

The Role of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in National Economic Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Due to the need for Environmental Impact Assessment EIA in national development, the role of EIA in national economic development in Nigeria is reviewed to see how it impact on national economic development. It is observed among many others that the relevance of EIA provides quality information about a project that helps quality decision to be taken before execution. Therefore, it study concluded that with EIA, every developmental project will have positive impact on national economic development and future generational benefit of the nation. Hence, the study recommends that proper EIA should be properly carried out by professionals and the government should enforce and regulate the agency of environmental management to carry out EIA on projects before execution and penalties to those that violate the law.

Keywords: *Project, Economic Development, Management, EIA, and Execution.*

INTRODUCTION

A healthy environment is also a healthy economy. Environment, ecology; economy and development are interrelated. The related problems of population growth, poverty, and pattern of consumption, unemployment, fear and insecurity are among other fundamental causes of environmental degradation (Chitkara, 2012). Man is both a creator and moulders of his environment which gives him physical sustenance and affords him opportunity for intellectual, moral, social, physical and chemical factors which compose the surroundings of man; these makes man become the most dominant animal in the biosphere. Today man determines what happen to the environment and what happen in the environment which leads to environment making people become whom they are today either negatively or positively.

In trying to solve a problem is creating another problem especially when proper EIA is not well carried out. Today man is the most dominant animal in the biosphere. Unique combinations of certain physical features and mental abilities have made him more powerful than any other animals. With the accumulation of knowledge and increase in the sophistication or artefacts and machines man has acquired the capacity to change the environment for his need. Human needs and greed coupled with short – sightedness have disturbed the delicate ecological balance by depleting and degrading the vital life supporting

systems such as air, water and land which rightfully belong to the entire living world. The series of ecological and environmental disaster made man realise that he will kill himself if he thoughtlessly and violently upsets the delicate web of environment of which he is a part. Environmental degradation poses a direct threat to the quality of life. The ecosystem helps to provide all human needs and the need to manage them. To experience national development there must be developmental projects and every developmental project carries certain levels of discomforts on the people and the environment.

However, it is worth undertaking. Nigeria is a nation where developmental projects are carried out without proper environmental impact assessment of that project, which latter caused more harm than good to the people. Developmental projects are always schedule for problem solution but solving a problem is creating a problem especially if not properly assessed. Most of our developmental projects, risk analysis and control are not well carried out for the safety of the people. Most of the projects, quality control management are out of it. We run more of economic growth project than developmental projects that is why, the people are not improving, for they lacks conducive environment and that has also reduce their productivity rate.

Man and its Environment

Human beings exist in an environment. According to Jain and Rea (2011), environment refers to surroundings in which man lives and works. It can also be seen as the surrounding conditions, influence or forces that influence or modify as the aggregate of social and cultural conditions as; custom, law, language, religion and economic and political organization that influence the life of an individual or a community. There is an overwhelming influence of environment on 'economic activities' of man. Economic activities may be defined as various occupations or pursuits whereby man earns the means to satisfy his various needs like food, clothing, shelter etc. To satisfy various requirements man discovers resources, exploit them and then utilize them. The human in the development of various economic pursuits is very important, because it is man who can use the existing resources on the earth in a real and constructive manner. The two factors that contributed most vitally to the economic progress of a nation are the quality of its people and the diversity and riches of its natural resources. The quality of the people of the nation depends upon three factors:

1. The innate intelligence of the people
2. Their cultural heritage
3. The physical environment in which they live

The variety and the riches of natural resources of a country determine the pattern of occupation of its people. The more diversified the natural resources, the more varied will be their occupation. Different occupations offer vary degree of opportunities for the exercise and improvement of human intelligence (Jain and Rea, 2011).

Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA]

EIA is a study of the probable changes in social – economic and biophysical characteristic of the environment that may result from a proposed action (Dhameja, 2012). It also represents a means of evaluating the simultaneous control quality of the human environment.

EIAs are prepared for proposed projects that have the potential to result in significant impacts on the environment. It can be defined as a continuous process for identifying the likely consequences for:

- a. The bio – geophysical environment
- b. Man's health and welfare of implementing particular activities and
- c. For conveying this information, at a stage when it can meteorically effect their decision, to those responsible for sanctioning the proposal.

An EIA is prepared for proposed actions when it is not known whether the proposal would result in significant impacts on the environment. The documents that are prepared to determine whether a project has the potential to cause significant impacts on environment (Shrivastava, 2011). Environmental Impact Assessment can be done before and after a project. Before the execution of the project, Environmental Impact Assessment is prepared for proposed projects that have the potential to result in significant impact on the environment, for the purpose of quality decision making. Project manager used the report to take decision especially in the area of cost, design, estimation and planning. On the other hand, carrying out EIA after the project causes more damage and procures more cost either to the owner, the public (the end user) and the environment. This is done when the environment is polluted out of the negligence of man.

Economic importance of Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA]

Economics its basic function is to study how people, individual, households, firms and nation maximize their gains from their limited resources and opportunities (Dwivedi, 2009). Until the importance of something is understood abuse is inevitable. Economic as a social science in nature has aided a lot of management, especially in decision making; its aid has boost management decision for quality output. Over the years it has resulted to one of the media used in national development.

Environmental management is attributed to man and its environment; how man should and why man should control and manage his environment for their benefit and future benefits. One of the purposes God created man is to exploit the earth; the nature called the environment. That is why man is given the power and ability to think more constructively under the influence of the power of choices and decisions. Economics aids profit from unlimited resources and scarcity. One of the reasons of poverty is due to limited resources and the reason of high price is due to scarcity of goods and services. The surface of the earth, for the environment consists of unlimited resources, tilling and drilling or construction, there is a need for environmental management to prevent different types or kinds of hazard. Environmental management reduces the saying 'solving a problem is creating a problem'. The careless attitude of man has always been surrounded by as the act of God in the future or natural factor. In all, every developmental project must affect the crust of the earth for this EIA must be conducted for future benefit.

EIA Cost Value and Decision

Multiplying human beings and their expanding need for food, energy, space and material goods (shelter) is seemingly creating endless possibilities for alerting earth climate. The

way present day environment is managed will determine the security, safety, wealth or poverty or more work for the next generation. The persons who feel that he or she has to pay in some manner equate an environment and action as a personal and unreasonable cost, while those who only benefit from an environment action see the cost impersonally and as worthwhile (Shrivastava, 2011). The cost of protecting the environment, the cost comes in two ways; before the project and after the project. They are either at gain or at loss or at loss or gain either to the public or to the owner vice versa. The owner can be government, individuals, organizations /companies or shareholders. It is either you pay for the cost today and not to pay in the future or refusing to pay today and pay more in the future. The gain and the loss can be in form of: (a) monetary value, (b) health wise and (c) environmental value - beautification. Clean-up of pollution and preservation of environmental resources have various costs associated with them. Cost can be in the form of an increase in operating expenses for business that must reduce pollutants they generate. These costs may be passed on to the consumer by increasing the price of goods or service on the other hand, not all environment costs result in negative economic impact.

Negative impacts to the environment have accumulated over the years, and it could take many years to correct environmental impact, if they are correctable at all. EIA seek to prevent environmentally degrading actions rather than allowing them to take place, thus leaving future generations faced with rectifying the problem. If we look ahead and correct our course of action, it will cost less in terms of money and quality of life than if we try to fix mistakes later. The environments consist of plants, animals, non-living things and humans. What is good for plants and animals is at the expense of people. What is good for plants and animals are also good for people. To progress in life you have to do something with or have something to do with the earth. Your ecosystem knowledge will help a lot for the next generation if properly looked upon which is necessary to.

Individual progress enhances the economy of the nation. Scarce resources are inability of man to think positively. Greed and consumerism are the real causes of degradation of internal as also external environment. Government is what surrounds us and in all sides: the land, water and air. Caring for the natural environment is the key to any sustainable plan to reduce poverty. To take quality decision in every decision process of EIA report it is better made by committee and not just an individual, for group of people will be able to deliberate and see things in their own view of professional and the consequences or risk to manage.

CONCLUSION

Due to the need of people and industries trying to provide solution to mankind, industries are becoming more and more complex. In meeting the need of the people they required increase of production rate, high efficiency and optimisation. Any negligence at any stage from concept state to design, erecting, and operation will result into disaster, loss of human lives and huge production losses. EIA is an intrinsic link between environment and economic development and if detailed EIA precedes all development projects, then it will greatly help in averting subsequent adverse effects on the environment.

EIA has become indispensable to introduce environment aspects in planning, especially perspective planning and proper designing of projects in order to predict the overall risk arising from any activity and to identify areas where risk can possibly be reduced (Dhameja, 2012). Also the fast development of science and technology, which resulted in substantial benefit to humankind are also contributing significantly for the degradation of the environment. If man's intellect is responsible for all the progress of mankind, his arrogance and lack of wisdom to live in harmony with nature are responsible for all the harmful effects on the environment which we call pollution. World organizations have realized that economic development cannot succeed unless sufficient attention is given to the natural environment during developmental planning.

According to The United Nation World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development must meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs and aspiration. Most a times this can be done or achieve if the government enforce and regulate the system, if not natural man love freedom. The freer a man is the more crime and damage he will cause to the environment for every man is selfish. It is possible to have development without destroying the environment provided man ensures that any single use does not deplete the environmental resources to such an extent that they are no longer capable of sustaining any other use. Regulatory policies and service activities have a big role in reducing poverty in a nation especially in the area of EIA.

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