

Chapter 11

Climate Change and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Limitations and Opportunities

Ighodalo Bassey Akhakpe
Lagos State University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The chapter assesses the nature and effects of climate change on sustainable development in Nigeria. It observes that climate change has a multifarious effect not only on the environment but also on the socio-economic life of the people. Therefore, if sustainable development is to be realized in the country, climate change should be properly managed through extant public policies. However, if government track records on policies and program implementations is anything to go by, the future of sustainable development is gloomy. This makes an interrogation of the interface between climate change and sustainable development germane. The chapter observes that while government has shown willingness to manage climate change for the sustainability of the environment and its people, certain limitations stand on its path. These include poor policy or program implementation, inadequate funding of climate change management, poor sensitization program on environment management, among others. However, there are opportunities that can be harvested at the state and individual levels.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is in urgent need of transformation in its socio-economic and political life. The most populous nation and biggest market in Africa ironically houses some of the poorest of the poor in Africa. This development is not unrelated to several challenges that characterize its march to human and societal development. While many of its challenges are not unique to the country in particular and Africa in general, however, its capacity to manage them and possibly overcome them has been low and in some cases, non-existence. This has made the quest for socio-economic transformation of the continent an herculean task inspite of efforts by successive governments in the various African countries to achieve its goal.

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One of these challenges is the phenomenon of climate change. Why climate change is a global phenomenon that is affecting different countries of the world, the capacity of the individual countries to attenuate its effects through well-articulated policy instrument and well managed policy implementation mechanisms differs from one country to another. While policies on climate change have not been in short supply, across the continent the human and technical capacity gap have constrained efforts at tackling this challenge. Climate change negatively affects both human and material resources of every society. It has led to early death of most living things, destroys the ecosystem and depletes finite and non-finite resources.

With this development, a chance of achieving sustainable development in Nigeria becomes increasingly remote. The quest for sustainable development is hinged on the desire of using and preserving the resources of the present generation without endangering their usage by future ones. It is against this backdrop the United Nations declared in 2015, a decade and half for the pursuit of sustainable development in the globe. However, the sub-sets of sustainable development are presently threatened by climate change which makes it imperative to investigate its effects on the overall well being and sustainable socio-economic development of the people and society.

To address the central issues in the study, the paper is divided into the following parts. The first part engages in conceptual and theoretical indulgence, the second explores the nature and character of climate change and sustainable development. The third discusses the effects of climate change on sustainable development in Nigeria with particular reference to the socio-economic concern of the people and society. The forth analyzes challenges facing efforts at managing the effects of climate change on sustainable development. The fifth provides a road map for managing climate change for sustainable development through some remedial policy proposals.

Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Indulgence

The concept of climate change has become a global phenomenon concept and process. Ojo and Oni (in Adejobi and Akhakpe (2012) define climate as “the total experience of weather many place over some specific period of time”. This perspective to the concept of climate rests on its dynamic nature and coverage which defer from one period of time to the other. It denotes the average deviations that occurs and allows for intensive and extensive evaluation of climate data (Adejobi, and Akhakpe, 2012). Similarly, climate change is a process of alteration of climate conditions covered by factors such as increased frequency of heat and ground level ozone. However, climate change should be seen in the context of many other factors in the global setting including the process of urban development. Other climate change inducing factors are desertification, deforestation, exploration finite and non-finite resources, reduction of biodiversity and soil fertility.

There are many perspectives to defining the concept of development. The United Nations define it as a process that increases people’s opportunity of choice. For Rudeback (1997), development is the ability of a people to use their cultural values to bring about progressive change in which the present condition is better than the previous one. Therefore, a people must make a choice of the developmental paradigm to apply or follow. In the same vein, sustainability could mean maintaining and retaining a chosen and viable developmental path for a long time in order to preserve both finite and non finite resources. Therefore, sustainable development demands the use of world resources to meet the needs of the present and future generation. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)

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