

# The post-independence Nigerian environment and economic development: An historical survey

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**ABSTRACT:** Environment plays a vital role in shaping and determining the level of progress achievable by man, both individually and collectively in various fields of endeavour. Man, and his environment are inseparably bound together, as the environment provides him the platform for the expression and demonstration of his inherent potentials and skills as a gregarious and productive organism. Without environment, there will be no life because it is the environment that sustains life. Human environment should therefore be made conducive, enabling and salubrious for the sustenance of life and diverse activities. Thus, this paper begins, by a somber glance at the post – independence since 1960; effects of good environment on productivity and economic development, and the crushing influence of harsh environment on Nigerian economy. The paper concludes by highlighting an economic development-friendly environment as a must for our 21st century Nigeria. The paper employed participatory observation and historical methods in other to achieve its objectives. The paper recommends, among others, that the government should promptly and urgently rid our environment of the activities of insurgents, bandits, terrorist herdsmen, unknown gunmen, kidnappers, and criminals which constitute serious threats to life sustenance, peace, social stability, and economic development.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, post-independence, environment, economic development, historical survey.

## INTRODUCTION

Environment is an indispensable factor in man's continuous quest for a healthy, prosperous, blissful and adventurous living. Regrettably, man in his natural selfishness and carefree attitude has paid less attention to the wellbeing of his environment; and as a result, his environment degenerates as he progresses or advances economically, technologically, politically, educationally, structurally and culturally. Nigeria, as a nation has achieved an appreciable level of development and growth in diverse facets of her national life since independence in 1960, though the pace could be adjudged to be relatively slow. Paradoxically, her environment has degenerated with speed less proportional to her overall development (Mezieobi and Maduiké, 2015).

Obinaju (2012) defines environment as any space external to us. This includes our surrounding, the atmosphere, the streams, lawns, roadsides, vegetations, mountains and the other surrounding features around us (Mezieobi and Maduiké, 2015). Human environment can be physical, social, political, economic, religious, educational and so on (Ojo, 2016). A careful glance at Nigerian environment in the recent times evokes a nostalgic sentiment and longing for the 1960's environmental conditions, which from all indications were far better than the present ones characterized by sharp degradation, improper management of hazardous wastes, traffic congestion, overgrazing, harmful emissions and contaminants from automobiles, industrial chimneys and gas flaring (Tasie,

2011), rising incidence of flooding and ocean acidification (Okwelu, 2011). Our contemporary environment is also charged with insecurity and endless contention with terrorism and insurgency (Anele, 2012) and upsurge of illegal immigrants and refugees (Ugwuanyi, 2012). There is also soaring population which exerts much pressure on our exhaustible resources (Ukeje, 2010) and that culminates in environmental degradation (Ezeah, 2010).

Though we all are aware of the contemporary global environmental problems which affect almost every facet of the global economy, but Nigeria's case is becoming the worst as she faces resource exploitation, environmental degradation and despoliation in order to achieve economic growth, and increase rapidly its volume of goods and services to its teeming population (Agwu, 2006). One cannot afford to do without the environment in one's quest to live a good life, no matter from which angle one sees the concept of good life. Aristotelian views recounted in Agwu (2006) makes us believe that the way the bulk of the people earn their living, whether they are farmers, herdsmen, mechanics, shopkeepers, or day labourers, industrialists, and so on, will have much to do with determining the nature of the state and its government, whatever that government is, feudalistic, capitalist or socialist, the orientation lies in the harnessing of the forces of the environment to the creation of the products needed or wanted by the society (Agwu, 2006).

Nigeria has had a long and chequered history of economic development since her independence, but fortune seems not to smile in the face of the country as it has not been able to make efficient use of human and natural resources to achieve sustainable economic growth and environmentally-friendly productive economy. She has failed to bridge the infrastructural gap to spark off national development and wealth creation; and translate economic growth into equitable social development for all citizens ([www.commonwealthgovernance.com](http://www.commonwealthgovernance.com), 2023). Similarly, her echelon of lofty development plans, beginning from the post-independence plan 1962-1968 (six year development plan), the post war four years development plan 1970-1974, the third national development plan 1975-1980; the fourth national development plan 1981-1985; to the one year economic emergency plan of 1986 (Obikeze and Obi, 2004) and other major development strategic initiatives, either fizzled out at their implementation stages or failed to produce commensurate positive results. One thing notable about the outlined development plans is that none of them made adequate budgetary allocation for environmental protection and sustainability or for initiation of pragmatic approach for checking over exploitation of the environment and non-renewable resources.

Relevant agencies such as the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and State Environmental Protection Agencies (SEPA's), their counterparts in the 36 states and FCT Abuja, Federal Road Maintenance Agency

(FERMA) and their counterparts in the 36 states and FCT Abuja, Federal Department of Forestry, and so on, were emasculated by exiguous operational funds and hence could not contribute much towards making our environment conducive for healthy living and economic productivity. As pointed out by Azuoma (2012), our environment has kept on deteriorating to the level that it is not able to sustain economic development. Nigeria is really in dire need of a supportive, auspicious, safe, toxin-free, and secure environment that will make the actualization of individual, group and national economic aspirations and goals easier and feasible in the 21st century, hence the need for the study.

### **A SOMBER GLANCE AT THE POST-INDEPENDENCE NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT**

The Post-Independence Nigerian environment paints a worrisome and pathetic scenario of a fast-depleting and degenerating environment that is over exploited, daily and unremittingly saddled with more exacerbating than ameliorating agents. It is on record that the government at various times in history has made relative efforts to regulate the environment to boost economic development but they yielded little or no positive results. The government as early as 1964 constituted a committee, through wide consultations with various arms of the Federal Ministries, to study and make recommendations about how to solve the problem of water pollutions. Through their recommendations, there was enactment of a water pollution Act of the Federation. In 1970, the Expert Committee on Environmental Health of the National Council of Health constituted by the government made many proposals on how to improve the nation's environmental health, one of which was the need to establish a sanitary inspectorate in the Federal Ministry of Health. Unfortunately, the efforts yielded very minimal results (Adelegan, 2004). With the progress made in the development of mineral resources especially crude oil and the building of refinery at Eleme, near Port Harcourt in 1965, much pressure was mounted on our environment particularly in Niger-Delta areas, through oil exploration and gas flaring.

In 1970, the production capacity and the annual output has risen from 3,326.000 metric tons in 1962 to 14 million barrels daily (Onwubiko, 1973). This increase was followed by a corresponding increase in oil spillage, oil bunkering, gas flaring, water pollution, destruction of aquatic animals and environmental hazards. As observed by Egbule *et al.* (2015), environmental hazards can cause injury, disease or death to people and make environment unable to sustain meaningful economic activities. There are also the associated problems of crowding and traffic congestion in our oil producing zones, though their problems have extended to major cities and economic

nerve-centres of our various states. Crowding, according to Arubayi *et al.* (2015) involves both residential crowding and household crowding, where large number of residential buildings and individuals cluster in a small space. This poses great challenge to the health and general wellbeing of the people.

Admittedly, it was the desire to achieve proper and efficient management of environment, control rapid degradation and reduce indiscriminate dumping of hazardous wastes that made the Federal Government of Nigeria to establish the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and States Environmental Protection Agencies (SEPA's) in 1988 which later became Ministry of Environment. Federal Department of Forestry was created to protect our Flora and Fauna, Ministry of Mining and Industry and other environmental regulatory agencies were equally established, but they failed to proffer Nigerians a benign and congenial environment suitable for human existence and economic prosperity despite all the budgetary provisions (funding) and releases.

Similarly, the Federal and State Governments in partnership with international development agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations and donor agencies have taken bold steps towards improving rural water supply in various rural areas in Nigeria in order to make life better in rural environments but the reverse is the case. In Imo State, for example, between the year 2000 and 2008, the state has a total of 725 water supply facilities in various communities as identified by the Imo State Water Development Agency (IWADA). In 2009, the state government executed 33 new solar powered water projects which were added to the existing 725 to make water supply facilities across the state 758. But unfortunately, one third of the new water supply systems constructed within the last decade are not working at all and another 30% are working only intermittently (Ugoanyanwu, 2010). Between 2015 and 2023, there is little or no progress made in the area of initiating water pollution and bringing about cleaner environment for the citizens.

Nigerian forest ecosystems are threatened by rapid population growth and unregulated economic activities with annual deforestation rate raging between 0.72 and 2.38 percent (FAO, 2018). Agricultural expansion, heavy reliance on firewood and charcoal for energy, unsustainable timber extraction, urbanization, grazing, bush fires, infrastructural development are among the factors behind this trend (FAO, 2022). While taking a somber glance at our environment, Mezieobi *et al.* (2013: p.77) observation underpins the above when they remark that:

Outside some natural disasters such as landslide, earthquake to which Nigeria is divinely shielded out from, Nigerian environment is largely terrorized by environmental

degradation in the way of water and wind erosion, drought, food, deforestation, pollution of land, air, water, noise and sprawling human population and their activities. Nigeria's physical environmental terrorism has made the environment unfriendly and terrifying, not worth staying or living in such a way that everybody wants to be on the escape train, even if it is for a refuge or asylum overseas.

In addition to the foregoing, the whole fulcrum of Nigerian environment is at the moment, overcharged with insecurity and different forms of criminal activities which makes it to be dreaded by both citizens and foreign nationals alike. Security challenge as observed by Madumere *et al.* (2020), has remained the incubus which continued to torment Nigeria since its independence in 1960. They contend that the activities of the militant groups in the Niger Delta region and the Pro-Biafran groups in the south east have made these regions insecure and unsafe for both habitation and business activities. The same is applicable to states in the North where Boko Haram insurgency has caused the death of thousands of persons and equally hampered economic activities and armed banditry e.g. kidnapping for ransom in North Western Nigeria (Ogazie, 2020). The situation keeps worsening on a daily basis instead of improving. The level of insecurity in the country today is not only unprecedented in the history of the nation but takes different forms such as armed struggle for political relevance (use of arms to achieve political goals), ritual killings, kidnappings, armed robbery, famers-herders clashes, communal clashes, ethno-religious clashes, banditry and insurgency (Uneze-Amby *et al.*, 2020). It however sends a fearful signal that as our environmental challenges burgeon, the containment measures of the government, which if put on a balance are lighter in weight than the challenges, do not yield positive results.

## ISSUES IN NIGERIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1960

Nigerian economy is described by many economic historians as a third world economy. This is because comparatively speaking the economy of Nigeria is poor, imbalanced and mono cultural as it heavily depends on revenue from crude petroleum for survival (Chete *et al.*, 2012). Before making progress in the development of her mineral resources, Nigeria had seen agriculture as one of her main sources of revenue. In the early 1960's, agriculture supplied 85% of Nigeria's export. The 85% represented less than 25% of the total agricultural production, the rest being food and raw materials for local consumption (Onwubiko, 1973). As a result of the development of her agricultural and oil factors, Nigeria's

international trade made huge progress. This can be seen from the recorded increase of her export value from £127,500.000 in 1957 to £186,692.000 in 1963. The value of her imports equally rose from £152,500.000 in 1957 to £207,526.000 in 1963 (Onwubiko, 1973).

The problem of Nigerian trade balance has started right from early 1960. It was during this period that Nigeria started experiencing unfavourable trade balance in the international market. Nigeria international trade experience since her independence has been characterized by adverse trade balance as she had excess of the value of imports over the value of exports year after year (Onwubiko, 1973). With the oil boom experience in the global oil market, Nigeria shifted gradually from export of agricultural products to pitch her tent on oil export. This made Nebo (2010) to describe Nigeria's economy as one that is essentially recursive and dangerously dependent on only one commodity-oil. According to him, from a robust agrarian economy with vast potentials for growth, Nigeria has metamorphosed into an economy that now imports agricultural products. In the seventies, the country generated tremendous income from oil and gradually and systematically underdeveloped the agricultural and other sectors. Only oil accounted for over 85% of Nigeria's export receipts in the 1970's. Fluctuation in the production of oil and glut in the global oil market sent the economy into a deep sleep, forcing a downward trend in the Gross National Product (GNP) (Nebo, 2010).

During the 1980's, the government made efforts to check the effect of the global economic recession which caused a serious decline in foreign exchange earnings, balance of payment disequilibrium and unemployment in the Nigerian economy. This affected the fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985) and made it to fail woefully (Chete *et al.*, 2012).

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was introduced in 1986 as an economic modality for revamping the moribund economy and for addressing the ineffectiveness of previous development planning efforts. The SAP enunciated objectives included promoting investment, stimulating non-oil exports, boosting industrialization, provision of base for private sector-led development, privatization of state-owned enterprises to promote industrial efficiency, develop and utilize domestic technology by encouraging accelerated development and use of local raw materials and intermediate inputs rather than imported ones (Chete *et al.*, 2012). Unfortunately, the austerity measures put in place by the government through SAP brought much hardship on Nigerian citizens. By the end of the eighties, the nation's economic outlook was so bleak that the World Bank classified Nigeria as a low-income country (Nebo, 2010). The ugly economic trend continued even in the 1990's as most of the oil money were not properly accounted for by the stakeholders in the oil sector.

In the early 2000's, Nigeria's economy started to stabilize gradually and the nation was able to record nearly

5% economic growth in the first half of 2000's. The nation's economy equally received a great boost in 2005 with the Paris Club cancelling Nigeria's huge external debt (Nebo, 2010). Later on, the economy started declining and this was mainly as a result of wide spread corruption among the leadership class and within the oil and gas sectors' environment (Oruwari and Nwaeke, 2015). Besides, no adequate effort was made by the government to mitigate the toxic effects of oil and gas exploration and exploitation in the oil rich zones of Nigeria. This impinged greatly on effective engagement in other aspects of economic activities within the zone.

Suffice it to say that oil and gas-based economy is now a Trojan horse and not a fillip to diversification and all round growth of the nation's economy. Nigerian economy is now characterized by imbalance in the allocation of investment resources to all sectors of the economy. Such sectors of the nation's economy include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, petroleum, gas. Water supply, construction, transport and communications, electricity and service are not being emphasized nor allocated significant investment capital and other resources needed to maximize sector outputs (Obasi, 2001). The above imbalance and inefficiency in the sectoral resource allocation is largely induced by bad governance and lack of visionary political leadership which have circumscribed the nation within the perigee of consumption economy instead of the apogee of production economy. Consumption economy is the product of gloomy and problematic economic environment where things are poorly planned and executed.

Nigerians, despite the plethora of human and natural resources available in the country have continued to suffer. The present economic hardship is caused by corrupt, bad and poor leadership styles of our unconscionable political elites (Ikime, 2018). There is in our economic environment a wide and an entrenched socio-political and economic exclusion engendered by bad governance. About 112 million Nigerians live below poverty line as at 2016, representing 67.1 percent of the country's total population. In 2017, report from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that Nigeria ranks 152 with a score of 0.527 out of 188 countries in Human Development Index (Dan-Azumi, 2018).

In the recent times, economic hardship has started biting harder on Nigerians with the removal of petroleum subsidy as a litre of fuel is being sold N680 as at 22/11/2023 in many parts of Nigeria. The essence of petroleum subsidy is to make petroleum products affordable by poor citizens and enhance the flow of economic activities in the country. As petroleum subsidy was removed by the new government on the 29th of May, 2023, the suffering of Nigerians has tripled, economic activities jeopardized and cost of living risen astronomically. Nigerians are now clamouring for a way out of the present economic mess in our economic environment. Can there be any immediate solution?

## **EFFECTS OF GOOD ENVIRONMENT ON PRODUCTIVITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

An environment can make or mar economic productivity and development; it motivates or retards motivation for greater productivity. Observation has shown that for meaningful economic development to take place in a developing economy like Nigeria, there must not only be planned alteration of productive structure but also alteration of environment to reduce fast degradation and indiscriminate dumping of hazardous wastes to bring about linear relationship between good economic environment and economic productivity.

Days are gone when development was said to be only the function of growth rate of the Gross National Product (GNP) which was supposed to account for the national expansion of output outpacing the increase in population (Ezeanyika, 1999) but involves also effective management of environment, provision of good and functional road network in rural areas, reduction of poverty and environmentally induced diseases and so on.

A good economic environment should be safe and healthy with potential hazards reduced to the barest minimum. An economic environment deals with the environment where production, distribution and consumption of goods and services are made available in the community (Ojo, 2016).

In every economic environment, there are economic institutions, such as factories, banks, agriculture, money, import, export, market, private and public sectors. Ojo (2016) categorizes economic institutions into four namely trading sector, farming sector, manufacturing sector and lastly services sector. These categories of economic institutions cannot function efficiently in an unsuitable environment. Economic environment is the vital and most essential aspect of environment that impels, propels and services other environments (Ojo, 2016).

Good environment guarantees safety and well-being of industrial workers, bankers can only operate, function well where there is safety. Local and foreign investors will only invest into the nation's economy when they are sure that their lives and businesses will be protected from harm. Private and public sectors alike need good and functional road network, peaceful and clean environments for maximum productivity. Those in the agricultural sectors, farmers, herders, fishers, agricultural extension workers, poultry farmers, pig rearers and so on, need good environment with portable water; good grass land, protection from flood, wind and drought; safe, peaceful, hazard-free environment; and good road network for high productivity and easy access to market for sale of their products.

Studies have shown that most of our rural environment known for the production of agro-based products lack good road network required for easy transportation of farm products to rural markets and urban areas where they are

in high demand. An environment bereft of functional network of rail lines, good waterways and interconnected road system can hardly foster or sustain effervescence of economic activities, industrial growth, productive efficiency, mass transportation of sellers and buyers and industrial workers to industrial hubs, especially now that the complexity of the patterns of trade and transport has increased. A good environment with an improved means of transportation will enable increasing quantities of various food items and manufactured goods to become significantly involved in trading activities (Onokala, 2002). Regrettably, Nigerian environment is replete with uncanny factors that stubbornly impede industrialization, economic development and greater investment in import and export trades.

## **THE CRUSHING INFLUENCE OF HARSH ENVIRONMENT ON NIGERIAN ECONOMY**

Nothing undermines Nigeria's efforts at joining the league of vibrant and developed economies today like harsh and unpropitious environment, indiscriminate dumping of toxic and hazardous wastes, poor management of liquid and solid wastes, un-disposed refuse in streets, oil seepage and spillage, gas flaring, bush burning, deforestation, carbon monoxide emissions from automobiles and chimneys of kitchens and industrial plants, industrial effluent, human wastes, incineration of tyres, polythenes and household dumps are some of the agents that deteriorate, degenerate and make our environments harsh. Environment contaminated with refuse and industrial effluent poses a serious threat to human health and business activities. In some of our major cities, one sees mountainous heaps of stinking refuse and very dirty gutters that have not been dredged over a decade, examples are dump sites along Mile 2, Ijesha road, Surulere L.G.A, Lagos, Ikot Ekpene road, Aba, Douglas road, Owerri, Rumuokoro, PortHarcourt (along Owerri PortHarcourt road) and so on. This discourages traders and workers in these cities as it makes their lives uncomfortable.

Erosion-induced degradation is rife in most of our environments known for housing a preponderance of economic activities. Some of these places in Imo State such as Umuchima in Ideato South LGA, Amaifeke in Orlu LGA, Egbeada, Akwakuma and Mbieri in Mbaitoli LGA, Oba in Idemili North LGA, Anambra State, are gradually being cut off from their neighbouring communities by erosion. This also has tremendous negative effects on their economic activities. Other agents include, insecurity (insurgency and terrorism), widespread corruption and high incidence of crime in our environments. Terrorist attacks by Boko Haram, armed bandits and herdsmen in Northern States have rendered those areas unsafe and deleterious for human lives and business activities. Their

attacks have triggered a massive wave of displacement in the north, leading to the death of 20,000 persons and displacement of 2.3 million from their homes between 2009 and 2015 (Agbaegbu *et al.*, 2020).

The same thing is applicable to south eastern states, especially Ebonyi and Enugu states where herdsmen attacks have displaced many communities, destroyed their farms and disrupted their economic activities. The activities of unknown gun men (UGM) in the south east and militants in the Niger Delta states of Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states have equally made those areas dangerous and hostile to lives and economic productivity. Oil workers are being kidnapped, local and foreign investors are also being kidnapped by criminals in these areas and this creates fear and feeling of insecurity among workers, businessmen and women and investors (local and foreign). Insecurity in any environment constitutes a threat to lives and properties, crushes economic activities, discourages local and foreign investors and ultimately retards human and economic development in a nation (Agbaegbu *et al.*, 2020). When many farmers and traders are internally displaced, you could imagine what has happened to their businesses and contributions to the nation's economy.

Economic institutions such as banks, markets, industries, factories: that are environmentally disadvantaged will certainly have low productive capacity and little business patronage from clients/customers. Harsh and poorly managed environmental conditions impinge upon macro economic performance. Economic failure can result from the failure of the operators to take into account the total economic values derived by society from the structural features and environmental functions of ecosystems (OECD, 1994). Our inability to make our environment safe, clean, auspicious and conducive for business growth and expansion constitutes a colossal challenge to Nigerian economic operations and economic development.

#### **AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT: A MUST FOR OUR 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA**

Having seen that good environment is indispensable in achieving economic growth and development in a complex and rapidly changing world today, wisdom demands that we invest reasonable resources in pursuance of suitable and sustainable environment as we invest in trade, agriculture, industrial projects, mining, oil exploration, timber processing; and all manner of economic activities in order to bring about a relational stability between our environmental development and economic development. An economic development-friendly environment is a catalyst for high productivity, efficient service delivery, investors stimulation, high profit margin, sustained increase in the volume of trading activities and qualitative

macro-economic performance. An economic development friendly environment is a sine quanon in our 21st century Nigeria where greater emphasis is being laid on private sector-driven economy as the basis for rapid economic growth and sustainable development. Hence, it will be contradictory as well as counterproductive if Nigeria fails to provide a good environment that is capable of supporting productive-efficiency, free flow of goods/services and economic development as she envisions a boost in her macro-economic performance so as to join the league of developed and stable economies by the year 2030. As enthused by Onu (2005), Nigeria should lead the way to create a suitable environment for promoting trade and unfettered economic co-operations among countries of Africa and also with the rest of the world.

There are insecurity, political instability and environmentally-induced obstacles hurting trade and economic relations between Nigeria and other African countries in the recent times. In this regard, all hazardous environmental conditions that hamper business activities in Nigeria and impede trade and economic relations between the country and other countries in Africa and other places in the globe should be urgently addressed and effective environmental regulatory measures put in place to ensure environmental sustainability and control of illegal dumping of hazardous wastes in our environment. The malaise of corruption is a threat to the survival of Nigerian environment and economy (Adam, 2019). Corruption has stifled operational efficiency of many governmental agencies in Nigeria including the Ministry of Environment/Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), thus institutional environmental regulations could not be effectively implemented. According to Usman in Adams (2019), corruption makes our leaders to lack the temerity and will power to provide effective leadership in all facets of Nigerian life but only empowers them to siphon public funds into private pockets.

Corruption constitutes a serious setback to our economic growth and development and must be eradicated from our environment to spur national economic transformation and national development. Thus, the need for economic development-friendly environment in the 21st century Nigeria cannot be compromised or be substituted for anything that bears resemblance of it in our burgeoning thirst for sustainable economic development.

#### **CONCLUSION**

No doubt, environmental issues cannot be successfully sidelined in our current striving to revamp our nation's economy through private sector stimulation in industrialization, downstream oil marketing and agriculture. Environmental issues are, to say the least, very complex, herculean and difficult to deal with. They are interrelated

with other issues which are typically difficult to disaggregate into manageable parts capable of solution or at least, of amelioration (Agwu, 2006). For the government to invest heavily in agriculture, oil exploration, trade, industry eg the mining sectors and other sectors of our nation's economy, there must be a commensurate investment in environmental sustainability to ensure a conducive, safer and cleaner environment for maximum productivity and sustainable macroeconomic performance in the country. There is the need for the government of the federation to put in mind the centrality of good environmental management to national economic development. No amount of political jingoism will successfully carpet the ever increasing challenges of environmental degradation, air pollution, water pollution, climate change and the concomitant global warming; indiscriminate dumping of toxic and hazardous wastes, erosion, insecurity, and alarming increase in criminal activities which constitute serious threats to healthy living and economic development in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

For effective management of multifarious environmental challenges inhibiting Nigeria's economic development, this paper therefore makes the following recommendations as the way forward:

1. There is the need for the government to invest more resources in environmental management and degradation control and equip the Ministry of Environment/Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) with advanced technologies with which to monitor illegal dumping of toxic wastes and environmental degradation in our country.
2. There is also the need for the government at all levels (Federal, State and Local) to ensure that persons with requisite knowledge and expertise in environmental issues are appointed as Honourable Federal Ministers and State Commissioners of Environment. This is because the complex nature of environmental issues can only be handled by persons who have the managerial capacity to proactively and pragmatically approach them without inflicting more harm on individuals and the environment.
3. Existing environment laws and institutional environmental regulations should be diligently and seriously enforced by the government to ensure that indiscriminate dumping of hazardous wastes, deforestation, air and water pollution, incidence of poorly managed oil spillage and seepage and so on are reduced to the barest minimum.
4. Public and private sectors' workers, business men and women, farmers of all kinds, herdsmen, traders, industrialists, and ordinary citizens in Nigeria should

cooperate with the government in protecting and keeping our environment safe, clean and free from toxic wastes. They should endeavour also to obey environmental laws and regulations regularly and consistently to ensure healthy living and economic development-friendly environment.

5. The government should promptly and urgently rid our environment of the activities of insurgents, bandits, terrorist herdsmen, unknown gunmen, kidnappers, and criminals which constitute serious threats to life sustenance, peace, social stability, and economic development.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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