
Environmental Enlightenment and Awareness Towards Environmental Sustainability in Zuba Town of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This study was carried out to ascertain the impact of Environmental Enlightenment on sustainable environmental development in zuba town of the FCT. In unraveling this issue a study was undertaken of 100 residents of Zuba town. The findings of the study show that the level of environmental degradation is very high within the area due to low level of environmental awareness, enlightenment and poor government commitment through their various agencies saddled with environmental protection responsibility. Electronic media remain a better way of creating environmental awareness than the print media. Internet and town criers do not contribute in any way towards environmental awareness in the town. This depicts that much needs to be done for a sustainable environment based on the people's opinion. Alternative information network that are not easily constrained, such as mobile phones can, be a promising medium for fast and mass information dissemination.

Introduction

Environmental degradation is a process induced by human behaviour and activities that damage the natural environment (World Bank, 2000). In Africa the rapidly growing population and economic development are instigating environmental degradation through uncontrolled growth of urbanization and industrialization, expansion and massive intensification of agriculture, and deforestation (World Bank,

2000; Millennium Ecosystem, 2003). The protection of the environment is an essential part of development. Without adequate environmental protection, development is undermined; without development, resources will be inadequate for needed investments, and environmental protection will fail growth brings with it the risk of appalling environmental damage (Millennium Ecosystem, 2003).

Generally, the poor are the most vulnerable group of environmental degradation and they are also the agents and perpetrators of degradation because they are generally short-run maximisers of environmental resources; they struggle towards meeting their immediate needs at the expense of the future generation. Over exploitation of forest resources, over exploitation marginal lands, grasslands overgrazing and over crowding of urban centres are all activities of the low income earners (UNDP, 2001).

Over few decades awareness and concern about environmental degradation have grown around the world; these concerns are shared by people of different nations, cultures, religions and social classes (Lomborg, 2001). Environmental awareness is highly significant to maintain environment quality, protect human health and use natural resources sustainable not at the expense of on-coming generation. Environment education will only be vital only if include basic environmental awareness and conservative practice. Incidentally, grassroots and low income earners response to environmental awareness program is often been seen as a promising and must used to make people feel indifferent to environmental policy overtures by the government (World Resources, 2002; Thomashow, 2002).

Unsustainable development, lack of environmental awareness and population pressure contribute to environmental degradation. Environmental decline is also exacting a toll on people (Lafferty *et al.*, 2000., Dietz *et al.*, 2004). Inadequate information and awareness about consequences of environmental degradation upon human health and well-being may be as a result of low educational level. Social groups with low levels of education may be directly exposed to pollution and, as consequence, they may not be aware of damages being caused to their health. There could be another environmental consequence of low educational level.

Environmental awareness is considered as a great influence on environmental degradation. Lack of awareness make people exploit the environmental resources faster and they tend to overuse the natural resources due to the lack of sufficient knowledge on environmental conservation (Micheal *et al.*, 2005). As a result this study seeks to examine particularly the extent of environmental awareness and enlightenment among the residents of fast growing Zuba town of the Federal Capital of Nigeria. Research on environmental awareness in less developed towns is important due to the consistent dependence on proximate natural resources (Twine *et al.*, 2003).

Study Area

Zuba the study area is found in Gwagwalada Area Council of Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) Nigeria (See Fig. 1). This town is the gate way town of the FCT from Kaduna and Niger state and conurbating with Madala town of Niger state.

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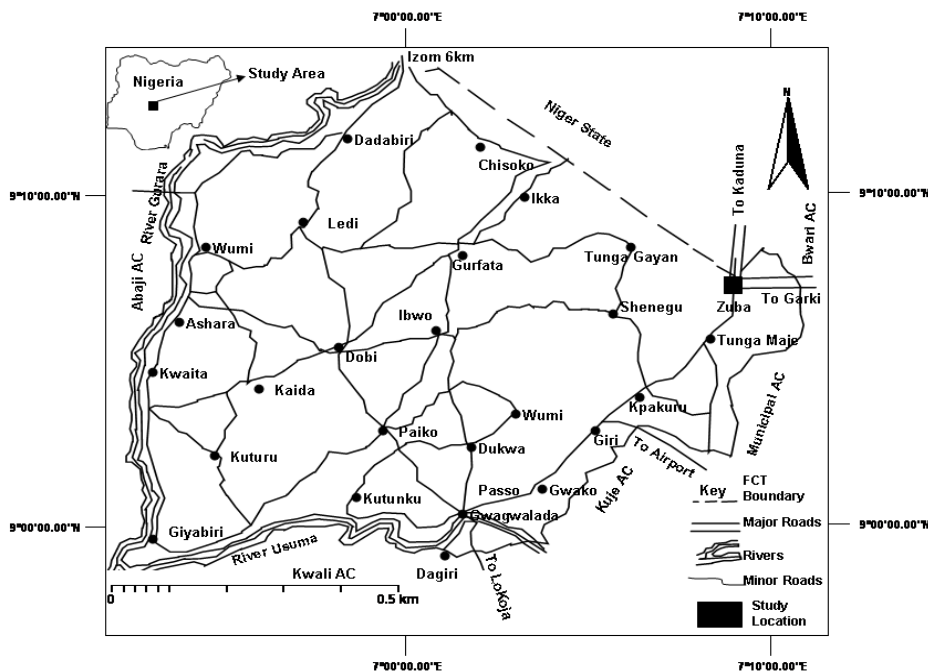


Figure 1. Map of Gwagwalada Area Council Showing The study Sites

The climate of the Area just like most areas in the tropics has wet and dry season's characteristics. The temperature in the area ranges from 30⁰C – 37.0⁰C yearly with the highest temperature in the month of March and mean total annual rainfall of approximately 1,650mm per annum. In Zuba most of the rainfall during the raining season fall between the months of July to September. The area is within the northern boundary of the Guinea Savannah having vegetation a slightly differerent comprising shrub savanna vegetation type (Adakayi, 2000). The species of plants dominating this area are Danulio Oliver, *Albizia Zygia*, Shea butter tree *Butrospermum paradoxium* and African Locust bean. *Parkia clappertoniana*, *Terminatia pilisotigma*, *Amona*, *Nauclea* and *Bombax contratum* which are fast disappearing due to human anthropogenic activities in the area (Balogun, 2001).

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Methodology

The data and information for this study were collected from a direct field study based on the results of 100 administered questionnaire copies in the study area and informal discussion with households heads were conducted in 2008. The study was carried out by using adaptable method for field investigation of environmental perception (Sisson and Stocker, 1989). The questions were in scaled form of statements to which the respondents could show their degree of agreement or disagreement with the scale value. In this study the 5 scale was used.

For the purpose of administering the questionnaire, household heads were purposively administered questionnaires to. Approximately 15 minutes were spent to complete a copy of the questionnaire. The study was conducted at the face-to-face level and obtained a response rate of 100%.

The analysis was based on mainly descriptive analysis and simple presentation. However, Chi-square was used to test if significant differences exist in some of the responses.

Result

Majority of the respondents (72.8%) were male with the respondents between twenty and forty five years of age dominating (58.6%). Semi skilled workers dominates, representing 51.5%, the skilled respondents represent 24.2% while the unskilled respondents represent 24.2%.

The level of environmental degradation in Zuba is high as expressed by majority of the respondents and 90.9% of the respondents saw the need for sustainable environmental development. This depict that much need to be done on sustainable environment based on the people opinion. In another vein 79% of the respondents opine that sustainable environmental development is struggle that should invoke all the citizens since it is a global problem that transcends local boundaries. According to Millennium Ecosystem (2003) the whole ecosystems are under dire stress. Biodiversity is being lost at alarming high rates, with potentially catastrophic consequences. The world's environmental resources are over-exploited and with many practices unsustainable. Environmental quality lost threatens the world, with adverse consequences predicted for developing countries more intense in Africa and Asia increasing the rate of poverty among the poor and the marginalized groups.

Table 1: Showing Respondents Views of the Level of Environmental Degradation in Zuba

Responses	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage
Low	10	10.10%
High	27	27.3%
Very High	39	39.4%
Average	23	23.2%
Total	99	100%

Source: Researcher Field Work July 2008

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From the responses gotten from the respondents in this study, majority of the respondents agreed that their need to be radical environmental awareness and the people should be involve in these environmental awareness programmes. Inhabitants should be enlightened on the importance of sustainable environmental development.

The environment in Zuba is under serious treat due to human activities. Up to 79.8% of the respondents were of the opinion that the environment is degrading, while the remaining 20.2% decline with the assertion that the environment has not lost its quality over the years despite human exploitation and numerous activities. The increasing exploitation of land resources is continually exacerbating environmental degradation mostly in areas dominated by the marginal groups.

Table 2: Showing Respondents Opinion of the Major Cause of Environmental Degradation

Responses	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage
Constructional activities	10	10.10%
Agricultural Activities	6	6.1%
Increase in Population	28	28.3%
Industrial activities	3	3.0%
Poverty	20	20.2%
Nonchalantness	32	32.3%
Total	99	100%

Source: Researcher Field Work July 2008

As opined by 32.3% of the respondents, nonchalance is the major cause of environmental degradation in Zuba, while 28.3% of the respondents were of the view that the cause is due to population increase in the town, 20.2% of the respondents opine that the cause of environmental degradation is highly associated with poverty, 10.10% of the respondents stressed that constructional activities is a pushing factor towards environmental degradation in the town, 6.1% of the respondents attached environmental degradation to agricultural activities, while the remaining 3.0% of the respondents lament that industrial activities in recent times is a standing cause of environmental degradation. This indicates that nonchalantness is the major cause of environmental degradation with the inhabitant highly responsible for the degradation of their environment (See table 2).

Orientation and awareness are indeed important issues in environmental conservation. The level of environmental awareness in Zuba is very poor as 94% of the respondents strongly stress that health and environment workers hardly come around to instigate the enforcement of government agendas towards sustainable environmental development. Despite the availability of medium of information dissemination the expected agencies are found wanting in creating awareness, enlightening and educating people on environmental issues.

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Environmental enlightenment and awareness is a significant way of equipping people in the drive towards environmental protection and sustainable development (Biel, 2005). The kind of awareness people need is not only on environment degradation but on how to safeguard it. Majority (96.10%) of the respondents agreed that there are need for wide public enlightenment within the town. This is an indication that public enlightenment should be encouraged as this will go a long way towards achieving the expected goal of sustainable development (Hunter *et al.*, 2004., Micheal *et al.*, 2005). In the restoration and environmental conservation strives the marginalized that are mostly the poor need to be incorporated in such plans.

From the opinon of 90.9% of the respondent, for the campaign to be acceptable by the inhabitants their will be a serious need for environmental awareness starting from the grassroots level. Although public awareness on environmental quality lost has risen greatly in some part of the world, and corrective measures have been undertaken, a billion people still lack access to such information (Micheal *et al.*, 2005).

Large chunk of the reliable information people get about the state of the environment may not necessary come formal but mostly from the media (Mohai, 2003; Micheal *et al.*, 2005). The media tend to have better opportunity in promoting environmental awareness because they usually have wide audience both young and aged. Due to the fact that the media has significant role in environmental awareness the media stands a better chance of taking the lead in the struggle towards sustainable development (Micheal *et al.*, 2005). Television as opine by majority (37.4%) of the respondents is one of the reliable way of creating environmental awareness among people, while 30.4% of the respondents were of the view that radio tend to be the reliable source of environmental awareness to the people. It is glaring that electronic media is a better way of creating environmental awareness than the print media as only 18.3% and 11.3% of the respondents see news papers and magazines respectively as crucial medium of creating environmental awareness. Internet and town criers do not contribute in any way towards environmental awareness as majority of the inhabitant are not access to internet facilities or not literate enough to exploit it (See table 3).

Table 3: Showing Respondents Opinion of the Major sources of Environmental Information (More than a Response was Allowed)

Media	Frequency of Responses	Percentage
News Papers	21	18.3%
Magazines	13	11.3%
Radio	35	30.4%
Television	43	37.4%
Internet	03	2.6%
Town Crier	00	0.0%
Total Responses	115	100%

Source: Researcher Field Work July 2008

Conclusion

As unraveled, the impact of environmental enlightenment and awareness is very important because it this inform the people of the major happening in the environment. Environmental awareness must enjoy grassroots response. It is only the media that reduce the distance that technologies depict of the environmental effects of environmental resource exploitation which stands as a stumbling block to environmental awareness. The media is also an encouraging stimulant towards people participation in environmental pressure groups or social groups. This is because social and pressure groups depend strongly on the media for disseminating information and expressing their grievances related to environmental matters. Information and experience are disseminated through publication and magazines but in Zuba the contribution of print media toward environmental awareness is very weak when compared with electronic media. The internet and town criers play no role in environmental awareness as shown by finding in Zuba.

Recommendation

Findings from study shows that there will be more environmental awareness in Zuba and reliable awareness creation may involve alternative information network that are not easily constrained this may include mobile phones for fast and mass information dissemination. Such information may not only be reporting but also teaching and environmental press release. Environmental awareness need to center on maintaining environmental quality, protecting human health and the use of environmental resources sustainably, enlightenment must include basic conservative practices as well as establishing diverse activities towards promoting environmental conservation and protection.

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