

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper attempts to make an exposition on the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process in Nigeria from 1975 to 2004. The discussion is organized under a number of sub-headings, starting with an overview of the process of the institutionalization of EIA in Nigeria. This is followed by a detailed presentation of EIA within the framework of the country's plethora of environmental legislation and guidelines. Next follows a summary of the activities indicated in the Procedural Guidelines of EIA Act 86 of 1992, and the organizational and institutional framework for EIA in Nigeria, focusing on the role of the Federal Ministry of Environment (FMENV). Therefore comes a more detailed presentation of the diverse issues involved in the study and review stages of Nigeria's EIA process the role of state-level and local government environmental agencies, and the problems they encounter in the country's EIA process. Next is a comprehensive and critical treatment of the EIA implementation experience in Nigeria and well emphasis is laid on the performance of the FMENV, the country's apex environmental authority. This is followed by an appraisal of the overall quality of Nigeria's EIA process experience and performance. The paper is capped by conclusions which tie up the loose ends.

Keyword: EIA, FMENV, Prospects, Challenges, Nigeria

Introduction

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) process, over the years continues in the implementation of EIA-derived measures and plans (World Bank, 1997). The ultimate effectiveness or benefit of EIA can only be determined from looking at the results "on the ground" whether during implementation of a project or, even more effectively, after completion (World Bank, 1997; Okaru and Barannik, 1996; Matri ed., 1996). Above all, implementation constitutes one of the most vital elements in the sustainable development transformation process. This is because project implementation tests the quality of the EIA in two major ways (World Bank, 1997). It reveals the extent to which the EIA report accurately identifies and assesses the environmental impacts of projects; and the effectiveness of the EIA-derived plans and measures intended to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts and to manage and monitor environmental quality.

With specific reference to FMENV implementation experience in the EIA process in Nigeria, the benefit rests in the fact that in the process of managing and monitoring environmental quality, the performance and capabilities of institutions, and individuals in charge of implementing EIA-

related project activities are shown up as well (World Bank, 1997). The implication is that the performance of an EIA which is determined by the outcome of the quality of its implementation depends on the implementing authority. That an EIA is founded on sound principles alone cannot automatically shield the EIA process and product from failure as a valuable tool in decision making. The institutional and decision making contexts count for much in ensuring that the EIA turns out to be a valuable decision making tool capable of providing solutions during the project implementation stage.

The concern of this section is to appraise the performance and capabilities of the FMENV and its predecessor (FEPA) in implementing the EIA process in Nigeria, based on operations between 1995 and 2002. Also, the influence of EIA findings on project design will be reviewed. Information and data in this section are based on Dayo, Ajakaiye, Eke, Omoloyin and Adinye (2002).

The EIA Process

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) process is an interdisciplinary and multistep procedure to ensure that environmental considerations are included in decisions regarding projects that may impact the environment. Simply defined, the EIA process helps identify the possible environmental effects of a proposed activity and how those impacts can be mitigated. The purpose of the EIA process is to inform decision-makers and the public of the environmental consequences of implementing a proposed project. The EIA document itself is a technical tool that identifies, predicts, and analyzes impacts on the physical environment, as well as social, cultural, and health impacts (Mastri, 1996). If the EIA process is successful, it identifies alternatives and mitigation measures to reduce the environmental impact of a proposed project. The EIA process also serves an important procedural role in the overall decision-making process by promoting transparency and public involvement. It is important to note that the EIA process does not guarantee that a project will be modified or rejected if the process reveals that there will be serious environmental impacts. In some countries, a decision-maker may, in fact, choose the most environmentally-harmful alternative, as long as the consequences are disclosed in the EIA. In other words, the EIA process ensures an informed decision, but not necessarily an environmentally beneficial decision, (Omoloyin, and Adinye, 2002).

Types of EIA Follow-up

The types of EIA follow-up activities usually carried out by the FMENV and project proponents during the implementation and post commissioning of new projects are (Dayo, Ajakaiye, Eke, Omoloyin, and Adinye, 2002):

- Surveillance and inspection of projects and project sites by the FMENV;
- Implementation and post commissioning monitoring by the FMENV;
- Submission of post-impact or post commissioning studies by the project proponent;
- Implementation of contingency plans to manage large effects .e.g. oil spills; and
- Audits or evaluation of continued compliance of brown field projects.

There are two major concerns here. The first is to ascertain the capability and level of performance of the FMENV in follow-up activities in EIA especially as regards mitigation,

monitoring and auditing measures. The second is to appraise the extent to which follow-ups have positively impacted on the implementation of the projects submitted in the period 1995-2002 to the FMENV.

Underlying Deficiencies in Follow-up in EIA Implementation

Overall, follow-up was a weak link in the EIA process in the period under review. There is every reason to believe that the situation has further deteriorated since then. This is due to the increasing number of EIA projects handled by the FMENV without a corresponding improvement in human and material resources available to the apex environmental authority. As outlined by Dayo et al, (2002) the specific deficiencies and lapses in the EIA implementation in Nigeria in the period 1995-2002 are illustrated by the level of performance of the FMENV. For example,

- ❖ Only 30 percent of projects that passed through the EIA process were exposed to follow-up;
- ❖ For the oil and gas sector, the figure was about 58 percent;
- ❖ Proponents were in general not complying with the spirit of the EIA Act due to failure to submit post impact assessment reports regularly;
- ❖ Impacts assessed were always highly generalized; and
- ❖ There was no evidence that environmental management plans (EMPs) were implemented.

It is essential that the FMENV has the power not only to refuse to grant development consent but also to impose enforceable conditions when granting consent on the basis of the information in the EIA report. Above all, the FMENV should be able to exercise these powers when appropriate. This leads us on to an examination of the phenomenon of *agency capture* in the EIA process to which the performance and capabilities of institutions could be most prone to.

In order to ensure that there is continuous improvement in EIA implementation, building a robust institutional capacity is highly desirable. One major constraint to the solution of environmental problems is the limited capacity of countries to implement national standards and international agreements. Even in Western Europe, compliance with European Union standards and agreements varies markedly across member states (Alberti, 1994). Given the inability of the FMENV to carry out basic follow-ups for onshore oil and gas operations, the critical task of assessing current pollution levels from offshore oil and gas production is beyond the ministry for now. The key concerns offshore are oil waste and wastewater discharges from offshore oil and gas production, gas and oil separation plant (GOSP) and tie-in platforms, and determination of compliance with local and international effluent and receiving water quality standards. In developing countries lapses and failures in the EIA process could be compounded by the phenomenon of agency capture of the environmental authority.

Agency Capture

Agency capture has the potential to undermine EIA implementation in a number of ways. Rickson, Western and Burdge (1990) have explored the phenomenon of agency capture quoting works by Edelman (1964), Rickson (1976), Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979), Schnaiberg (1980), and Rickson and Ramsey (1984). To illustrate the major issues involved. Quoting Sabatier and

Mazmanian (1979), agency capture is a process by which the agency-industry relationships result in:

- Concealment or selective interpretation of quantitative or qualitative information about impacts; and
- * Collusion between agency regulators and their industry clientele to actively subvert the original intention of legislation and legislators.

As pointed out by Rickson *et al*, (1990), a basic hypothesis is that in the long run, government agencies are controlled by the industries they relate to. The model is not exclusive to the industry-agency relationship but applicable to any private or public interest groups. The way agency capture works is that, if captured by powerful interests, agencies enforce laws, apply policy, and report data in a manner desirable to those interests. Agency behaviour becomes a way for developers to substantially evade the law while securing agency legitimization of their operations. According to Rickson *et al*, (1990, quoting Edelman, 1964) this creates or sustains the impression that induces the acquiescence of the public in the face of private tactics that might otherwise be expected to produce resentment, protest or resistance. Under such circumstance, environmental impact assessment reports function mainly to control public opinion about the social and environmental consequences of development rather than promoting fundamental change (Rickson *et al*, 1990; paraphrasing Schnaiberg, 1980).

The reason why agency capture has been raised in this discussion is that it could easily happen in circumstances where the agency is not adequately equipped, in terms of human and material resources, to carry out its functions. The solution is to provide access to technical and professional expertise and to ensure the availability of adequate legal, financial and political resources. The FMENV is in short supply of all these. These are variables which are required to sustain the agency in its contacts with powerful interests. To these variables should be added the availability of "highly trained agency professionals with a great capacity for innovation and ability. When an HA environmental authority is so equipped, then it becomes possible to resist capture by powerful interest groups rather than responding submissively to external pressure.

Examples of the Influence of EIA in Project Implementation

EIAs are clearly intended to improve project design and help implementation by identifying and addressing key environmental and social issues that otherwise might be ignored. Thus, it is reasonable to expect EIAs to contribute in a positive way to the overall performance of large-scale projects in Category I (with potential significant adverse environmental impact). This is particularly the case with the oil and gas sector development initiatives in or near environmentally sensitive areas, with projects that are problematic from both environmental as well as social stand points or that may cause unforeseen environmental problems.

Despite the deficiencies and weaknesses in project implementation by the FMENV outlined earlier, the EIA process in Nigeria has recorded some successes in the integration of EIA-derived plans into specific projects. The two examples which demonstrate the effectiveness of project level EIA as a decision support tool are contained in Dayo *et al* (2002:11-12). They are:

- The development of Asubi airstrip in Warri by Shell Petroleum Development Company Limited (SPDC); and
- Implementation of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Project Trains I and II.

(a) Development of Asubi Airstrip in Warri by SPDC: This project has been retained as an example of the positive influence of EIA through follow-up, mitigation, monitoring and management plan on a specific project. During the implementation of this project a follow-up initiative by the FMENV led to a change in the earlier decision on sand sourcing. As a result of this change, sand was sourced from a dredged-up lake instead of from the formerly intended river sources in response to the outcome of hydrological studies. Two other major positive developments which resulted from the cooperative follow-up with the project proponent were (Dayo *et al*, 2002:11):

* Creation of a wild life sanctuary in the area; and

- Commitment of the project proponent not to use toxic chemicals in greening an approved golf course,

(b) Successful Implementation of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Plants (Trains): In this example, the FMENV was able to meet the challenge of integrating EIA more fully into overall project preparation and implementation for LNG Trains I and II. The Nigerian Liquefied National Gas (NLNG) asked the FMENV for a waiver on EIA for additional trains after the successful implementation of LNG Trains I and II which were successfully exposed to the EIA process. The outcome of the post commissioning monitoring carried out by the FMENV on Trains I and II convinced the environmental authority to mandate NLNG to carry out EIA for Trains III and IV. This decision by the FMENV "had a positive rub-on effect with funding agencies. It also engendered support for the project by local stakeholders" (Dayo *et al*, 2002:12).

Overall Appraisal

In Nigeria, large scale projects subjected to full EIA preparation and implementation based on the EIA Act 86 of 1992 are now maturing to the extent that allows some appraisal of the overall quality of the EIA procedure in Nigeria. Going by the key lessons from KIA experience in developed and developing countries, and tens of thousands of EIS which have been produced, EIAs conducted in Nigeria and other developing countries do not match the high standards of those of industrial nations. All the same, most of the problems associated with EIA preparation and implementation in Nigeria are not unique to the country. They are similar to the problems associated with EIA in other developing countries. Even in developed countries with long experience in high standard, traditional, full EIA, problems persist in EIA preparation and implementation. Indeed, MacDonald (1994) has gone as far as positing that an ideal approach to environmental assessment does not currently exist. In the Nigerian context, it is also evident that it is impossible for an institution such as the FMENV, the country's central environmental authority, to perform outside the limits set by their experience, resources and machinery of control.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the EIA Process in Nigeria

The strengths, weaknesses and the overall quality of the EIA process in Nigeria are examined against the above observations.

a) The strengths include the following:

- The preparation and implementation of the EIA process in Nigeria have followed the traditional steps in EIA supported by the requisite policy, legislative and institutional formula for EIA;
- The FMENV has acquired an acceptable level of capability in EIA (especially scoping, TOR, and review) and this has made possible the successes so far achieved in the EIA process;
- The procedure in Nigeria is open and transparent, and there is accountability. The cost is paid for by the proponent and it is subject to public review. (Foreign investors place a high premium on transparency in the EIA process);
- Public participation has been encouraged including freedom to criticize projects which have adverse environmental and social impacts. Since the 1990s, Nigerians have become increasingly aware, of the consequences of unsustainable development activities. The level of public awareness in environmental matters in Nigeria can be gauged not only from the pandemic crises and protests over on-going environmental pollution but especially by the proactive, strident, public protests in the case of proposed projects perceived to have a great potential for adverse impacts. A case in point is the organized public protest which accompanied the effort of the Federal Government to dredge the River Niger and selected creeks in the delta area (Adegoke, 1999:155; Anon, 1999). Citizen awareness and freedom to publicly protest in the face of perceived environmental threat are captured in the article by Ibiba (1999) in Nigeria's most influential national daily *The Guardian* of Wednesday 31st March 1999 titled "*Fears Still Over Dredging the Niger*";
- The procedures and capacity for determining whether an activity is likely to significantly affect the environment and therefore should be subject to EIA have been clearly defined by the FMENV; and
- Educational institutions in Nigeria have developed and incorporated environmental education and EIA training, especially at the tertiary level.

(b) Weaknesses

The weaknesses in the EIA procedure in Nigeria which should be addressed comprises the following:

1. Public Participation: Public participation is both strength and a weakness. Although host communities are increasingly involved in the EIA process, public participation nevertheless remains one of the weak aspects of the EIA process in Nigeria. The critical factor is a lack of appropriate skills and prior experience in public participation on the part of both the EIA teams and the FMENV. This weakness limits the capacity to carry the host community and affected population along or determine appropriately what should be ploughed back to the people and the environment (Nwafor, 1998; Adcwoye and Adegoke eds., 1999; Dayo *ft. al*, 2002). The escalating crises and conflicts resulting from the increasing severity of environmental

degradation make the point. A related area of weakness is the lack of a social impact assessment (SIA) component in the EIA process in Nigeria. Current efforts leave much to be desired.

2. Dearth of Requisite Human Resource: The dearth of specialist individuals in Nigeria with the capacity to design, conduct, review and evaluate HIA is another major weakness of the entire system. While the numbers of experts are increasing, there are presently nowhere near enough experts and the numbers may not be growing fast enough to make a difference soon.

3. EIA Report (i.e. EIS): We recall that the NEPA Act of 1969 which established EIA in the US emphasized that the EIS, as an aid to decision making, should be accurate, concise and as clear as possible. The problem of the documentation of the results of EIA studies has persisted not only with Nigerian EIA but with IIA in other countries and is characterized by poor standards. They remain voluminous and unwieldy (encyclopaedic) instead of being accurate, concise and clear documents that are, as far as possible, predictive.

There is a preference for full blown HIA in the EIA process in Nigeria even when this is not suitable in many situations. This weakness is partly the result of terms of reference (TOR) that are ill-defined. Also, there is often no clear indication in the EIS of information that was not available, and no discussion of uncertainty regarding any prediction of future impacts.

4. EIA Team: The selection of an appropriate (in terms of technical and management capabilities and competence) EIA team is a key challenge facing effectiveness in conducting and implementing EIA in Nigeria (Nwafor, 1999). Often, the EIA team put together by consultants is skewed in favour of experts from the biological and physical sciences. On the other hand relevant social science disciplines (economics, sociology/anthropology, and geography) are poorly represented and oftentimes not included. Under such circumstances, Nigeria's understanding of what constitutes "*environment*" is restricted to the biophysical dimension. This is in sharp contrast to the increasing incorporation of social concerns in EIA. Indeed, the term environmental impact assessment is increasingly being replaced by a more balanced term -- environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) (see e.g. UN, 2001).

5. Defective System of Accreditation of EIA Consultants: The FMKNV accreditation process, which we had earlier examined, makes it possible for unqualified persons to be enlisted as EIA consultants because the FMENV does not insist on restricting accreditation as consultants to experts who are knowledgeable in EIA. By contrast, the oil and gas sector insists on restricting accreditation to experts with proven track records as EIA consultants. Even for these ones, the quality of their EIA remains modest at the very best.

6. The Culpability of the Government: In Nigeria, the weakest aspect of environmental management and protection in general and the EIA procedure in particular is the ambivalence (e.g. continuous shifting of the deadline to end gas flaring) and indifference which is manifest at all tiers of government. For example, if the oil companies are destroying the environment in the Niger Delta, then the destruction is being done jointly with the Federal Government. The reason is that the NNPC is the joint venture partner to these oil companies and has more than 50 percent share in each joint venture partnership. The inevitable conclusion is that the government is by far

the biggest polluter and the biggest agent of destruction of the environment via the operators of the joint venture scheme.

7. Implementation: The implementation problems in the EIA process in Nigeria, which we examined in some detail earlier on, are reiterated here because improvement in these areas is critical to the effectiveness of the EIA process in Nigeria. They comprise the following:

- ❖ the problem of lack of an effective monitoring and enforcement unit in the FMENV;
- ❖ the absence of follow-up guidelines and lack of feedbacks through follow-ups;
- ❖ lack of cooperation between FMENV and state environmental institutions for follow-up; and
- ❖ The absence of clear responsibility for what happens to the EMP.

Prospects of EIA in Nigeria

The future needs of the EIA process in Nigeria can be determined from the lessons of experience of all stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of EIA for proposed large scale projects in the country in the last decade. The needs centre on strengthening the process by addressing the weaknesses outlined above, as well as bringing about improvement through a careful implementation of the following suggestions:-

(a) Address Social Dimensions more forcefully: The social dimensions in environmental management and especially EIA should be more forcefully addressed by ensuring that stakeholders are involved in the design and implementation of projects. The focus of the EIA process needs to go beyond striking a balance between project implementation and protecting the environment (Ozumba, Ozumba and Obobeifo, 1999). Rather, concern should shift from the natural environment to the human environment; to enable the host communities achieve a sustainable future (SPDC, 2003; 2004).

Moreover, the EIA process should ensure that greater attention is paid to cultural issues and social costs and benefits, and that the benefits of intervention are carefully discussed and addressed. Nigeria should seriously consider moving away from environmental impact assessment to adopt environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) in any proposed reform in the country's EIA legislation. However, since the environmental authorities have proved incapable of enforcing the existing laws, there is no reason to believe that any new laws will be better enforced.

(b) Need to Commence EIA Early: EIA should commence early in the project cycle. In implementing the EIA process in Nigeria, the FMENV should set priorities carefully. As a fledgling environmental institution, the FMENV must take into account the fact that not all preparation and implementation problems can be tackled at once. To this end, the FMENV needs to set realistic standards and enforce them. Where Western standards are set, failing to meet them undermines the credibility of government. A better approach is to set realistic standards with phased targets and ensure that they are effectively enforced.

(c) Reinforcement of Screening: There is a need to reinforce environmental screening especially to detect small projects with the potential for cumulative impacts. This should serve as a way to incorporate environmental opportunities much earlier in the project (particularly at the

design stage) as opposed to merely avoiding environmental problems. Also, there should be a better focus on primary data quality even when secondary data are used for practical purposes.

(d) Use of Credible Professionals: The FMENV should utilize credible KIA professionals with the requisite experience and expertise in EIA preparation and implementation as consultants. To this end, FMENV should collaborate with the relevant experts in the country's tertiary institutions as well as in the private sector, and professional environmental institutions and environmental non-governmental organizations.

(e) Clear Definition of Responsibilities for EMP: There should be a clear definition of the institutional arrangement for what happens to the EMP, since the principal influence of the more typical project-level EIA as an effective tool is through mitigation, monitoring and management plans. EMPs should incorporate specific actions and their timings; the division of responsibilities and the costs should be sufficiently defined. For the EIA process to be useful in decision making there should be feedbacks through follow-ups from the decision maker. In order to achieve this goal the FMENV should devise a properly structured follow-up programme (Attin and Eragbae, 1999).

(f) Need to Integrate Environment into other Sectors: The FMENV should approach the environment as primarily a cross-cutting issue and pursue its integration into other sectoral programmes rather than treating it as a separate issue. The possibility of direct environmental support with strong links to poverty alleviation and sustainable development depends on the extent to which the environment is integrated into other sectors. The FMENV should refocus its activities in this direction.

(g) Optimization of the Interactions and Integration of Social, Economic and Environmental Factors: The FMENV should seek to optimize the interactions and integration of the social, economic and environmental factors to achieve sustainable development. EIA could play a pivotal role in this respect through improvements in its procedures to ensure that environmental issues are properly integrated into policies, plans and programmes. In the face of this challenge, the project-by-project approach that is now routinely practiced in Nigeria is no longer adequate for the broad environmental policy, institutional building and other aspects of resources management now needed in the country (see for example, Okaru and Barannik, 1996; World Bank, 1997).

To this end, the FMENV must begin to look at a much broader and longer perspective and understanding of the interrelationship of EIA to planning management and the long term success of projects. For proposed policy initiatives or development plans and programmes, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) with sectoral and regional issues will be more appropriate. The Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals Development has blazed the trail in SEA application with the production of a *Sectoral Environmental and Social Assessment for Sustainable Management of Mineral Resources Project in Nigeria* (Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals Development, 2004).

(h) Reform of National Environmental Laws and Legislation: The existing national laws and legislation fall short of an instrument for effective environmental protection. These, therefore, need to be comprehensively amended to meet present-day needs and realities. For example, most

of the existing penalty provisions are grossly understated and cannot provide a deterrent effect. Moreover, they are not commensurate with the harm or damage inflicted on the environment and, through it, the population.

Furthermore, many of the existing laws still require pertinent regulations to be made by the designated authority, which is usually the minister charged with such responsibility under the legislation. In most cases these provisions in the existing legislation are not complied with. Even in the few cases where the statutory provisions have been effected and the regulations made, these are not adequate to advance the cause of environmental protection.

There is, therefore, the need to comply with these provisions under the principal legislation, and the regulations (i.e. subsidiary legislation) made pursuant thereto could serve as a legal mechanism to correct the inadequacies of the principal legislation. In passing the regulations, due consideration should be given to the contemporary environmental protection values in furtherance of the goals and objectives of the National Policy on Environment.

The future needs of the FMENV (as outlined above) would be better met through increased support for institutional strengthening by multilateral and bilateral agencies and international environmental institutions, notably the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Their cooperative support is very much needed to enable the FMKNV guide the *El A.* process in Nigeria to the path of 21st century environmental management, based on mainstreaming environmental issues into socio-economic development.

Conclusions

Environmental impact assessment-can act as a catalyst to rationalize the management of the environment in Nigeria and other developing countries. However, this goal cannot be achieved in a climate in which the EIA institutions are often poorly coordinated and under-funded. In Nigeria, government has not established environmental protection as a high priority as evidenced by the persistent and continuous under-funding. The country's policy on environmental protection specifically requires the preparation of EIAs for new large-scale projects. This has been accompanied by the introduction of the necessary legal, legislative and institutional framework and reforms to manage the EIA process. Project proponents, on their part, have accepted the inevitability of EIA including environmental monitoring and audit in spite of the perception of added costs and delays. The reality on the ground is that enforcement is poorly implemented.

The response of the FMENV as an institution to the evolving challenges of preparing and implementing the country's EIA process has left much to be desired. Much work needs to be done in order to achieve effective and result-oriented overall oversight of EIA process preparation and implementation. In particular, it is vital that the FMENV, as the country's apex environmental authority, maintains a strong follow-up and review capacity especially for environmental monitoring and audit. Also, the EIA process in Nigeria should not respond only to legislation and guidelines. Rather it needs to move away from the traditional KIA approaches which respond only to guidelines or legislation towards more innovative assessment and cumulative EIA analysis, and make EIA more useful in decision making and more user-friendly.

To achieve this, EIA should move on to higher grounds to incorporate key issues such as sustainable development, climate change, poverty alleviation and public participation. Such an approach constitutes part of the effort to strengthen social impact assessment.

While competence in undertaking EIA in Nigeria or in evaluating EIA reports is available, enhanced capacity is certainly needed for more effective environmental management and to satisfactorily incorporate environmental issues into development. The overall aim should be the strengthening of the environmental management system as a whole not just the FMENV and state and local government environmental agencies in isolation. This should be expanded through increased awareness within the various ministries, parastatals, the private sector and the general public about the importance of EIA. The awareness campaign should be broadly focused on the importance of environmental protection and the linkage between the environment and sustainable development, climate change, health and wellbeing.

Since the reality is that 'EIA has evolved as an ongoing political process within development planning (Smith, 1993), the effectiveness of EIA in Nigeria as elsewhere will always be limited by the political context. By the political context is meant the degree to which the relevant authorities are willing or able to make environmentally sound development a priority (MacDonald, 1994). In addition, the objective of EIA should be to strengthen the policy and institutional framework to protect the poor and better manage the environment in ways that benefit them. In Nigeria, this calls for the improvement of the inefficient, corrupt and ineffective system of governance which leads to the environment being relatively neglected and not integrated into development policies, plans and programmes at national, state and local government levels.

Finally, the various environmental agencies, led by the FMENV, should take the initiative and tighten their internal EIA procedures in anticipation of the changes urgently needed in the country's regulatory framework decentralization and devolution of responsibilities - and to modify EIA to reflect the ideals of sustainability, public participation, poverty reduction, and climate change concerns. In addition, project proponents and industry can contribute to social wellbeing in an environmentally sustainable manner through participatory processes which provide an opportunity for firms to demonstrate this effectively to all stakeholders. A pre-condition for the achievement of this laudable goal is the existence of an atmosphere of a business-host community relationship that emphasizes open communication and transparency rather than confrontation.

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