention policy Government of Nigeria uses tax policy. For example, value added tax (VAT) exemption is granted by the federal government to Oil and Gas companies in respect to plants and equipments that are capable of re-injecting gas into the reservoirs. Again machinery, equipment or spare parts imported into Nigeria in connection with the processing and conversion of gas into electric power is exempted from custom duties. There were also emission charges for industrial companies. The higher level pollution attracts higher financial penalty and zero pollution level receives financial rewards. This mechanism was created for minimizing industrial pollution.

The government of Nigeria has made significant efforts to manage and protect their natural resources from degradation and pollution, yet 'much is left to be desired'. The federal government should embrace the idea of exchange of information, assistance and knowledge in natural resource management with advanced countries under same ecological conditions. The outcome of this collaboration would make for effective management of natural resources in the country. Furthermore, management and conservation of natural resources are not only a government business. Therefore, the authorities and departments concerned should engage in extensive mass awareness and training for the people and resource users. This corresponds with the UN conference on environmental development (UNCED) held in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where the role of indigenous knowledge and local people were recognized as being vital and indispensable in the management and conservation of natural resources. Also, the use of integrated resource management should be adopted. While desians in resource management are taken, costs and damage of altering one element of ecosystem must be considered. of the system. In this way, other natural resources could be conserved. Finally corruption should be checked among government institutions and personnel. Often, good government policies and efforts are thwarted due to corrupt personnel running for the government. These not withstanding the Nigerian Government has perspectives and lofty aims in managing the depletion of its natural resources.