

NIGERIA

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Purpose

This environmental analysis was conducted to:

- Provide an overall state of the environment report examining the general status, issues, problems and opportunities related to Nigeria's environment sector;
- Identify the primary causes of environmental degradation in Nigeria and suggest options to address them;
- Describe current and successful approaches of interventions in the environmental sector by private interests, bi- and multilateral donors, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other institutions;
- Analyze opportunities and constraints associated with the major elements (forests, land, wildlife, coastal and marine resources, air, water) of the environment;
- Provide recommendations as to how USAID/Nigeria can best integrate special targets of opportunity into its Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) program;
- Provide recommendations as to how USAID/Nigeria might be able to integrate "environment" into its current and future portfolio;
- Provide a concise evaluation of Nigeria's biodiversity and tropical forest resources; and
- Identify the extent to which required actions for conservation are satisfied by current or proposed USAID/Nigeria programs.

2.2 Findings

Nigeria's natural environmental resources and the quality of its air, water, and soils are severely threatened. Increasing poverty, high population growth and migration, especially into urban areas, and political/institutional constraints are the underlying causes for environmental degradation in the country.

Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation; one out of every five people living in sub-Saharan Africa lives here. Its population growth rate is above three percent and rural to urban migration is making the country's cities some of the largest in the world. Although Nigeria receives considerable revenue from its large multinational oil industry sector, this money rarely trickles down to the populace who are generally poor and growing poorer. This combination of expanding population and increasing poverty puts increasingly severe demands upon the natural environment, the institutional structures and the resources available to manage them. The technical capacity to deal with the enormity of the problem is generally weak and the lack of enforcement of (and compliance with)

existing regulations make for huge institutional obstacles when trying to effectively tackle environmental issues.

These causes lead to the major threats of unsustainable use of renewable natural resources, unplanned urban development and oil industry operations that confound sound community practices to manage natural resources for their mutual benefit.

Nigeria presently contains considerable biodiversity as well as some very important tracts of fairly undisturbed tropical forests. Its diversity of natural ecosystems ranges from semi-arid savanna to montane forests, rich seasonal floodplain environments, rainforests, vast freshwater swamp forests and diverse coastal vegetation. Nigeria, in the Niger Delta region, contains the largest remaining tract of mangroves in Africa—the third largest in the world. But all of this is threatened.

Most of the land in Nigeria has been converted to agricultural or pastoral uses and agricultural encroachment threatens the natural areas that remain. Desertification, the loss of soil fertility, insufficient quantities and quality of water and enormous erosion problems have followed in the wake of overuse and mismanagement of the country's resources. Environmental problems that stem from large unplanned urban centers with inadequate solid and municipal waste disposal practices and the impacts of the oil, mining and manufacturing industries are taking their toll on water and air quality in many areas. Add to this the escalating practices of overfishing, uncontrolled logging, and many other unsustainable uses of the natural resources that remain, and threats to the survival of significant components of Nigeria's biodiversity is very real. There is, however, still some hope.

Since the return to democracy in 1999, there has been a renewed interest in environmental management and protection. The newly created Federal Ministry of the Environment (FMoE) is pushing an agenda that makes priority issues of gas flaring, marine and coastal resources degradation, desertification, and industrial and urban pollution. The recently formed Niger Delta Development Commission has a transparent mandate and dynamic leadership to help that unique and resource-rich region seek and develop community-based solutions to the social and environmental problems that have been growing for decades. In many states across the country, there are encouraging signs that public leaders, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) are focusing actively on threats to the environment and donors are moving to help implement environmental activities that result in improved livelihoods for the people of Nigeria.

USAID/Nigeria currently supports vigorous programs in health, democracy and governance, agriculture, education, and energy and infrastructure. While the Mission does not support an environment program, per se, it is worthwhile to note most USAID/Nigeria programming areas could be leveraged to impact positively on environmental management. Conversely, it is also true that improved environmental management would impact positively upon most of USAID/Nigeria's current programming areas.

2.3 Conclusions and Recommendations

This analysis identified three major threats to effectively managing Nigeria's environment:

- The unsustainable use of renewable natural resources,
- Unplanned urban development, and
- Petroleum industry operations.

To plan for effective activities and to manage the environment in a more sustainable manner, the GFRN needs to address and mitigate these threats—and the underlying causes of environmental degradation mentioned above: increasing poverty, population growth and migration, and political and institutional constraints. To help improve environmental management and governance the environmental analysis (EA) team aggregated what it saw as priority actions into the areas of:

- Legal and policy reform
- Economic incentives
- Research
- Institutional strengthening
- Regulation

Legal and Policy Reform

Although the federal framework needs work in some areas, it is the states, due to the highly varied nature of the most pressing environmental threats they face, that need to be empowered to develop and enforce legislation promoting sustainable use of environmental resources. Sectoral policies are highly centralized and also suffer from lack of coordination. There needs to be an integrated, multisectoral approach to policy development and implementation at both the national and state levels.

USAID/Nigeria is continuing to gain valuable experience through its democracy and governance programming. Its work with the National Assembly, where members have ranked environment as an important thematic, might be an opportunity for expanded activity. Being aware of elected officials' sensitivity to environmental issues with their constituents and providing support to House and Senate Environment Committees are new places to focus attention. USAID programming has already been involved with the development and implementation of constituency outreach programs in other sectors. Assisting outreach programs grappling with pressing environmental issues such as gully erosion, water use and management, urban sanitation and pollution would be a logical step.

Economic Incentives

In Nigeria, the lack of effective resource valuation has strong negative impacts on the management of renewable natural resources and on the sustainable use of water and soils that affect overall quality and production potential. More complete knowledge of markets, better access to markets and use options for resources and their associated risks

are unknown, or incomplete. There is considerable room for improvement in just about every economic activity that depends on clean and abundant sources of water, fertile soil, protection of infrastructure and populations from erosion, construction material from trees, food from plants and animals, etc.

Through a variety of programming, USAID/Nigeria is working with partner institutions, researchers, and other donors to improve agricultural practices, expand technologies available to farmers and improve their access to and knowledge of local and international markets for their production. The recent start of the gum arabic program provides a solid linkage between rural livelihoods and environmental products. There are similar opportunities that can be captured with other high-value or specialty product in other regions of the country, building on the training and management experience being gained with local producer associations. The benefits already being realized under SO2 could be expanded by strengthening ties with the Sustainable Tree Crops Program, exploring additional options for non-timber forest product (NTFP) markets with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and other partners, and looking at incentives to leverage opportunities with other donor programs/activities in the area of soil fertility and soil and water conservation.

Research

Overuse and poor management of existing resources have created enormous problems and substantial holes in Nigeria's natural resource base. Public records at the federal and state levels are poor, and too often out of date. They are nonexistent at the local and community levels, except for the indigenous knowledge of local land stewards. There is a definite need to more information, better science and solid monitoring of environmental change.

Working with IITA, the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD) and others, USAID/Nigeria has developed a good reputation for providing valuable financial and technical assistance backed with good science. The reputation and assistance associated with these programs is almost exclusively within the domain of the agricultural sector. A slight movement into the greater environmental arena to include water use and water quality, soil and water conservation, gene pools of wild/traditional crops and the management of tree crops and NTFPs could provide added benefits for ongoing programs and count considerably towards increasing conservation and environmental awareness.

Institutional Strengthening

The capacity to integrate environmental concerns into economic development planning and activities is extremely weak in Nigeria. Unfortunately in many instances, there is also the lack of political will to even attempt do so. The capacity is greatest at the federal level, but there are usually no "flow-down" mechanisms to the state, and certainly not to the local government levels where environmental threats need to be directly addressed. NGOs and CBOs are numerous, and to their credit, pooling resources and gathering strength in many areas of the country. Many of these latter groups address environmental issues or conflict resolution around environmental degradation problems. Several have direct ties to international groups.

USAID/Nigeria is presently working with producer associations, local traders and exporters to strengthen access to and knowledge about gum arabic markets. Training in marketing techniques as well as management techniques to grow trees and improve yields are examples of activities that will, over time, improve environmental conditions and environmental awareness in areas where the activities take place. Similar institutional strengthening could also occur with producers of other natural/environment products with high or niche value. There are also potential opportunities to assist or leverage programs and institutions in the Niger Delta region in particular. Oil companies are developing broad programs that provide assistance to NGOs and other local institutions that seek to mitigate environmental degradation.

A number of Nigerian NGOs are also actively engaged in environmental education, community conservation and other environmental initiatives. USAID/Nigeria should continue to examine ways to work with international foundations that support NGOs and

CBOs operating in Nigeria (e.g., the MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation) that work to empower communities to effectively manage natural resources.

In education, USAID/Nigeria is focusing on literacy training. Using materials that provide an environment and natural history focus would improve environmental awareness at a very basic level and help instill an environmental ethic that is only beginning to show itself in some areas of the country. Additionally, where the attention is on working with civic society entities, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and the like, work could also be done to include related efforts of environmental educational NGOs, such as the Nigerian Conservation Foundation's (NCF) Conservation Club initiatives that are being developed in various locales around the country.

Regulation

Legal and political frameworks for environmental management require further work; considerable gains in improved environmental management could be made by effectively enforcing existing regulations, both in regards to pollution control and biodiversity conservation. Any credible change in Nigeria's enforcement of environmental regulations will require more than simple "capacity building," it will require building the political support or "the political will" to see the regulations enforced. These types of changes are long term and require raising the awareness of a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., resource users, judges, etc.) as to the interrelated nature of environment, economics and health.

One area that could use immediate focus is access to the Ecological Fund. Making the management of the Ecological Fund more transparent, and holding its users more accountable, could go a long way to promoting improved environmental management in Nigeria. Again, USAID/Nigeria's democracy and governance program could provide the most direct link to addressing regulatory issues such as the transparency of this Fund.

Another regulatory area (as well as an institutional one) that would benefit from additional assistance would be in strengthening the court system at the state level. This might first involve raising environmental awareness among court officials, both in a general sense and vis-à-vis the existing legislative framework. This might serve to help strengthen the application of environmental legislation among the judiciary.

Nigeria's environmental problems are extensive. Reversing these trends will require significant political and popular will, not to mention huge amounts of financial and human capital. The process has started and each small step has to be seen only as positive. Within this framework, USAID and other donors and institutions need to work in a coordinated effort to ensure that the scale of their efforts is as large as possible.