

The cover features a bright sun in a blue sky with white clouds at the top. The title is in large, bold, yellow letters with a red outline. At the bottom, there are wavy bands of green and orange over a black background.

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## HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*In the process of community development, different activities of man have effects on the community. The activities include: bush burning, deforestation, destroying of young plants and animals and many more. Some of the strategies to ameliorate human's activities negative effect on community development include community education and change-agent approaches to improve human's activities on community development. It is, therefore, recommended that community education should be used to ensure increased environmental awareness, nature conservation and also, efforts should be made to create awareness and sensitize community members about community development programmes through the use of adult education tools such as community mobilization and the mass media. Finally, there is need for joint efforts by all stakeholders to preserve the national resources and protect the environment better for both now and future for sustainable community development in Nigeria.*

**Key Words:** Sustainable Community Development, Human's Activities, Mobilization Strategies, challenges and Community Education.

### Introduction

Community development activities involve several efforts of man which may have both positive and negative effects on man and his environment. Some of such activities are bush burning, poor method of mining, and inappropriate methods of farming which are not new phenomenon but have been human acts from the beginning of human existence. Bush burning precedes planting a farm land. Burning, generally, has helped man positively to destroy dangerous creatures, unwanted and unused properties and many other things. However, bush burning, inappropriate farm methods and a lot of others are careless acts by man as a result of lack of control, leading to destruction of valuable properties and assets. They also are health risk behaviour in the sense that man may not be able to control the fire which he started. Ordinarily, fire is of

great importance to man particularly under controlled condition. Man uses fire for heating, cooking, getting rid of waste materials, refuse protection, and so on, but when fire is not controlled, it can do untold damages (Aghinuen, Omoruyi, Orhue and Kerobo, 1990).

Bush burning is a risky act that can lead to the destruction of anything. This is the negative aspect of fire, for it can cause an environmental pollution, health hazard, tree crops destruction, explosion of pipeline and farm land destruction. This may result in promoting poverty, ushering in hunger, unemployment, loss of lives, extinction of wildlife and serious health problems. It occurs when man unconsciously find himself in the state of forgetfulness. Man cannot do without fire because it is a basic utility for sustainability, a means of productivity and survival; the only problem is that man may



involve himself in its indiscriminate use (Gunningham & Gunningham, 2002). Most people do not consider the time, place or the environment before doing any kind of burning, provided it is convenient for them and without consideration for others. Some may even set the fire and later be occupied with something else. The forms of indiscriminate burning include the burning of office papers; throwing of cigarette butts into office waste paper basket; burning incinerators along the street in the cities, and urban areas; burning of gardens in the school and at home; burning of waste in the dust bin without supervision, forgetfulness after the use of ring boiler and pressing iron; burning of waste and refuse in market places etc. Different method of mining like open-cast method exposes the farmland to different hazards. Unplanned cutting of trees can lead to deforestation and such activities can lead to leaching of fertile soil and soil erosion.

### **Elements of Human Activities in Sustainable Community Development**

Man cannot live in isolation of his community and in the process of community development, different activities of man have effect on community. Human's intension initially is not to affect the communities negatively but their different community development activities, unconsciously affect their communities. Burning of the bush stimulates the growth of fresh grasses on the land, and enriches the soil with calcium, magnesium and phosphorous in the form of ash and this has effects on soil. However, bush burning pollutes the natural air for man and animals, causing health hazard. It can also cause destruction to crops and farmlands, thereby leading to poverty. It also causes desert encroachment and oil pipeline explosion, thereby affecting natural economy and

promoting poverty, hunger and unemployment (Ajayi, 1998).

### **Air and environmental pollution**

Burning of bushes in the process of clearing an environment pollutes the air. This involves the reduction of combustible solid waste to an inert residue by the use of high temperature combustion. Here, the solid waste is fed into furnace grate where it is dried, ignited and burnt at a temperature of 1,200 to 1,400 of Clinker. Ashes and the other incombustible waste are collected and removed for tipping (World Bank, 2006). Ogundele (2004) explained the sources of air pollution as combustion resulting in true smoke, dust, sulphides, carbon monoxide; mining and quarrying in dust and smoke; and space heating and refuse burning. He pointed at burning of fossil fuels which yields carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, hydro carbons and oxides of Nitrogen and sulfur. All these pollutants make the air and environment unsafe for man and animals.

According to World Bank release, the green house effect results in the release of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, causing gradual rise and melting of polar ice caps and thereby leading to flooding of coastal cities. Another serious effect to the environment is acid rain which is almost an international problem. When nitrogen and sulphur oxides form nitric acid and sulphur acid which later fall back to earth in rain because of high sulphur burning, it causes damages to trees, seeping of important mineral out of the soil, killing of fishes and dissolving of marble and limestone which will have effects on the economic of community people (World bank, 2006).

### **Deforestation**

Deforestation is another act of man in the processes of Community Development



It is the destruction of young plants and animals in the forest. Plant species that are expected to grow into trees are destroyed. The effects of deforestation include keeping the forest empty through indiscriminate fire. When plants are burned, rope fibre, medicine herds, fibre resins, dyes which are obtained from forest for domestic and industrial uses, are burnt along, thereby creating unemployment and hunger for those experts in these fields (Ginningham & Ginningham, 2002). Deforestation through indiscriminate bush burning exposes the land to soil erosion; it leads to reduction of soil nutrients, decrease in transpiration and increase in evaporation. According to Aghinuen, Omoruyi, Orhue and Kerobo (1990), deforestation causes undue wind break, erosion and deprivation of soil fertility due to the burning of leaf drops, and the scaring away of animals from man's habitation.

Desert encroachment is one of the outcomes of indiscriminate bush burning, as it results in the spread of desert encroachment (Ajayi, 1998). Bush burning can also result in oil pipeline explosion. Ajayi (1998) stated that oil spillage pollutes air, water and land, making the land unproductive for farming and causing destruction to crops. It also leads to the destruction of aquatic life and plants, suffocation and reddening of the eyes of man and animals. Explosion of pipeline through bush burning has taken numberless lives. A notable case is the Jesse oil vandalisation in Delta state.

### **Extinction of Wildlife**

At times, the activities of man affect wildlife animals on land and inside the waters. Extinction is a continuous process started since life began but human beings have increased the rate at which it occurs. Extinction mostly occurs when man clear

land in preparation for agriculture, construction and indiscriminate burning of bushes when in search of animals to kill. Indiscriminate bush burning continuously has destroyed animal habitat. Animals and plants cannot survive when their habitat have been destroyed. Poor method of using chemicals on aquatic animals also leads to the destruction of such animals inside the water. This occurs often when man uses chemicals to kill animals inside the rivers. Its effect on community development cannot be overlook because it will affect the economic activities of the people as well.

### **Destruction of Tree Crops**

Several times, government has made laws to reduce the activities of people in destroying the forest. In the process of harvesting timbers in the forest, people destroy young trees in the process of transporting the matured ones from the bush. Wood plays a part in many activities of the modern economy than does any other commodity. There is hardly any industry that does not use wood or wood products somewhere in its manufacturing and marketing process. Ginningham & Ginningham, (2002) stated that in 1999, 20 million acres per year were being cut and burned in the Amazon Basin alone and that about 1.5 million people depend on fuel wood as their primary energy source, have less than they need. More than half (1/2) of the people in the world depend on firewood or charcoal as their principal sources of heating and cooking fuel. This implies that firewood accounts for slightly more than half of all wood harvest worldwide. People's activities need to be checked so that the adverse effects on community development can be minimized or reduced.



### **Strategies to improve man's activities for Sustainable Community Development**

There must be drastic measures to control and correct wrong impression of people's attitudes toward their communities. There will be need for developers to adopt new methods to control man's activities in the process of community development. Some of the strategies that can improve and control man's activities in the process of sustainable environment include Community Education and Change-Agent approaches.

#### **Community Education**

Community Education reflects the expectation of the community which it serves, and is usually linked up with community development policy. Akinpelu, (1988) expressed that Community education is logically tied up with the idea of enabling people to exploit their resources, which would have otherwise lay dormant and to use such resources to increase their competence and confidence in their own affairs. Within the framework of this concept, community education is used as a device to help people become more active participants in the development of their local communities and encourage them to organize themselves for planning and action (Olawuni, 2012).

Governments and Non-governmental organizations may help the community at the grass-roots to use their local initiatives and resources to achieve increased production and high standards of living. The people can be motivated to define, solve, and work out the problems they are facing, committing as much as possible their local resources. Governments' philosophy may also find it necessary to help communities members learn techniques for cooperative action and to organize self-help programmes. The analysis of the major objectives of community education reveals it as a venture

of great magnitude which involves the evolution of rather new techniques to provide education and training for the whole community in order to improve the life of the people (Ogili, 2004, Olawuni, 2012)).

Community education is directly committed to the development of a stable, cohesive, self reliant citizenry, capable of mobilizing its own local resources (human and material) in order to satisfy its own needs and attain a decent and wholesome life ( Anyanwu,1999). This underscores the fact that it must be a community effort, an effort in which all must be interested, and in which all must play a part. Community education stresses the idea of community service and effort. Its basic idea is that it is a population endeavour. A principal factor of this endeavour is that it has to stimulate the people's desire to know, think and act. It has to motivate and assist people to lead a healthier, happier, more satisfying and more interesting life. Community education should prepare people to bring about improvement in their lives through changes in the condition of their community. This implies that there must be the stimulation of the desire for better things and the urge to attain such better things among the people (Akinpelu, 1988).

The principal objectives of community education are to:

- i. educate and motivate people for self-help;
- ii. develop responsible leadership among the people;
- iii. inculcate among the members of a community, a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness;
- iv. introduce and strengthen democracy at the grass-roots level, through the creation and or revitalization of institutions designed to serve as instruments of local participation;



- v. initiate a self generative, self sustaining and enduring process of growth;
- vi. enable people to establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationship in their community; and
- vii. bringing about gradual and self chosen changes in the life of a community, with minimum stress and disruption (Anyanwu. 1999 & Olawuni, 2012).

With the above objectives, it is clear that people are to see the need to work together in partnership with the government in order to have sustainable self-help projects. Different groups work together as a team owing to provision of development information and social networks. One of the conditions for building a new society is for the rural people to take responsibility for their own lives. The rural people have to rediscover their sense of dignity and re-affirm confidence in it. These confidence and self-realization can only come from them solving the numerous problems confronting them now, as they had done in the past. The primary aim of self-reliant development is to appeal to the people as the actors of development. This is necessary in order to overcome some of the problems facing community development as a whole (Osuji, 1992, Oyebamiji & Adekola, 2008).

### **Change-Agent Approaches to Sustainable Community Development**

Sustainable community development is the reflection of community people taking the development of their communities into their own hands and making it relevant to the present and in coming generations. In change-agent approaches, some methods are adopted, such as open method; rural forum; instructional group method; non-formal learning method; participatory group method and direct information-giving method. These approaches enable man to be enlightened

and been sensitized on how they can improve in protecting their environment.

One of the strategies to educate people towards environmental awareness is the open method. It is directing mobilization effort at an unorganized audience, believing that once the message is good, it can always be picked up by members of the community. This method involves the use of the media, which are television or radio stations. The message will be passed across once to all the people at a time. It covers a lot of grounds because it disseminates information broadly and openly. This will assist and guide the community to be involved in adequate and appropriate activities that will promote environmental awareness. One weakness of the method is that the producers and consumers of mobilization programmes do not meet and interact on the platform of consultation and coordination. Those that do not have access to light due to power failure and who cannot afford to buy batteries into their radio sets can not be reached easily (Osuji 1992 & Olawuni, 2012).

The rural forum method involves consultation, discussion and coordination between the mobilizers or their agents and the rural people being mobilized. This gives room for them to meet and discuss together in order to reach a conclusion. Decisions are taken with a lot of inputs from the community people. The fact that the people's views are heard and that decisions are taken and executed helps to maintain the commitment of the people. This is very important for developmental efforts. Community people can be enlightened on how they can develop their community without damaging their community and new methods of improving their communities will be introduced to them.

In instructional group method, there is an organized learning group which has the



advantage of providing the people with detailed information. Centres are established for this purpose while the audience is educated individuals. Community members will be enlightened and aware of what they should do to prevent environmental hazard. This may be done through farm clubs, market associations and at peer group level. The method will be more effective at the grass-root level since it creates conducive environment for learning among the community developers and community educators.

At the non-formal learning group level, the method involves using the radio as a means of educating and enlightening rural communities and the audience are mainly illiterate rural dwellers that assemble in marked buildings or points for listening and learning. This will be possible where there is adequate power supply and where people will have access to radio and time must be available to watch film at town hall or market squares for enlighten programmes. Radio programmes on weekly bases like "Agbeloba" or "Agbelere" are good avenues to reach the farmers to learn about environmental hazard and on how to improve their methods of farming in order to reduce hazards caused by inappropriate methods of farming in their communities.

The participatory group method involves training local leaders or decision makers who, in turn, promote developmental efforts in their communities. They will be enlightened and they will help to motivate and mobilize their people to understand the activities of man in his environment. The trained local leaders are like peer educators who have knowledge more than the community because they have been trained. They are in the best position to educate and mobilize their people. One disadvantage of this method is that the leaders to be trained

are not easy to get within the rural people (Anyanwu, 1999 & Olawuni 2012).

Indirect information-giving method, the task of enlightenment and education of the community is placed in the hands of ministries and departments of information; but the outputs from these bodies rarely make much impact. People will be educated and they know what to do but it is another thing for them to obey and cooperate with the mobilization bodies. For example, the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) programme in Nigeria did not achieve much success. Despite series of campaigns about monthly environmental sanitation exercise, some people are still being arrested regularly for not taking part in the exercise. But this must not discourage the change-changers to continue educating and sensitizing the community on what to do concerning that environment (Osuji 1992 & Olawuni, 2012).

Posters should be posted in strategic places, such as markets and post offices and they should be well illustrated, made accessible and bold enough for public consumption. Flyers should be distributed using youths in the community. There can be an arrangement of how such posters and flyers can be distributed in churches and mosques on Sundays and Fridays respectively. On Community development meeting days, such flyers and posters can be distributed as well with thorough explanation on the effects of people's activities in the environment.

## Conclusion

This paper examined human activities and challenges of sustainable environment in Nigeria and how man's activities have led to destruction of pipeline, crop tree and other valuable natural resources. Today, efforts are being made by the various States and the Federal



government in finding ways to sustain our environment for the betterment of Nigeria. The War Against Indiscipline (W.A.I.) introduced by the Buhari-Idiagbon regime with regards to environment health, is an eye opener. Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and National Orientation Agencies (NOA) are at all levels of government and their activities must be thorough. Community members must support them to achieve their aims and objectives on environmental protection campaigns. All communities should be conscious of their activities and try to reduce any act that can have negative effect on their community development. We can prevent fire outbreak only with utmost vigilance and care. More activities in preventing fire accidents would lessen the necessity of fire fighting.

### Recommendations

In order to have a sustainable environment in Nigeria, collective measures must be taken by the government, non-governmental agencies, community agents and community to minimize the negative effects of human activities on the environment.

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Community education should be used to ensure increased awareness, nature of conservation, and greenhouse effect and climate changes.
- ii. Environmental education should be participatory and be delivered using, adult education strategies to enhance rate of participation, especially, among adults.
- iii. Efforts should be made to create awareness and sensitized communities about community development programmes through the use of adult

education tools such as community mobilization, the mass media etc.

- iv. There is need for collaboration between community educators and other environmental protection agencies in planning community education that is efficient and enduring.
- v. There is need for extensive campaign against carbon dioxide and other environmental pollutants on the greenhouse effects.
- vi. Finally, there is need for concerted efforts by all community members to preserve the national resources and protect their communities better for now and future.

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