
THE STATE, ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The paper examines the impact of the nature and character of the Nigerian state and its environmental policy on the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper notes that the undemocratic and corrupt nature of the Nigerian state have rendered impotent the environmental policy and as a consequence, the achievement of sustainable development seems to be a mirage. Secondary sources of data were relied upon in the paper. The paper is of the opinion that with sanitized democratic process coupled with strengthened institutions, the state in collaboration with the people can formulate and implement potent environmental policies that can protect the environment from harsh unfriendly environment practices which in form can guarantee the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper recommends among others, that the formulation and implementation of environmental policies should be pro-poor and the relevant institutions should be strengthened in order to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: *State; Environmental Policy; Sustainable Development, Democracy; Carrying Capacity of the Earth.*

INTRODUCTION

The inadequacy nature has placed on man has ostensibly led to the inter-dependence and the gregarious nature of man. Thus, man is naturally a social animal whose social interaction with his fellow man in society is aimed at self and collective actualization. However, given the individual differences in man and the ever burning desire for self-preservation and the protection of man's interest, there is the need for the social interaction to be regulated. It is in a bid to regulate the social interaction and enhance mutually beneficial, peaceful, egalitarian and conducive society that the state becomes a necessary product of society.

The state formulates and implements public policies in order to promote the welfare of the citizens. Environmental policy as a public policy is formulated and implemented by the state to protect and preserve the environment. The environment with its natural resources is supportive of man's survival here on earth. But the excessive exploitation of the natural resources coupled with unfriendly environmental practices such as gas flaring, bush burning, indiscriminate deforestation and dumping of refuse not only distorts the eco-system but also destroys the biodiversity necessary for the reinvigoration of the carrying capacity of the earth for development. Thus, development needs to be sustained. This means that while we presently exploit the natural resources of the environment, the needs of the future generation should not be compromised. It is against this backdrop that the paper takes a look at the Nigerian state and the formulation and implementation of environmental policy for the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF STATE

The state like some other concepts in social sciences has a slippery nature in terms of the difficulty in having one generally acceptable definition. Suffice it to say that in simple terms, the state is a political organization conferred with the authority to make laws, decisions, formulate public policies and implement same in order to facilitate a mutually beneficial, peaceful, egalitarian and conducive society. Consequently, in tandem with Aristotelian teleology, the state is the highest form of development of society where individual potential can be achieved. In affirming the sacrosanct nature of state and its importance in ordering society Hegel sees the state as “the March of God on earth” (Guaba, 1981: 124)¹.

For Alapiki (2010)², the state can be defined as the most inclusive or supreme organization within a particular territory which has formal institutions for regulating the formal relationship of citizen and persons within its jurisdiction. Again, Alapiki (2010), notes that the purpose of state creation by the skills and genius of statesmen was to ensure that in every society, there should be a single recognized body or sovereign whose decisions were recognized as having final authority over both secular and spiritual interests. It follows that the main thrust of this new conception of the state is the establishment of the tradition of respect for the rule of law. In the view of Weber, a state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory (Guaba 1981:116)³.

According to Geoffrey.K.Roberts (1971) in (Guaba,1981)⁴ a state is a territorial area in which a population is governed by set of political authorities, and which successfully claims the compliance of the citizenry for its laws, and is able to secure such compliance by its monopolistic control of legitimate force. Guaba,(1981)⁵ identified the elements of state such as population, territory, government and sovereignty.

From the different perspectives of the state, the idealist theory demands complete subordination of man to the authority and command of the state, without ensuring whether the actual government which makes such demands, conform to the image of the ideal state or not (Guaba, 1981)⁶. On the other hand, the Marxist theory attributes any imperfection of government to the state itself. According to the Marxist, so long as society is divided into dominant and dependent classes, any government is bound to serve as an instrument of the dominant class. Thus, Marxist theory regards the state itself as an instrument of the class exploitation, and advocates transformation, and ultimate withering away of the state in order to restore ‘authority’ to a classless society. [Guaba, 1981]⁷. For the liberal democratic theory, the state is treated as a product of the will of the society, an instrument of ‘conflict resolution’ and of securing the common interest. It authorizes society to

¹ Guaba (1981) on Introduction to Political Theory

² Alapiki, H.E (2010) on Politics and Governance in Nigeria

³ Guaba (1981) on Introduction to Political Theory

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

constitute a government by free choice, and demands that the government should be responsible to the people, and should work with the continuous consent of the people [Guaba, 1981]⁸. From the foregoing, it is evident that the state is a symbol of authority. The state not only commands the respect and obedience of the citizens, it also in turn performs some basic functions that can reinforce the respect and obedience of its citizens. Some basic functions include –the protection of lives and property, promotion of the welfare of the citizens, maintenance of law and order, fair and equitable distribution of state resources, and the promotion of good governance by formulating and implementing policies and programmes that have direct bearing on the lives of the people.

The state through its government formulates and implements public policies and programmes that are people oriented. Thus, the state exist for the interest of the people and those who occupy state institutions must act in conformity with the general will of the people. This view was corroborated by Pierson [1996]⁹ when he said that “but it is widely argued that, within a constitutional order, those who exercise state power must do so in ways which are themselves lawful, constitutional and constrained by publicly acknowledged procedures. They are generally seen to act not upon a personal bias but rather because of their public positions as the occupants of particular offices of state”.

Pierson [1996]¹⁰ also noted that it is of the essence that under a law governed regime, politicians should themselves be subject to the constitutional order and the laws which they have themselves helped to make and enforce. In addition, Pierson, [1996]¹¹ observed that what is most characteristic of the modern state is not just the greater weight given to legal authority to the state’s embodiment of abstract legal principles enforced through an impartial bureaucratic and judicial apparatus but above all, to the idea that the state embodies and expresses the (sovereign) will of the people. The state therefore becomes a veritable instrument through which the potential of the individuals can be achieved. Indeed it guarantees “the greatest good for the greatest number”.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

It should be noted that the achievement of individual potential through the state is a function of the carrying capacity of the earth (environment). The environment provides the required resources necessary for the actualization of individual potential. As man applies his labour power on nature in order to derive value for his survival, resources are not only depleted, but there is also concomitant distortion of the ecosystem and destruction of the biodiversity. The implication is that with excessive and indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources, the natural resources may go into extinction, and the environment in what may be considered as reprisal attack becomes hostile to man. For instance, the industrial and oil exploitation activities have polluted the environment through the discharge of Chlorofluoro carbons, methane gas and nitrogen oxides into the atmosphere. This has led to such deleterious effects as acid rain, global warming and the depletion of ozone layer (that layer that shields the earth from the direct effect of radioactive rays of the sun).

⁸ Ibid

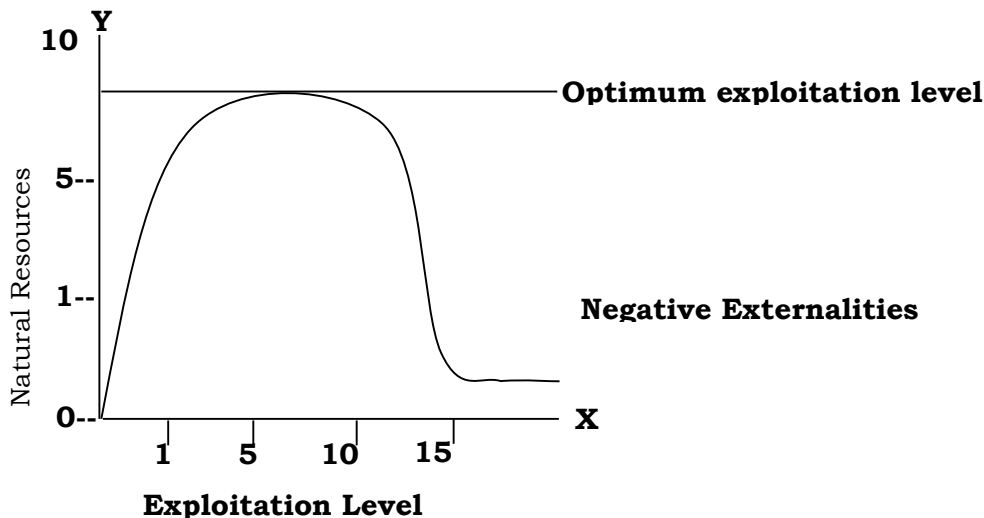
⁹ Pierson (1996)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

There is also the pollution of land and water through oil spillage. This renders infertile agricultural lands and destroys aquatic bodies. Again is the fact that excessive and indiscriminate deforestation and bush burning destroys the vegetative cover of the earth, thereby exposing the earth to leaching, erosion and flooding which are catastrophic to human existence.

In order to curb the excessive and indiscriminate exploitation of the environment, the state which is seen as the vanguard of the good life of the people formulates and implements environmental policy. Environmental policy is therefore formulated and implemented by the state in order to facilitate effective environmental management. This can ensure the preservation of the environment not only for the present generation but also for the future generation. It should be noted that environmental policy means all the actions taken by the government to protect and preserve the environment. The necessity of environmental policy is predicated on the fact that the carrying capacity of the earth is limited. This means that the more the environment, (the earth) is exploited, the more it attains its carrying capacity limit. Beyond the carrying capacity of the earth, the natural resources diminish and the earth begins to exhibit negative externalities which threaten the existence of man on earth. Such negative externalities may include oil spillage, erosion and flooding, pollution of the atmosphere which can lead to global warming, acid rain, depletion of ozone layer and ultimately climate change. The exploitation of natural resources can be demonstrated graphically.



It is therefore the basic function of environmental policy to regulate the exploitation of the environment in order not to exceed the optimum exploitation level. In fact environmental policy ensures that there is development without destruction. The development must be futuristic and sustained in order to take care of the needs of future generation. Thus, sustainable development is a product of environmental policy. However, it is not enough to have well-articulated environmental policy, but also important is the effectiveness of the institutional arrangements and the mobilization of machinery and resources for its effective implementation.

The articulation and effective implementation of environmental policy should take into consideration some predisposing factors. For example, population growth rate should be check

mated. This is premised on the fact that the more the population, the more the exploitation of natural resources for survival, given the finite nature of natural resources. But it is worthy of note that naturally when, for instance, 10 people share 30 loaves of bread, they will have 3 loaves of bread each. But if the same 30 loaves of bread are shared by 60 people, they will not have enough to eat. This may lead to the excessive exploitation of the raw materials for the baking of bread. In addition, we are not losing sight of the fact that a faulty distributive mechanism imposed on the people as a result of the kleptomaniac tendencies of the ruling elites can drastically reduce the impact of increase in gross domestic product (GDP) on the economic well-being of the people. The effect is that few people become richer while the majority becomes poor.

Poverty is another predisposing factor, it has been argued that the more the people are poor, the more they fall back on crude means of exploiting natural resources. This can lead to excessive and indiscriminate deforestation, bush burning, overgrazing and indiscriminate refuse dumping. But we make haste to add that even in developed societies, given their scientific and technological advancement, their industrial activities and the exploitation of crude oil have led to the pollution of the environment. Thus, it appears poverty and development do not respect the environment. But the only thing that can cage them is well-articulated and implemented environmental policy. The participation of the people in the articulation and implementation of environmental policy is a *sine qua non* of the effectiveness of environmental policy in enhancing effective environmental management for the achievement of sustainable development. The participation of the people in the formulation and implementation of environmental policy is a reflection of their democratic culture. The more democratic a state is, the more the people participate in the formulation and implementation of environmental policy. Thus, the character of the state (as it finds expression in the behavior of the actors of the state) will go a long way to determine the efficacy of environmental policy.

The Nigerian state realizing the importance of the environment and the need to protect and preserve the environment has formulated some environmental policies such as National Policy on Erosion and Flood Control, The Prevention of Pollution of Sea and Land 1954 (Amended 1962), Petroleum Regulation 1967, Oil in Navigable Waters Decree No 34 1968 among others. But it appears the more these environmental policies are formulated, the more the Nigerian environment is degraded, particularly in the Niger Delta Region. The over celebrated cases of oil spillages, gas flaring, erosion and flooding and others are proof of the impotency of the environmental policies in enhancing effective environmental management in Nigeria.

The impotency of the environmental policy to protect the environment in Nigeria is a reflection of the inability of the state to effectively implement environmental policies. The inability of the Nigerian state to effectively implement environmental policies is in turn a reflection of the character of the state. The state and its apparatuses are seen as means through which actors of the state enrich themselves.

This behavior of the actors of Nigerian state is a demonstration of the mode of elite formation in Nigeria which is related to its colonial history in which the indigenous elite was excluded from “the commanding heights” of the economy, the process of decolonization and independence,

whereby economically weak but politically powerful elites pursue economic and selfish ends (Arokoyu and Ibani, 2004)¹².

With this brazen pursuit of economic and selfish interest of the ruling elites, the state and its institutions became hostile to democracy as the ruling elites would want to control these institutions at all cost. The implication is that political sovereignty of the people has been taken away from them as the people (Nigerians) can no longer determine who becomes their leader. This is made possible by the plethora of electoral frauds that characterize elections in Nigeria (Oddih, 2007)¹³. The implication is that the people were distanced from the process of decision making and policy formulation and implementation. Again is the fact that, although in some cases, policies are formulated for the interest of the people, but it is often the case that the implementation of these policies, particularly environmental policies do not consider the interest of the people.

The over celebrated cases of life threatening erosion and flood, gas flaring and oil spillages in Ogoni land and other parts of the Niger Delta are indications of the inability of the state to effectively implementation environmental policies in Nigeria thereby leading to environmental policy failure. The inability can be seen from the conflict of standard among the different tiers of government. For instance, the Lagos state Environmental Pollution Edict No. 13, August 22, 1989 empowers the Lagos state, Ministry of Environmental and Physical Planning to establish effluent discharges standards. The standards established were higher than those set by FEPA (Falomo, 1977) in Arokoyu and Ibani (2004)¹⁴; and this generated some crisis within the industrialestablishments in Lagos state as to which of the two standards to obey. Also, serious overlaps and role conflicts were also noted at the state Local Government levels between the state Environmental Protection Agencies, the Ministry of Health and the waste Management Authorities (Falomo, 1977) in Arokoyu and Ibani, (2004)¹⁵.

The case of conflict of standard between Lagos state Ministry of Environment and FEPA is a clear case of how enforcement of environmental policy can be trapped by the politics of inter-governmental relations, thus rendering the enforcement of effective administration of environmental standards and laws largely impotent in regulating and protecting the environment (Arokoyu and Ibani, 2004)¹⁶. Again is the fact that considering the inordinate ambition of the actors of the Nigerian state to enrich themselves, corruption becomes their watchword, for instance, Arokoyu and Ibani, (2004)¹⁷ noted that state projects are sometimes built without regard to existing environmental regulations because some top officials are getting percentages from the contracting firms, and relevant public office holders divert funds earmarked for environmental projects.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Nigerian state, rather than play ancillary roles that can enhance effective formulation and implementation of environmental policy for the achievement of sustainable development has become obstacle to the achievement of sustainable development.

¹² Arokoyu & Ibani (2004) on Environmental Regulations and the Nigeria Environment

¹³ Oddih (2007) on Electoral Fraud and the Democratic process: lesson from the 2003 Elections.

¹⁴ Arokoyu & Ibani (2004) on Environmental Regulations and the Nigeria Environment

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

Apart from the anti-democratic posture of the Nigerian state, the conflict arising from the unhealthy politics of inter-governmental relations and the corrupt practices of the actors of Nigerians state have asphyxiated environmental policies. The effect is that these environmental policies become impotent in protecting the environment and the attainment of sustainable development seems to be a mirage.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOME ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA

The need to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development has led to the formulation and implementation of environmental policies in order to regulate human activities. Often times human activities lead to unfriendly environmental practices which degrade the environment thereby reducing the carrying capacity of the earth to support life. Given the importance of environmental policy, its formulation and implementation in Nigeria, the seemingly intractable environmental challenges in Nigeria calls for the review of the environmental policies in Nigeria. The question that boggles the mind is, why, inspite of the environmental policies, the Nigerian environment, particularly in the Niger Delta region is degraded. It is in an attempt to answer this question that the paper analyses some environmental policies. The two environmental policies chosen for analysis are National Erosion and Flood Control Policy and Agricultural policy. The choice was informed by the prevalent unfriendly environmental practices in these areas which directly affect the lives of the people.

NATIONAL EROSION AND FLOOD CONTROL POLICY

Erosion and Flood are twin natural disasters that encumber the quest for sustainable development. Apart from washing away top soil nutrients necessary for increased agricultural productivity, erosion particularly gully erosion has displaced many people in Nigeria. For instance, according to Kio and Ogrigiri (1990)¹⁸, in November, 1988 there was a massive land subsidence at Nanka, Agula Local Government Area of Anambra state involving the down throw of a block of land to a depth of 20m from ground and producing a temporary terrace adjoining the Nanka erosion complex. In northern Nigeria, the main natural cause of erosion is wind because of the prevailing arid conditions and the loose sandy soil which characterize several semi-arid locations (Kio and Ogrigiri, 1990)¹⁹. There are also cases of erosion in Port Harcourt, Yenagoa and other parts of the Niger Delta Region.

Flood on the other hand occurs when ponds, lakes, riverbeds, dams, soil and vegetation cannot absorb all the water. Thus, water runs off the land in quantities that cannot be carried within stream channels or retrained in natural ponds, lakes and man-made reservoirs (Bariweni, Tawari and Abowei, 2012)²⁰. These excesses of water running off their natural and man-made reservoirs as a result of torrential rain and rise in sea level, especially at the flood areas leads to flood. The cause of flood can be attributed to natural factor and human activities such as bush burning, deforestation,

¹⁸ Kio & Ogrigiri (1990) on Controlling the Threat and Menace of Desertification and Erosion in Nigeria

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Bariweni, Tawari & Abowei (2012) on Some Delta Environmental Effects of Flooding in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

improper farm practices and more importantly, construction activities i.e building of roads, houses and industries.(Aletan, Martins and Idowu, 2011)²¹. Although, it has been noted that flood water flow into the banks, sand, silt and debris are deposited into the surrounding land. After the river water subsided and go back to the its normal flow, the deposited materials will help make the land richer or more fertile. The organic materials and minerals deposited by the river water keep the soil fertile and productive (Abowei and Sikoki, 2005 in (Bariweni, Tawari and Abowei, 2012)²². However, the devastating effect of flood seems to outweigh the good effect. Flood has brought untold hardship, loss of property and lives. For instance, it was reported that at least 102 people are now thought to have been killed by flood in and around the south-western Nigerian city of Ibadan. Flood took a deadly toll in north-eastern Nigeria in august,2011. Torrential rains pushed rivers over their banks, collapsed mud houses, and washed away livestock (Bariweni,Tawari and Abowei, 2012)²³.

It was reported that in the northern state of Sokoto, Nigeria in September,2010 flooding in a place called Kagara, which is a small village near Goronyotown worsened significantly. The houses of the inhabitants, their crops and storage of food were completely destroyed. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced, roads, trees, buildings were submerged. The flood led to the loss of thousands of houses and farm lands in 11 local government areas of the state. Other areas affected by the disaster include-isa,kebbe,sokoto- north and sokoto-south, Rabah, Binji, Goronyo, Silame, Shagariand Kware Local Government councils. Unconfirmed reports put the death toll at 49 while about 50 villages were submerged and more than 130,000 people displaced (Etuonovbe, 2011)²⁴. In what seems like wild fire, about 90 communities in Kogi State, particularly in Lokoja, Ibaji, and Kogi Local Government Areas of the state were sacked by the raging flood which displaced over 500,000 people. In some areas, only farmlands were affected while in others both houses and farmlands were all swept away (Etuonovbe 2011)²⁵. Bayelsa state was affected. Flood sacked over 5,000 people in two communities in Sagbama and Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Areas of the state. The flood which occurred as a result of the over flow of river nun affected Okorozi Community in Sagbama and Odi in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local government areas. In Olorobi community, many homes were affected, forcing them to paddle their canoes to neighbouring communities in search of refuge.

In 2012, the unprecedented debacle of flood in Nigeria affected some communities in rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Lagos, Oyo, Kebbi, Sokoto, Kogi, Cross River, Anambra, Kwara, and others. Most of the inhabitants of these states were forced to be refugees in their own land as they clustered in relief camps. The federal government of Nigeria under the leadership of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was jolted. The sum of ₦35 billion was released and shared to the affected states according to the severity of the flood in each affected states.

²¹ Aletan & Idowu (2011) on Mitigating the Effects of Floods and Erosion in the Niger South Catchment Area through Integrated Flood Management (IFM)

²² Bariweni, Tawari & Abowei (2012) on Some Delta Environmental Effects of Flooding in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

²³ Bariweni, Tawari & Abowei (2012) on Some Delta Environmental Effects of Flooding in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

²⁴ Etuonovbe, A.K. (2011) on The devastating Effect of Flooding in Nigeria

²⁵ Ibid

The above instances of flood and others in Nigeria prove the fact that erosion and flood are not only a threat to the environment but also the lives of Nigerians. Thus, erosion and flood render illusory the quest for sustainable development in Nigeria. The devastating effects of gully erosion on available land space, the washing away of top soil nutrients, the submerging of homes and farms and the destructions of lives and property by erosion and flood reduce the capacity of the environment to meet the needs of present and future generation.

It is against this backdrop that the federal government of Nigeria formulated and promulgated the National Erosion and Flood Control Policy. The policy was formulated by Federal Ministry of Environment in March, 2005. In the past, efforts made to control erosion and flood in Nigeria appear un-coordinated, poorly funded and discontinuous, leading to unsatisfactory results. It is the focus of the National Policy on Erosion and Flood to meaningfully intervene amidst an escalating crisis of soil erosion and flood in order to achieve the nations quest for sustainable development. Obasanjo (2005)²⁶ in his preface to the National Policy on Erosion and Flood Control succinctly captures the mind of the policy when he said inter alia that “the national policy on erosion and flood control is intended to coordinate and promote programmes that would lead to the eventual minimization of soil erosion and flood hazards”.

Furthermore, Obasanjo (2005)²⁷ observed that the National Policy advocates a proactive approach in the management of our river systems to reduce the potential for flooding in the future and to design our recovery efforts following flood events. Unfortunately, apart from other erosion and flood incidents, the devastating 2012 flood in Nigeria was not mainly as a result of heavy rain fall (flash flood) but also due to human activities. The question is, why is it that the National Erosion and Flood Control Policy could not regulate these human activities at least to forestall and mitigate the harsh effects of the 2012 flood in Nigeria.

The policy thrust of the National Erosion and Flood Control Policy focuses on ensuring coordinated and systematic measures in the management of erosion and flood problems. To ensure sustainability, the policy will encourage participatory approach that involves all stakeholders including community members and relevant Sectorial Ministries as well as appropriate institutions. The policy objectives are as follows:

- i. Develop integrated programmes for addressing the impact arising from hydrological hazards of soil erosion and floods.
- ii. Evolve mechanism for forecasting, monitoring and control of soil erosion and flood
- iii. Promote inter and intra agency linkages.
- iv. Promote and strengthen training at all levels of erosion and flood prevention, management and control
- v. Conduct national inventory/survey of all areas devastated by soil erosion and flood, and develop a national data bank
- vi. Formulate and review land use laws and regulations and ensure the enforcement of these laws and regulations relating to soil and water conservation.

²⁶ Obasanjo (2005) on National Policy on Erosion and Flood Control

²⁷ Obasanjo (2005) on National Policy on Erosion and Flood Control

vii. Raise public awareness and promote understanding of the linkages between soil erosion and flood and environmental degradation as well as encouraging grassroots participation in soil erosion and flood management.

From the policy thrust and indeed the objectives of the National Erosion and Flood Control Policy, emphasis is placed on participating approach, especially at the grassroots level. This presupposes the raising of public awareness and the promotion of understanding of the linkages between soil erosion and flood and environmental degradation. Contrary to this expectation is the fact that the spate of flood and erosion in Nigeria has proved that the National Erosion and Flood Control Policy is incapable of restoring serenity to our environment. The indiscriminate blocking of waterways through indiscriminate refuse dumps and construction activities by individuals, corporate organizations and government agencies is an indication that the people are either ignorant of the aftermath of their unfriendly environmental practices or are blindfolded by selfish and mundane interest. The absence or utter neglect of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports during construction activities is proof of ignorance. The continuous indulgence of the people in such unfriendly environmental practices like bush burning, deforestation and overgrazing is an attestation to the fact that the people are still wallowing in seemingly abysmal ignorance. The point is that about seven years after the formulation of the National Policy on Erosion and Flood control, most Nigerians are still ignorant of the consequences of their human activities on the environment. It has been observed that there is the innate irresistible urge to dam the consequences. This is predicated on the attitude of the mind which reflects the prevailing values and norms. The norms and values constitute the social dynamics of the environment which can influence the environment positively or negatively. For instance, it is only lunatics or nonentities who may not know that when water ways are blocked, water can find other ways and this can lead to the flooding of the immediate environment. Again is the fact that given the rate of poverty prompted by harsh economic realities with its attendant population pressure and the desire to survive, people tend to live in any available space. In most cases close to the banks of the river which are susceptible to flood when the river overflows its banks.

The emphasis here is that apart from the fact the policy provided as part of the objectives the need to raise awareness (which is yet on a low ebb), there is also the need for change of attitude on the part of most Nigerians which was not captured by the policy not only by the agents of socialization but also by laws and regulations that can checkmate the excesses of man particularly on the environment. In pursuance of this objective, the policy provided that there should be the formulation and review of land use laws and regulations.

However, it is not just the formulation and review of land use laws and regulations but the strict adherence of these land use laws and regulations. The actors of Nigerian state are products of weak economic foundation. During the process of decolonization and independence, they were not allowed access to the commanding height of the economy. Thus, they became economically weak but politically strong. Consequently, they (actors of Nigeria state) manipulated political power an institutions to pursue economic and selfish ends. In tandem with their selfish interest, they see the state and its apparatuses as means of amassing wealth and ascendancy to state power and institutions as do-or-die affair. The effect is that majority of the people are excluded from decision-making and are also made to bear the brunt of accumulating tendencies of the ruling elites (actors

of Nigerian state). The actors of Nigeria state also manipulate institutions and have a very little regard for constitutional rules and rule of law. It follows that the enforcement of land use laws and regulations are undermined through the instrumentality of the state bureaucracy. For example, where public buildings are constructed without any regard to environmental regulations. Again, is the fact that powerful people in government and their associates have converted parks and children's playground to private use. It has been argued that in some quarters that state projects are sometimes built without regard to existing environmental regulations because some top officials are getting percentages from the contracting firms (Arokoyu and Ibani 2004)²⁸.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that adequate actions have not been taken to actualize the objectives of the National Policy on Erosion and Flood Control in Nigeria. The policy is mere paper work which has not been given the full force it deserves in order to curb and mitigate the harsh effect of erosion and flood in Nigeria particularly in the Niger Delta region.

THE NEW NIGERIA AGRICULTURAL POLICY

The new Nigerian Agricultural POLICY document was launched in 2001. It is a precipitate of the previous agricultural policy document which was formalised in 1988. The new policy document bears most of the features of the old one, but with more focused direction and better articulation. It should be noted that the choice of agricultural policy has become pertinent considering the fact that agriculture is the basic source of livelihood of the people of Niger Delta. The way agricultural activities are carried out in Niger Delta region, to an extent, affects the environment. For instance, it is a known fact that bush burning and deforestation which are practised in the Niger Delta region are veritable means of pollution and distortion of the ecosystem, thereby, degrading the environment. Furthermore, the analysis of the agricultural policy becomes imperative when one considers the high poverty level, increasing population and the adoption of crude methods of farming. The combination of these factors exerts untold pressure on the land. This pressure on the land not only reduces or vitiates the carrying capacity of the land to support agricultural activities but also creates land squeeze which has become a source of communal conflict and general insecurity.

It is in a bid to curtail the excessive pressure on land and enhance increased agricultural production that necessitated the formulation of an agricultural policy. Apart from the above manifest reasons, it is also latent that agricultural policy was formulated to ensure the sustainable utilization of land and preserve the environment. These and other reasons are encapsulated in the objectives of the new agricultural policy. The objectives are stated as follows:

- i. The achievement of self-sufficiency in basic food supply and attainment of food security.
- ii. Increased production of agricultural raw materials for industries.
- iii. Increased production and processing of exports crops, using improved production and processing technologies.
- iv. Generating gainful employment.

²⁸ Arokoyu & Ibani (2004) on Environmental Regulations and the Nigeria Environment

- v. Rational utilization of agricultural resources, improved protection of agricultural land resources from drought, dessert encroachment, soil erosion and flood, and the general preservation of the environment for the sustainability of agricultural production.
- vi. Promotion of increased application of modern technology to agricultural production.
- vii. Improvement in the quality of life of rural dwellers.

Whereas the focus of this analysis and indeed this paper is not within the parlance of agricultural science, but suffice it to say that objectives i-ii seem to exert more pressure on the land. However, objectives iii appears to facilitate the effects of objectives i and ii by emphasizing on increased production and processing of expert crops, using improved production and processing technologies. The question that boggles the mind is, how much of these technologies have been made accessible to the rural farmers in Nigeria and indeed in the Niger Delta region. It is common knowledge that more than 80% of farmers in Nigeria adopt crude methods of farming. Yet what is uppermost in the mind of Nigerian government and the rural farmers is how to achieve objectives i and ii. The implication is that the land becomes vulnerable to the rude shock of crude farming methods with little or no shock absorber, thereby undermining the sustainability of the land and the consequent preservation of the environment.

Looking at objective v, it is obvious that the agricultural policy recognizes the need for general preservation of the environment for the sustainability of agricultural production. Objective v also provided for the rational utilization of agricultural resource, improved protection of agricultural land resources from drought, dessert encroachment, soil erosion and flood.

It should be reiterated that the focus of the study is to x-ray the efficiency of environmental policy in preserving the environment for the ultimate achievement of environmental policy in Nigeria. Recall that the agricultural policy in its objective v was formulated to enhance the protection of agricultural land resources from drought, soil erosion and flood. However, a cursory look generally at the agricultural land resources in Nigeria shows how ravaged and impoverished agricultural land resources are. For instance in the Northern part of Nigeria, the alarming rate of drought and dessert encroachment poses a serious threat not only to the agricultural land resources but also to the environment. It is a clear evidence that 350,000 hectares of agricultural land resources are being destroyed by drought and dessert encroachment (<http://www.vanguardngr.com>)²⁹. The implication is that apart from the fact that it reduces drastically the available agriculture land resources for agricultural production, it also reduces the living space, which can lead to land squeeze and consequently communal ethnic conflict and general insecurity and more hazardous impact on the environment. In the Niger delta region of Nigeria, soil erosion and flood are ravaging agricultural land resources. For example, 75% of the agricultural land resources are lost to soil erosion and flood. Particularly in 2012, lives, property and agricultural resources were lost as a result of flood. From the foregoing, it is apparent that the agricultural policy is yet to achieve one of its objectives which is improved protection of agricultural land resources from drought, desert encroachment, soil erosion and flood. The reason for the failure of the agricultural policy in facilitating improved protection of agricultural land resources is because the policy seems to be more concerned and focused on increased agricultural productivity without corresponding concern on the impact on the

²⁹ <http://www.vanguardngr.com>

welfare of the people, and the environment. Corroborating the above view, the stakeholders' perspective on the effectiveness of policies, regulations and institutions on Nigeria's agriculture states that:

It can be seen that current policies are more effective in the primary production subsector of agriculture than in the downstream subsector. Impact of policies on the welfare status of the people and on the environment remains weak. In general, the thrust of the effective policies is on food self-sufficiency as most of these policies have bearing on boosting agricultural production for food self-sufficiency (www.nipc.gov.ng)³⁰.

Another reason for the failure of the agricultural policy is that one of its objectives which is the improvement in the quality of life of rural dwellers is yet to be achieved, particularly in the Niger Delta region. The high rate of poverty coupled with the corresponding infrastructural decay in the Niger Delta region is a pointer to the failure of agricultural policy. According to (NDDC, 2001)³¹ there is widespread poverty with about 70 percent of the population below poverty line in the Niger Delta region.

Furthermore, the agricultural policy failed to emphasize on the participation of the rural dweller while at the same time, as one of its objectives, emphasized the promotion of the increased application of modern technology to agricultural production. It is well known fact that the rural dwellers (farmers) are not used to modern technology and if they are not properly schooled on, and integrated into, the application and benefit of agricultural production, it may lead to sheer waste of time and resources in the application of modern technology to agriculture. This will obviously reinforce the crude agricultural practices which would have negative impacts on the environment and production. In addition, the huge revenue from oil over time had infused negative mentality in both the government and the people (the ruled) which is working against increased agricultural productivity. This is evident in the meager budget estimates for agriculture and abandonment of the land by the people for oil company jobs, contracts and compensation. Contrary to this meager budget allocation to agriculture, the AU Maputo declaration on agriculture, to which Nigeria is a signatory urged member states to commit at least 10 percent of national budgetary resources to agriculture and rural development policy implementation within five years. The 2010 budgetary allocation of N148,715,672,952 to agriculture was considered insufficient, especially as the sum represents only 3.7 percent of the total budget of N4,079,645,724,257 proposed for the 2010 fiscal year (Egbe, 2012)³². The N4.92 trillion 2013 budget is another clear case of conspiracy by the actors of Nigeria state to continuously pay lip service to, and if possible asphyxiate the agricultural sector. A cursory look at some key allocations in the 2013 budget proposal will be more convincing;

³⁰ www.nipc.gov.ng

³¹ NDDC (2001)

³² Egbe (2012) on Nigerian State Violence against Agriculture in the Niger Delta

Works	₦183.5 billion
Power	₦74.26 billion
Education	₦426.53 billion
Health	₦279.23 billion
Defence	₦348.91 billion
Police	₦348.91 billion
Agriculture and rural development	₦81.41 billion

More worrisome is the fact that in 2014 budget, agriculture got only ₦36,260,705,926. The alarming reduction in the budgetary allocations to agriculture over the years is a clear indication that the Nigerian state is not seriously committed to the development of the agricultural sector and subsequent diversification of the economy and rural development. It is therefore no longer surprising to observe that the environment which is a pillar of agriculture is not given the due attention and protection it deserves. This partly explains why oil exploration and exploitation activities have been going on unfettered in the Niger Delta without considering their adverse effects on the environment.

As a follow up, the new agricultural policy consciously paid little or no attention to the sustainable management of the environment. A look at the survey carried out to examine the effectiveness or otherwise of policies and regulations in different areas of agriculture is a pointer. See survey results below.

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS	RANK	POSITION
Agricultural inputs supply farmers	2.83	4
Agricultural input demand farmers	2.17	2
Foreign investment in agriculture	8.83	20
Domestic investment in agriculture	4.00	5
Commercialization of agriculture	6.17	14
Agricultural production for domestic market	1.83	1
Agricultural production for export market	5.33	8
Agricultural commodity storage	7.17	18
Agricultural commodity transport, distribution and information	6.50	16
Domestic agricultural commodity trade	2.67	3
Agricultural commodity export	5.83	11
Agricultural commodity utilization	5.50	9
Agricultural research and technology development	4.33	7
Agricultural technology adoption	4.00	5
Food security	5.50	9
Poverty reduction	5.83	11
Closing gender gap	6.00	13
Protection/welfare of vulnerable groups	6.67	17
Sustainable environmental management	7.5	19

Source: Olawumi, (2009:10) in (Egbe, 2012) N/B-the lower the value, the better

From the table, it is obvious that sustainable environmental management which took the 19th position was not given the due position it deserves as the pillar of agricultural activities. Also from the table above, agricultural production for domestic market took the 1st position. This means that the greatest concern of the new agricultural policy is to enhance increased agricultural production for local consumption. This appears to be a contradiction of sorts with the 19th position for sustainable environmental management. The contradiction stems from the fact that the achievement of increased agricultural production for domestic market may become illusory when the environment is not adequately sustainably managed.

The poor state of agriculture in Africa was noted by (Gopep, Dada and Kayode, 2012)³³ when they said that agriculture in Africa is predominantly by human power. In their words, they also observed that; “investment in agricultural sector in most of the African countries is still grossly underdeveloped considering the fact that agriculture is backed with good policy documents and statements, implementation of such policies is the case. Most African countries are very good in policy making but poor in policy implementation”. The poor implementation of environmental policies has adversely affected the environment and by extension agricultural activities and productivity in Nigeria. It is no longer news to see the dwindling annual budget allocation to agriculture by Nigeria state. The reason may be that it will amount to sheer waste of resources to increase budgetary allocation to agriculture when the environment is degraded.

THE WAY FORWARD

The centrality of the state to harness resources for the welfare of the people cannot be overemphasized. The state can do this by formulating and implementing public policies, particularly environmental policies that have direct positive bearing on the lives of the people. The state can achieve this feat when it is democratized. Democracy demands that the people decide who becomes their leader and the leader in turn must not only be answerable to the people but also responsive and responsible to the yearnings and aspirations of the people. The formulation and implementation of environmental policy and indeed other public policies must be pro-poor. This means that the people must participate in the formulation and implementation of environmental policy and their interests and welfare taken into consideration. Again, there should be effective institutional arrangements put in place to coordinate and give fillip to the formulation and implementation of environmental policies. There should be enforceable, environmental laws to checkmate unfriendly environmental practices. This means that the judiciary should be virile and independent. There is also the need for extensive environmental awareness campaign that can educate the people on the gains of friendly environmental practices. Environment based organizations should be formed not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas in order to complement the efforts of government in protecting the environment.

³³ Gopep, Dada, & Kayode (2012) on Mechanization, A pre-requisite to sustainable Agricultural Development in Africa

CONCLUSION

In spite of the litany of environmental policies and laws, the environment in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region is degraded. This is due to environmental policy failure anchored and the inability of the state (through its actors) to live to its responsibilities in responding to the felt needs of the people. Institutional failure is also part of this irresponsibility on the part of the Nigerian state. Thus, what is often noticed is a debilitating fire-brigade approach to environmental problems. The implication of the aforementioned is that environmental policy become too weak to protect environment from unfriendly environmental practices and an unprotected environment cannot guarantee sustainable development in Nigeria.

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