

## **THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (STEWARDSHIP) IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN NG**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Environmental Ethical principles have not been given much scholarly and public attention in the management of the environment and environmental resources in Nigeria. This is the gap this paper intends to fill as it highlights the difference environmental ethics could make in redressing the current abuse of the Nigeria environment which is characterized by indiscriminate disposal of solid waste, deforestation, desertification, erosion and industrial pollution, to mention but a few. Attention is also paid to the implication of the above environmental problems for the promotion of environmental ethics in general and the principle of stewardship in particular. Randomly selected environmental management functionaries and documents were analysed and discussed within the ambit of Paulos Gregarious Christian stewardship Theory. This results in apportioning moral responsibilities on the various stakeholders to Nigerians environment. Having critically looked at the problems and prospects inherent in the discourse, the paper recommends ways of making religious ethics in general and stewardship principles in particular a veritable tool for ensuring proper environmental management in Nigeria.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Environment is defined as the entire surrounding of man that is made up of living and non living components. Living component includes plants and animals in their various forms, while non living components include the air, water bodies, mountains landscapes, built up areas, infrastructure and a host of others.

Environmental management simply refers to man's application of scientific, technical, social and other knowledge and skills in managing all the components of the environment to ensure that the environment is not

stressed beyond its productive capacity at any given time. Managing an environment so that it can continue to provide basic needs and services for the present & future generation is what we refer to as sustainable environmental management.

So much is involved in the task of managing the environment. People erroneously think that since the environment is God – given, there is no need to care for it. In the struggle for survival and development, man has done a lot of harm to the environment; ranging from over exploitation of resources and destruction of the ecosystem, to air, water and land pollution. For instance, deforestation, indiscriminate bush burning, land mass clearing for agriculture, or for urban development, mining activities; all lead to soil erosion, flooding and water pollution. On the other hand, gaseous emission and discharge of effluents from manufacturing industries can cause serious pollution of air and water. Severe soil erosion can impoverish rich soil, resulting in poor agricultural yield, while polluted water can negatively affect fish production in our rivers. A common challenge in Nigeria environment is the problem of solid waste management as most parts of our urban cities are heavily littered with dirt. Often times, the drainage systems are blocked, resulting in the flooding of many access roads. Sources of wastes in urban and rural areas include homes, markets, hotels and restaurants, hospitals, commuters in moving vehicles and motor parks, school children, etc. People from these segments of the society litter the environment or drainages with nylon, sachet water nylon, sweets and biscuits wrappers, disposable plates and spoons, leaf wrappers, peels and unsold perishable fruits and vegetables.

Although proper management of the environment in general, and waste management in particular demand a lot of financial input, human attitudinal co-operation is also required. Such integrated environmental management approach would include, deliberate waste reduction, sorting, recycling, responsible behavior and restraints which is encapsulated in the environmental ethical principle called stewardship.

Environmental management is multidimensional and multidisciplinary in content and context, but the religious ethical dimension of it has not been given sufficient attention. Two major reasons can be advanced for this. One, it is believed in some quarters that environmental issues are more of scientific and technological<sup>1</sup> than ethical religious. Religion is perceived to be too private or personal to be applied to environmental issues. The other

reason is that environmental studies is comparatively a recent development of less than four decades<sup>2</sup>. It was only in 1970 that environmental studies as a discipline was created in Britain<sup>3</sup>. One of the outstanding features of the 1980s however, is the global awareness and growth of environmental issues. In the West, the issues that brought about the public awareness of environmental danger are the following four disasters (1) The leakage of poisonous gases from a chemical gas plant in Bhopal in 1984 in which about 2,000 people were killed and up to 200,000 people were either injured or blinded; (2) The accident at the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl in 1986 which released a huge radioactive cloud over Europe. The full lethal effects of the incident is yet to be ascertained (3) The release of about 30 tons of agricultural chemicals by fire fighters in **Switzerland** in 1986 which seriously polluted the Rhine and destroyed millions of fish and (4).The grounding of ExxonValdez tanker in price William Sound in 1989, causing the spillage of 10 million gallons of crude oil and the consequent devastation of Alaskan coastline and wild life.

In Nigeria, demonstration of environmental awareness was almost non existent until the incident of the toxic waste dump in koko in Delta State in June 1988. After the incident, a formal policy for environmental management was established with the creation of the Federal Environmental protection Agency.

In the context of this work, environmental management will be viewed as efforts aimed at avoiding the stressing of the valued ecosystem beyond the limits of its resilience and stability. In other words, environmental management is a human conduct in which policy makers, parliamentarians, scientist, corporation organizations, groups, community members and individuals get involved in ideologies and practices that prevent and control environmental degradation which consists amongst others, ground and surface water contamination, air pollution, deforestation, fishery losses, biodiversity losses, gully erosion, coastal erosion, desertification , oil spillage and gas flaring.

For many people in decision- making positions, especially in Nigeria, science and technology provide the only hope for solving environmental problems because it is believed that such problems require high technical knowhow, facts and objectivity which only science and technology can provide. It is being discovered lately by scholars and philosophers that environmental challenges are neither exclusive to, nor primarily the problems of science and technology.

According to Des Jardins, environmental issues raise the fundamental questions about what we as human beings value, the kind of beings that we are, the kind of lives that we should live, our place in nature and the kind of world in which we must flourish<sup>5</sup>. This means that the formulation of effective environmental policies has to seek answers to the aforementioned questions before applying the knowledge derived from science and technology. Providing answers to the questions raised by Jardins is essentially the prerogative of ethics, especially religious ethics. Through the principles of stewardship, Christian ethics amongst other functions make human beings relate meaningfully with his environment – land, water, nature, air, living and non living things inhabiting them, with a sense of qualified ownership.

This subject matter is approached from analytical and descriptive points of view. This is necessary because environmental matters are easily observable by any rational person hence the need to examine and analyze the biblical tradition on environmental situation of the Nigerian society objectives.

### **THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

Environmental Mismanagement and its accompanying crisis are primarily the outcome of anthropocentric philosophical orientation that under girds our approach to ecological issues. Human interest is usually the central focus of every response to environmental issues. The numerous oil spills in Niger Delta regions of Nigeria and recently in Mexico and Newzealand agitated concerns not just on these land spaces that were damaged but also on the dangers and displacement they brought to human beings living in and around them. These areas are never fully recovered despite the millions of dollars committed to the clean up. The nuclear disasters in Japan in recent times demonstrated the dangers of nuclear power on human beings, aquatic lives and every living thing around it, yet the emphasis has always been on the hundreds of thousands of Japanese lives that were lost to the flood and chemical exposure.

In Nigeria large expanse of rainforests are continually stripped of their adorning trees as they are daily sacrificed on the altar of human need for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources, construction and cooking fuels. Thus, when environmental protection bills and policies are promulgated, they are in the ultimate interest and development of human beings, not necessarily in consideration of the extinction of various species of plants and animals within the environment. Even some contemporary

Christian ethicists in their definition of stewardship projected humans as the ultimate goal of the care. Bugg's definition of stewardship as "a theological belief rooted in Christian scripture about utilizing and managing all resources as God's resources for God's glory and improvement of man's condition<sup>6</sup> provides a ready example. This paper is however proposing a deeper environmental stewardship which balances concern for the environment particularly the non-human species with concerns about human well-being. This tallies with Micheal Hoffman's biocentric view in which he argues that the environment has intrinsic value and should be respected irrespective of what it can contribute to human beings.<sup>7</sup>

The Christian and Jewish cosmologies uphold a qualified right of human beings. Right over money, property and care are owned by God while human beings hold it in trust. The resources of the earth are held in trust for a divine purpose. Our relationship to earth's resources could by law and custom be defined as ownership but in reality it is a conditional ownership or stewardship. A steward has the responsibility of prudently managing a property that is not his own. The Jewish cosmology of qualified ownership or stewardship is illustrated in the Jewish harvest custom of not gleaning one's farmland to the edges so as to make provision or create a margin for the care of the poor. The principle of stewardship in environmental management imposes on human beings much sense of responsibility to nature and the natural environment. This responsibility is buttressed by **C.S Lewis** in his dictum: "if somebody else made me for his own purpose, then I will have a lot of duties which I should not have if I simply belong to myself.

### **Biblical View of Environmental Stewardship**

Religious tradition and Christian tradition in particular stand a better ground to analyze and suggest the right pattern for environmental management. This is true because God's creation and people of faith should be more qualified to explain the wisest and the most prudent way of caring for it. Corroborating this view, **Francis Schaeffer** states, "it is the biblical view of nature that gives nature a value in itself...because God made it."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, people of all faith and of all works of life have been found guilty of ecological carelessness (Schaeffer. 1973).

There is a clear biblical directive that supports environmental care. This is encapsulated in God's requirement for human beings to work the earth and keep it (Gen2:15). Also from God's direction to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 2: 15), It can be argued that man has a clear industrial, managerial and caretaking responsibility for nature. The biblical witness

stipulates that man is given specific jobs pertaining to nature. By being asked to “fill and subdue”, humanity is charged to procreate and multiply the human race and have dominion over all creation. Dominion however, is to be carried out through servant leadership as modeled in the servant kingship of Jesus, “For even the Son of man came, not to be ministered to but to minister, and gave his life a ransom for many: ( Mark 10: 45). Humans are not to simply leave nature to itself, rather they are clearly directed to work, harness the content of the land and at the same time care for it. Man is expected to bring out the unharnessed beauty of the environment.

Divine mandate for stewardship therefore aims at reminding human beings of their duty to bring to manifestation the amazing contents of creation with which God blessed humanity through human induced developments while protecting the environment at the same time. The land is to be used not abused. The stewardship mandate requires a two way response of using and caring. In using, man can develop the earth’s resources like prospecting coal, natural gas petroleum, mining of natural resources and cutting timber for building and construction. However, care should be applied to avoid destructive exploitation and waste. Proper stewardship of the environment amongst other things requires knowledge and wisdom. Humans need to know the requirement of all the plants and animals. The knowledge of the effect of human intervention on both plants and animals is necessary as well.

## **THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP**

The word stewardship rarely appears in the bible but reference is made to it in different portions. From the Old Testament usage, a steward was a person who had responsibility of managing someone else’s estate or someone who renders services to a royal personality. In the New Testament, the word steward is used for abstract matters like being the steward of God’s grace. In a broader sense, stewardship in the biblical context means serving and being accountable to God. Application of stewardship to people’s treatment of environment was glossed over by early Christians until the time of Calvin .Prior to this time, Christians only refer to stewardship as a biblical rationale for financial and other supports. Calvin however resuscitated the biblical view of Stewardship as it applies to the earth as a whole. Before the 1960s, Christians hardly took interest in ecology. Anxiety about environmental problems led to a new perspective in which North American theologians began to look into the relationship between ethics and the human earth in the 1970s and 1980s .<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, it was the concept of stewardship that was used to develop a deeper ecologically sensitive Christian understanding of people and their relationship to the natural environment. Thus Christian theologians have identified the "Keeping "Mandate of **Genesis 2:15** with the concept of stewardship:" And the lord took the man, and put him into the garden to dress and keep it."

The concept of Stewardship is used to expose the inherent environmental responsibility of humanity towards sentient and non sentient elements of the planet. The divine instruction to the Israelites regarding the use of land further buttressed the fundamental principles of stewardship in Christian environmental ethics.

"The land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine and you are tenants" (Lev 25:23).

Stewardship in environmental ethics is derived from the biblical emphasis that God owns the earth and man is to take care of it on his behalf :

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it (psalm 24:1)

"The heaven are yours and yours also the earth, you founded the world and everything in it " ( psalm 89:11)

"Yours, O Lord is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours "(1 chron . 29:11). Christian ethics upholds that man stands to benefit from wise stewardship (Deut 25:4) "you shall not muzzle the ox when he threads the corn". Man is allowed to reap a reward for his profit. Christian environmental ethics is against worshipping the creature instead of the creator (Romans 1:25). The biblical mandate for man to rule over the earth and subdue it encourages the development of energy sources such as coal, natural gas, crude oil, mining of mineral resources, the cutting of timber for building etc. However, this is not to an irreplaceable extent "for there is always a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to keep and a time to throw away"(Eccl 3:1-8). In the new testament, through the various parables of Jesus like the parable of the tenants, the talents, the minas and the servant, stewardship requires accountability, responsibility, good management of resources, avoidance of waste, maximum productivity. All these are to be undertaken on behalf of the master. Stewardship in

environmental ethics emphasizes that every activity on and with the environment should be carried out on behalf of the ultimate Owner.

Humans being are the stewards of God. From the creation mandate, human beings are expected to be environmentally responsible and accountable, hardworking and productive without being wasteful and destructive to the environment.

Thus, Christian environmental ethics advocates intelligent stewardship which involves wisdom and knowledge. This involves the knowledge of the requirements of all the various plants and animals, knowledge of how they interact and what effects our interaction will have on them and ourselves. It also requires wisdom to balance all the seemingly conflicting issues and select the option that offers the greatest benefit and least damage to all creatures concerned. Stewardship demands that we balance our needs as the ruling species with the needs of the many other species that we have been charged to care for.

The imago Dei attributes in Man is the enabling factor for his stewardship capacity. Being made in the image of God, man is distinct from all other creatures. He stands supreme as the head and crown of creation. The image of God in man gives him an edge over other animals, in terms of intellectual capacity, speech and language abilities, as well as moral faculties. (Okeke, 2011) All God's creatures glorify Him by their very existence, but it is only humans that are able to worship and serve him by an act of the will. Hence, man has a superior brain and ability to communicate complex thoughts so he could share information and pass it on from one generation to the next. Having been given these privileges, much is divinely required from man to care, replenish and preserve the earth which the creator entrusted to him. Despite the divine delegation or stewardship, God still shows direct concern for his creation that he clothes even the lilies of the field and watches over the sparrows (Matt. 6: 28)

If God is concerned to the extent of being mindful of the beauty of plants in the bush and the safety of seemingly insignificant sparrows that fly, surely man who acts as a steward must be similarly concerned about how the ultimate Owner feels when the fields are being littered and the trees wantonly uprooted in the name of road construction. Integrity demands that if man cannot improve on the condition of the object entrusted to him as the steward, he should at least preserve it. He is not to decimate or destroy it. Wise stewardship attracts benefits. Such benefits include development, peaceful cohabitation of human beings with one another and other



creatures. Environmental crises or conflicts that human beings engage in are the products of the wrong perception of our responsibilities to the environment. Crisis like flood and erosion are common in Nigeria today. The temporality of our natural environment must not be overlooked.

“In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth “(Gen 1:1) presupposes that our environment is finite & subject to decay. Being finite and subject to decay, there are specific biblical laws or guidelines which ensure that nature is given proper care. These established guidelines are embedded in the laws of Sabbath rest, the levitical sanitation laws against deforestation of economic trees, annual safety and land use guidelines. If these guidelines are applied to the Nigerian situation, they will go a long way in addressing the problem of poverty in her socio- economic life.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

For several years in Nigeria and other African countries, the major preoccupation of government has been the provision of basic amenities. Environmental pollution was synonymous with conservation of resources, while concerns for industrial control and hazardous wastes management were regarded as attempts to slow down the pace of industrialization. With such orientation towards environmental protection, a strong catalyst is needed to wake up both government and the populace to their responsibilities. For Nigeria, this much needed catalyst for proper environmental management started in 1988 after an illegal dumping of toxic waste from Italy. The government responded to this by:

1. Creating the Federal environmental protection agency and
2. Launching a national policy on environment. These two instruments although coming 16 years after the Stockholm conference, put Nigeria in the fore front of other African countries in environmental management matters and somehow put her at par with a number of developed countries. However, unlike the developed countries, Nigeria was starting de novo without any industrial pollution law or an enforcement tradition in a situation of dwindling economic fortunes that was already struggling under the weight of the structural adjustment programmes (SAP).

## **HISTORICAL BACGROUND OF ENVIROMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

Past efforts of Nigeria government towards environmental protection are geared towards safety, protection and conservation of the economically

important natural resources. This is reflected in the existing environmental laws which include:

- Oil pipeline act 1956
- Forestry act 1958
- Destruction of mosquitoes Act 1958
- Public health act 1958
- Mineral act 1958 capital LFN 1990
- Mineral Oil (safety) regulation 1963 capital 350 LFN 1990
- Oil in navigable waters act 1968 capital 339 LFN 1990
- Endangered species act capital 404 LFN 1990
- Quarries act capital 404 LFN 1990
- Sea fisheries act capital 385 LFN 1990

There were no laws on industrial pollution and hazardous wastes. Industrialization was considered a key indicator of development. States and municipal governments gave tax reliefs and other concessions to lure and attract industrialists into their domain and the citizens being ignorant lived happily with the resultant pollution and the hazardous waste. With time, coloured effluents discharged into streams were given mythical interpretation. Some say they have disease curative properties. Industrial effluents and sludge were erroneously used as manure to produce fresh but deadly crops for human consumption. Poisoned fishes and crabs were easily caught from polluted rivers and lagoons and were sold and consumed freely. Containers of chemicals (and pesticides) were collected by people to store their food and water. Particles from quarries, asphalt, cement and similar industries settle on most housewife's pots of soup, cutleries, and even on their food stuffs. These form layers of crusts which are eventually consumed by family members as part of their regular meals. Fumes from stacks occlude sunlight and cause burning and irritation of the eyes, nose, lungs, skins etc. The effects are so many but the Government was claiming to be protecting the people and the environment

The 1972 Stockholm conference on human environment was attended by Nigeria. It ignited the consciousness of our government on the need for a holistic rather than sectoral approach to environmental protection. After the conference, some efforts and regional activities were initiated such as the Lagos plan of action of 1980, the placing of bill on environmental protection by the parliament in 1981 and the creation of a small unit called environmental planning and protection division in the federal ministry of works and housing which was supposed to be handling

environmental protection. But nothing actually happened to the bill and pollution continued at an alarming rate. But the turning point occurred in June 1988, at the height of the period Nigeria was leading the diplomatic move in protecting the West African region from toxic waste and also condemning neighbouring African States for accepting foreign wastes. This was the time it was revealed that a five shipment loads containing 3884 metric tones of toxic waste was dumped in Koko. This was a national embarrassment, but it agitated the national consciousness for environmental protection on both the government and the people of Nigeria. This incidence laid a sound foundation for environmental polices in Nigeria thus creating FEPA (Federal Environmental Protection Agency) by decree 58 of 1988 as the overall regulatory body charged with the responsibility of protecting the environment of Nigeria.

### **CHALLENGES OF ENVIROMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

The environmental regulatory bodies: Federal Ministry of Environment (FME) and the Environmental Impact Assessment Agency (EIA) often receive threats from powerful' individual industrialist and groups who own industries that are pollutants. For example, detergent factories discharging its effluents into open drainagies which in turn empties into a river used as source of drinking water some 600 meters down stream . Owners of such factories are ready to attack and fight back the inspectorate instead of putting measure that would enhance the safety of the environment where the factory is sited and of the people in the neighbourhood. There is always a power play among the allied monitoring organizations like manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), NAFDAC ETC as to who does what in terms of their inspectorate roles. Often, officials of one of these bodies may decide to obtain a gift from the companies and then impose a restraining order for any further inspection on such companies.

Small scale industries that operate as one man businesses and family business have constituted the greatest headache in the management of Nigerian environment. Many of such industries are located in residential areas and some at the back of people's houses, sharing neighbourhood with uther tenants, thereby posing serious health hazards to those neighbours.

Role Conflict, especially between Federal Environmental protection Agency (FEPA) now Federal Ministry of Environment (FME) and local government often constitute an impediment to their environmental protection activities. By the Nigerian Constitution, municipal waste

disposal and sanitation is the responsibility of local governments. But what happens where there are both municipal and industrial wastes in a state or community? This brings us to the invaluable need for the principle of stewardship in environmental management.

### **STEWARDSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

Despite the burning effects of environmental mismanagement, our society is still bedeviled with activities that lack the care and keeping injunctions given to human beings concerning the environment. From national to domestic levels activities that are inimical to the stability and sustainability of the environment is being constantly unleashed. These are manifested in the deforestation, littering, indiscriminate dumping of solid wastes on the streets and market places.

Nations including Nigeria deliberately destroy forests and waters in the manipulation of the environments for military purposes especially in war times. In Nigeria during the civil war, trees were wantonly felled for clear view of enemies' advancements and for disguising of military bases and vehicles. During the Iran/Iraq war of 1980s, Over half million barrels of oil was poured into Gulf waters from a shattered driven platform<sup>14</sup>. The 1991 Gulf war witnesses a huge release of hundreds of thousands of barrels of crude oil from Kuwait facilities into the Gulf. This resulted in the death of marine plants and animals.

About 950 Kuwait oil wells were set ablaze releasing toxic smoke that blocked the sun for years. Thousands of Kuwaitis left the country owing to burning sensations in their throats and respiratory organs<sup>15</sup>(Horgan, 1991). All these are ways by which nations display their lack of stewardship. The activities of the multinational oil companies in Nigeria's Niger Delta region is also a case in point. Their Oil exploration activities which gave rise to gas flaring, oil spillage and bush burning have caused untold suffering, extinction and devaluation to humans, Land, flora and Fauna in the region. Nations also manifest their lack of environmental stewardship as they engage in nuclear bomb production. For instance, plutonium which is one of the essential components of nuclear bombs is so toxic that inhaling one/millionth of an ounce can cause cancer. Studies show that it remains radioactive for thousands of years. Our global commons which comprises of high seas, deep sea beds, outer space and the Antarctica are secretly being polluted by nations. Out of the 745 nuclear power plants by 1996, 340 of it were dumped inside the submarines<sup>16</sup>.(Onyeonoro 2005) These are evidences of attitudes and

political actions that are lacking in stewardship. Though this global commons belongs to all, it is not meant to be destroyed by any. Proper environmental stewardship ensures the prudent use of both renewable and non-renewable natural resources to maintain the present needs and protect the needs of the future generations and the ecosystem. The required responsibility is not only in the conservation of the human population, it also requires the preservation of the habitats, their species as well as non living elements on which they depend.

### **SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF LACK OF STEWARDSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA.**

There is incalculable intellectual losses of traditional knowledge in communities and local homesteads. Artifacts, historical monuments, sacred trees, ancestral altars are cleared and destroyed in the course of exploration of mineral resources. Such alterations, removals or complete destruction of these relics not only threaten the Identity of a people group, they also weaken the archeological and anthropological research into the traditional life of the people in question. This is the situation in the Niger delta region of Nigeria where oil prospecting, exploration and exploitation had led to the destruction of huge historical monuments and artifacts.

Lack of stewardship also breeds dislocation of citizens and conflict. In the past, there were communally owned farm lands and economic trees like the palm tree. These natural resources provide means of livelihood and economic assistance to indigent members of local communities. Proceeds from such properties are communally sold and used to sponsor intelligent youths from poor families to acquire formal higher education. Apart from the material gains, these processes were a boost to values like welfarism, communal and mutual assistance among the local communities. With land seizure for construction and development' such values have given way to individualistic and winner-takes all life style. The destruction of the people' shared symbol undoubtedly resulted in blurred social and cultural values ; a situation which is responsible for the on going dysfunctional social relations and environmental conflicts.

Failure to apply stewardship in environmental management breeds insatiability. The Bible describes it as 'chasing after wind '. The Buddhist describes it as 'craving or as avarice. Avarice is better described as insatiable thirst. Insatiability touches two major areas: pursuing after what we do not have yet and holding on to what we have. This leads to

valuing things above people and time. Avarice breeds loneliness, anxiety, waste, injustice and neglect of the poor(Os Guinness2001)

### **Recommendation**

For Nigeria to succeed in proper environmental management some basic ideas about environmental management has to be conceptualized. Prior to modernization, people were tied intricately to their environment. Nigerians, especially the Igbo were made to love their surroundings and give it the required attention. Thus it was a taboo to throw rubbish, create or urinate in places other than the designated places. The surroundings and market places were swept and kept clean regularly especially on market days.

Nigeria's environmental policy makers should therefore adopt: (a) community based approach to environmental management. Officials of the federal Ministry of environment and Municipal environmental agencies should be sent to educate people on the right use of modern scientific agricultural methods. For instance, the health implications of wrong application of inorganic substances (fertilizer) to the soil cannot be overlooked. Though they are needed for bumper harvests, it can also aggravate soil erosion. Its direct contact to human food can be hazardous to health. Members of communities should also be educated on modern methods and developments in environmental protection as well as the ethical and religious implications of environmental pollution. There should be institutionalization of powers to punish environmental offenders. Officials of the Ministry of Environment should be fluent in local languages for proper communication of ideas and the required information. In other words, environmental awareness should be clearly crafted to make the rural populace aware of the effects of the unwise use of the environment and be well equipped with the techniques of environmental management. This paper also recommends the proper education of primary and post primary children on environmental issues by including Environmental Awareness Education (EAE) to their school curricula. In other words, environmental awareness and environmental protection need to be cultured and home – grown. The frame work should be from bottom to up. Hitherto, environmental awareness and environmental protection was only scientifically emphasized among the policy makers. The approach should incorporate scientific, religious and ethical methods. There has to be a genuine application of some religious values like religious beliefs, injunctions and attitudes to the management of the environment. These approaches should involve all human stakeholders to the environment

which include the households, community leaders, government and the industries.

## **CONCLUSION**

Nigeria as a nation is blessed in many areas including in landmass, human population and other natural resources. Nigeria's total land area of 983.213km<sup>2</sup> is being occupied by over 160 million people. The negative activities of this teeming population on the environment have left an indelible mark on the landscape. There is an insatiable desire and want from this population for food, shelter, recreation, infrastructure, among others and they have invariably resulted in deforestation, desertification, urbanization grazing and its concomitant multidimensional pollution and conflicts. Granted that economically, these land use activities have sometimes translated to some level of development of the nation, they have equally brought about some negative impacts which could have been mitigated by the application of environmental ethical principles like stewardship and restraint. It is obvious that environmental problems are presently far more than what they were before the Stockholm conference and the establishment of Nigeria's Federal Environmental protection Agency (FEPA). For Nigeria, despite the legal backing and heavy funding of FEPA which is now the Ministry of Environment (FME) from the Federal Government, the level of success currently being recorded is a far cry from its goals and objectives. Environmental degradation is growing at an alarming rate. Built environment is steadily taking over the well laid out reserved areas which hitherto exuded the air of freshness, nature and quietness in cities. People deliberately fell quality trees, not just for timber or construction, but to burn them into charcoal and sell for peanut prices. Thus, deforestation and desertification is now a common feature in many rural areas. Trees that took 25years to grow are felled and burnt as charcoal which will be used for a week end's wedding party. Meanwhile no effort is made to replace it by planting another tree. Flood and other natural disasters have become a regular phenomenon in most parts of Nigeria. Most Nigerian cities are now being "decorated" with heaps of trash and rubbish. Homes and market places are increasingly being slumised and market women comfortably buy and sell in the midst of the slum, constantly inhaling the stench therefrom. It is in reaction to these situations that Adegoke warned that if appropriate measures, techniques and technology of environmental protection and management are not put

in place, Nigeria may become a difficult country to live in the next 15 years.

In addition to the roles of the governments and industrialists in environmental protection, every member of the Nigeria society should be made to realize that he or she owes it as a duty to God, the ultimate owner of the environment to keep and maintain every space he/she occupies at every point in time. The awareness of such responsibility will translate into cleanliness, aesthetics and productivity. This is stewardship.



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