

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING DROUGHT AND
DESERTIFICATION IN NIGERIA

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A project report submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Science (Planning-Resource and Environmental Management)

FACULTY OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT
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APRIL 2007

ABSTRACT

In the 1970s, the United Nations identified desertification as a global threat to environmental sustainability. While the concept of dryland degradation has long and always existed, desertification on the other hand implies the rapid spread of the degradation of vast land and its productivity throughout the world, notably in Africa and Asia. Modern desertification, as the case is in Nigeria, often arises from the demands of increased populations that settle on the land in order to grow crops and graze animals. The extent and severity of desertification in Nigeria has not been fully established neither has the rate of its progression been properly recognized. However, it is estimated that the country is currently losing about 351,000 hectares of its landmass to desert conditions annually, and such conditions are estimated to be advancing southwards at the rate of about 0.6km per year. Desertification, which is affecting the 11 northern states, is considered the most pressing environmental problem. The purpose of this study is to evaluate current government policies in addressing desertification and to offer new measures based on the findings of the study. The study has found out that the reasons for the failure of current government policies are numerous including the government's top-down approach, inconsistency of government policies, neglect of indigenous knowledge, use of inappropriate technology, sectoral approach, inadequate funding, inadequate awareness, etc. Having identified the causes of the problem, this study proposes new measures to combat desertification and mitigate the effect of drought in Nigeria.

ABSTRAK

Dalam tahun 1970an, desertifikasi telah di kenal pasti oleh Pertubuhan Bangsa-bangsa Bersatu sebagai ancaman global terhadap keseimbangan alam. Walaupun konsep 'degradasi kawasan kering' telah lama wujud, desertifikasi sebaliknya mewakili proses penggurunan tanah dan penurunan produktiviti yang berterusan merangkumi seluruh dunia, terutamanya di benua Afrika dan Asia. Di masa kini, desertifikasi sebagaimana di Nigeria kebiasaannya berlaku akibat tekanan populasi di kawasan kering melalui aktiviti bercucuk tanam dan penternakan haiwan. Tahap dan ancaman desertifikasi di Nigeria dan juga kadar perkembangannya setakat ini belum dikenalpasti sepenuhnya. Walaubagaimanapun, dijangkakan bahawa negara ini kehilangan kira-kira 351,000 hektar tanah kepada keadaan gurun setiap tahun dan dijangkakan fenomena desertifikasi ini mara kearah selatan pada kadar 0.6km setahun. Desertifikasi yang melanda 11 negeri utara kini merupakan impak alam sekitar yang terbesar. Tajuan kajian ini adalah untuk menilai semula polisi-polisi kerajaan dalam menangani kejadian kemarau dan fenomena desertifikasi serta mengusulkan cadangan-cadangan mengatasinya berdasarkan hasil kajian. Kajian ini telah mendapati bahawa antara sebab-sebab kegagalan polisi semasa adalah banyak dan antaranya ialah pendekatan 'top-down' yang diambil oleh kerajaan, percanggahan dalam polisi-polisi kerajaan, pengabaian pengetahuan/kemahiran tempatan, penggunaan teknologi yang kurang sesuai, pendekatan secara sektoral, kurang tahap kesedaran dan sebagainya. Setelah mengenalpasti punca-punca kepada masalah ini, kajian ini akhirnya mencadangkan beberapa pendekatan baru dalam menangani masalah kemarau dan desertifikasi di Nigeria.