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NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

It is a remarkable feeling to be surrounded by various natural resources which can provide financial and health remedies that support the livelihood and well being of mankind. Natural resources are not man made, if not they will be termed as “artificial”. Natural resources are resources that exist without any action of human kind. These include all valued characteristics such as magnetic, gravitational, electrical properties and forces, etc. On earth, it includes sunlight, atmosphere, water, land (all minerals) along with all vegetation, crops and animal life that naturally subsists upon or within the …. Identified characteristics and substances.

There are various methods of categorizing natural resources, these include the source of origin, state of development, and by their renewability. On the basis of origin, natural resources are divided into Biotic resources (obtained from biosphere) such as coal and petroleum and biotic resources (obtained from non-living, non-organic materials) such as land, fresh water, air, rare-earth elements, etc. On the stage of development, natural resources may be refined in the following ways: potential resources (which may be in the future), actual resources, i.e resources that have been surveyed, quantified and qualified, reserve resources and stock resources 9resources that have been surveyed but cannot be used due to the lack of technology) e.g. hydrogen. Finally, on the basis of recovery rate, natural resources are divided into renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources are replenished naturally and are continuously available such as air, water, wind, etc. Their quantities are not noticeably affected by human consumption. Non-renewable resources on the other hand, either form slowly or do not naturally form in the environment. The most common resources moulded in this category are minerals.

With a deeply rooted understanding of the meaning of natural resources, we can dive into the matter of natural resources management.

Natural resource management is the engineering and regulation of natural resources with a particular focus on how management affects the quality of life for both present and future generations. It deals with managing the way people and natural landscapes interact. This management brings about land use planning, water management, biodiversity conservation, and the future sustainability of industries like agriculture, mining, fisheries and forestry. Natural resources management specifically focuses on a scientific and technical understanding of resources and ecology and life-supporting capacity of those management.

When it comes to natural resources management in Nigeria, we have a variety of both renewable and non-renewable resources. Nigeria’s most economically valuable minerals are crude oil, natural gas, coal, tin and columbite, which are based on extraction. In Nigeria, petroleum which was first discovered in 1956, is the most important source of government revenue and foreign exchange but is diminishing and becoming insignificant as the world is advancing technologically. This just proves that at a certain point in the nearest future, crude oil will no longer generate a high percentage of government revenue in Nigeria. Apart from that, petroleum oil is also toxic for most life forms and episodic. Chronic pollution of the environment by oil causes major ecological disturbance and disorder. Marine environments are especially vulnerable since oil spills of coastal regions.

Currently, there has been a drastic fall in the prize of oil per barrel which has dangerously exposed us to oil crash.

So what is the way forward? What alternative natural resources do Nigeria possess that can be developed to profit and generate both government revenue as well as employment for the nation? The first set of resources that can be developed are agricultural resources. Nigeria is abundantly blessed in the agricultural sector. Nigeria is predominantly still an agricultural society. Approximately 70%of the population of Nigeria engages in agricultural production at a subsistence level. Nigeria’s wide range of climate variations allows it to produce a variety of food and cash crops. The staple food crops include cassava, yam, corn, coco-yam, cow-peas, beans, sweet potato, millet, plantain, banana, rice, etc. Cassava has currently made Nigeria by far the largest country in the world to produce in large/bulk quantity which was recorded by The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)in Rome. Apart from cassava being a top commodity for consumption, it can do much more. In Nigeria, in the course of cassava production, we lack suitable energy availability and sufficiency. This can be solved by the use of our very own cassava residues to generate bioenergy. Bioenergy is electricity and gas that is generated from casava residue that is also known as biomass. This bioenergy can help the country to cut down on expenses as it always and widely available as a renewable source of energy. Bioenergy is less expensive than fossil fuels and even adds an extra revenue source for the producers.

Also, in agricultural resources in Nigeria, we tend to produce cash crops. Cash crops are crops which are specifically produced for their commercial value. The leading cash crops in Nigeria are cocoa, cotton, groundnut (peanut), palm oil, palm kernel, belliseed and rubber. Cash crops can be of high importance in Nigeria as it can generate fantastic revenue to the nation. It provides massive employment opportunities because the larger the amount of cash crops, the more hands acquainted in such a massive production. Cash crops are an essential part of sustainable intensification as it creates agricultural investments.

The second set of oil natural resources that Nigeria is blessed with are our natural tourism sites and attractions. If Dubai can generate tons of revenue from artificial tourism attractions, then why can’t we do the same from our natural tourism sites? We have several tourism attractions such as Agbokim Waterfalls, Agodi Gardens, Bina Footprint, Gurara Waterfalls, Ibeno Beach, Kanji Dam, Obudu Cattle Ranch and many more. We can develop such natural resources like this by preserving its natural environmental aesthetics as well as conservation of its various unique properties. Natural tourism attractions are quite important to our country as it contributes to both the local and national economy. They can also attract foreign visitors who could become foreign investors along the line. They also drew specific attractions to other resources that can be located in the tourism sites which pick the interest of foreign investors for business transactions.

The last set of natural resources which is actually a primary resource that can assist in the management and development of other resources is the ‘Human resource’. Before advancing towards human resources, human capital must be achieved. Human capital is the stock of habits, knowledge, social and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic values. In lame man terms, without humankind, natural resources cannot be managed and developed. Human capital is the primary key to development in any country, that is why it has to work hand-in-hand with the other resources to economically grow and advance a nation. The importance of human resource is to plan, train, observe and evaluate the performance of the employees which were recruited for specific jobs in various sectors to achieve development. It is very important for a country to invest in their human capital because it is perceived to increase productivity and thus profitability.

Our country is blessed beyond bounds with resources that other countries are taking from us to develop their own countries, so why can’t we use our natural resources to put our country as part of the top productive countries in the world? We as a country can develop our resources and bring an increase in productivity, economic growth, employment opportunities and eradicate poverty in the society. There will be economic stability, technological growth, human resource management and of course, state-of-the-art infrastructures, equipment and Industries. As we were given lemon, let's make lemonade!