

Chapter 2

Some Aspects of Natural Resource Exploitation and Management in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Natural resources provide the all-important basis for human existence and civilization. Natural resources management has several implications for human security and public safety. A quality environment supports virile natural resources, which provide the necessary goods and services to satisfy life quality needs and mitigate famine and food shortages and their concomitant effects, including food riots and public disorder. Poorly managed and severely degraded natural resources systems will interfere with other systems, such as the climate, to produce resource conflicts and exacerbate human insecurity and undermine public safety. Africa is highly vulnerable to natural resource degradation and its concomitant impacts, a situation that has deepened the existing poverty-environment-human security linkages. This chapter explores the dimension of natural resources and natural resource management, its implications on livelihoods and conflicts, human security and public safety, and its contexts in Africa in general with particular reference to Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In no other continent is the strong nexus between the natural resources, environment, livelihoods, poverty, food security, human security and public safety better exemplified than Africa. Livelihoods in the vast rural interiors of Africa are tied to resources of nature. More than ever before, harsh political, economic and social conditions and low level of technology have considerably diminished people's resilience and make them vulnerable to impacts of global environmental change. Although indigenous societies across Africa are known for their resilience and have survived changes for thousands of years based on

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traditional coping strategies, increasing population and diminishing natural resources - especially water and agricultural and grazing lands – has become additional stressor that have stretched the traditional resilience to the hilt. Accelerated land and water degradation, increasing aridity and competition for finite resources are impacting the social fabric and increasing resource conflicts. This further drives the flywheel of poverty and human insecurity and public safety concerns across the continent.

Land is Africa's most important resources. Africa is a massive continent in size and population. With about 30.3million square kilometers (22% of the world's land area) and over one billion people across 58 sovereign states. Africa remains a land of tremendous potentials in material (natural) resources. Half of the world's usable arable lands are in Africa (AfDB, 2016). About 70% of Africa's land is communally owned or under customary tenure (Peters, 2006). Africa's land resource is increasingly affected by the competition of mutually exclusive uses. The sustainability of natural goods and services depend to a large extent on the natural resources governance arrangement (ownership and access regime). Land resources in most rural Africa are regarded as common pool resources where exclusion is difficult, and their use is rivalrous. Poor natural resource governance and management drives conflicts and creates the tragedy of the commons with attendant composite environmental, social and public safety challenges.

Nigeria is Africa's most populated country with about 183.6 million in 2015 (representing 15.4% of Africa) and an annual growth rate of 2.8% (CBN, 2015). It is Africa's 14th largest country in terms of land mass with 923,768 km² (consisting of 909,890 km² of land area and 13,879 km² of water area). The average population density is 200.1 persons/km² and land per capital is 0.507ha in 2015. Nigeria has about 71.2 million hectares of cultivable land (Adeniyi, 2002) but with only 34 million hectares actually under cultivation. This makes the country richly endowed in land resources which are still highly underutilized like in most other countries of Africa. Nigeria spans over 10 degrees of latitude which presents a wide range of climatic, vegetation and soil conditions that provide great potentials for agricultural production. This rich renewable natural resource base is also complemented by rich mineral resources including energy resources, metallic minerals and non-metallic minerals. Despite these huge potential, Nigeria is plagued by natural resource management issues including poor resource governance, unsustainable exploitation, land and environmental degradation, unsustainable resource management, and resource conflicts. Thus, Nigeria is also plagued by the 'rich but poor' and 'resource curse' syndrome that pervades the African landscape.

The objective of this chapter is to explore the dimensions of natural resources issues including livelihood, resource governance and management, and resource conflicts in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular. Section two sets the context for Africa and Nigeria in terms of natural resources and the new resource exploitation drive, section three deals with the main issues including contextualizing natural resources and natural resource management and rural livelihoods, as well as resource conflicts and its connection with public safety in Africa and Nigeria. The last sections highlight some solutions and recommendations, future research directions and conclusions.

BACKGROUND

Several African countries have large tracts of cultivable land, something that is at a premium in most developed countries. Thus in a new deal being offered African countries, in recent years, millions of hectares of land are being leased on a long-term basis by nations as well as private corporations outside Africa (Mbow, 2010). Africa has become the new frontier and a beacon for land grabbing by the de-

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