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IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria, an African country on the Gulf of Guinea, has many natural landmarks and wildlife reserves. Protected areas such as Cross River National Park and Yankari National Park have waterfalls, dense rainforest, savanna and rare primate habitats. One of the most recognizable sites is Zuma Rock, a 725m-tall monolith outside the capital of Abuja that's pictured on the national currency. Officially the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is a country in West Africa. It is situated between the Sahel to the north and the Gulf of Guinea to the south in the Atlantic Ocean. It covers an area of 923,769 square kilometers and with a population of over 225 million, it is the most populous country in Africa, and the world's sixth-most populous country. The largest city in Nigeria is Lagos, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world and the second-largest in Africa. The important ecological problems in Nigeria are:

- Water and Air Pollution
- Solid Waste Management
- Deforestation

Pollution. In Nigeria, several rural towns that had in the past enjoyed fresh and dry air are currently experiencing air pollution problems due to industrialization process and expansion in human activities. Aquatic or water pollution is the discharge of unwanted biological, chemical and physical materials into water bodies from man's environment. The pollutants are usually chemical, physical and biological substances that affect the natural condition of water. This incidence is responsible for the wide spread water contamination in most Nigerian cities. The environmental policy is the foundation of the environmental management system (EMS) through the provision of a framework for action and the setting of environmental objectives and targets. The environmental problems in Nigeria are acute, pervasive and increase rapidly. This should be a source of great and justifiable concern for all today. The effect of pollution on air, aquatic or water and on land has

adverse impacts on health and economic activities. The increasing population pressure, the decline levels of water tables and more airborne and water-borne pollution from industries and domestic waste. Underpinning all these problems are poor management capabilities and corruption which hinder effective government policies. Allied to these is the fact that in Nigeria the environment has so far not been seen as an important matter by the politicians, companies and individuals. The re-examination of the environmental problems provides the avenue for the EIA to be seriously involved in all the issues concerning the environment in order to make and implement policies to tackle the various environmental problems.

Deforestation. The major driving factor for deforestation in Nigeria today is the rapidly growing population with attendant higher demand for agricultural land, livestock production and fuel wood. Unfortunately, these demands will continue to increase with the population if nothing drastic is done. The persistence of the age-old practice of shifting cultivation ("slash-and-burn") will also continue to drive this threat as farmers will continue to move, plundering our forests as the soil fertility in the farms decline In Ondo State for example, more than 44 percent of the 3,075sqklm forest reserve has been lost in the last 30 years due to a combination of activities mentioned above. Uncontrolled logging and tree felling from which government generate paltry taxes accentuated by lack of re-stocking are the order of the day in many parts of the southern states of Nigeria. This carries with it loss of precious biological diversity. Nigeria's wildlife is rapidly declining due to habitat loss and increased pressure from hunters, poachers and bush burning. Animals that have disappeared from Nigeria in recent times include the cheetah, the pygmy hippopotamus, the giraffe, the black rhinoceros and the giant eland.

Flooding. A flood is an overflow of water (or rarely other fluids) that submerges land that is usually dry. Flooding was reported in about ninety three per cent (92.9%) of the surveyed settlements with different intensity. Not all the communities shared the same opinion about the cause of flooding. From the view point of the discussants during the focus group discussion, flooding is also caused by a mix of factors which are heavy rainfall, blocked or no drainage, tidal waves and climate change. Flooding occurs when there is heavy rainfall. And to worsen the case there are no well-constructed drainages. This makes water stagnant on the land. Stagnant water eats up the road. Also, due to climate change, rain may fall continuously for 5days, and this is always catastrophic. The pressure is now on the Nigerian government to reverse its catastrophic environmental policies. The Nigerian government must "advance its flood warning systems," giving people more time to act during flooding and saving lives.

Conclusion. Environmental problems are very relevant for Nigeria and require their resolution.