

GREEN ECONOMY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

Energy is an indispensable sector in any developing economy. The current growth-fixated economies, built on the exploitation of finite resources and emission-intensive energy, are no longer sustainable (Oluwatosun, 2012). Nigeria's energy supply is dependent mainly on fossil fuel and the environmental hazards associated with the use of this type of energy has manifested in diverse ways including global warming, climate change, acid rain, flooding, etc. Considering these environmental hazards, renewable energy is a very viable sector in national development. Nigeria is rich in sources of renewable energy ranging from abundant sunlight, water resources, wind etc. To move Nigeria from the level of underdevelopment to a developed nation, there is the need to create awareness nationwide on the benefits of green economy and what the nation will benefit from it. The government should also have the political will to pursue and fund the green initiative with a well developed renewable energy.

KEYWORDS: *Green economy, renewable energy, environmental hazards, awareness, development*

INTRODUCTION

The environmental problems associated with our current energy system are affecting almost all aspects of our lives. It affects the global system that supports life on earth. The essence of green economy is to prevent the earth from further deterioration. Green economy is built on environmentally friendly and sustainable energy supplies. It is an economy that employs environmentally friendly approach in the process of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services to improve the wellbeing of man.

The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) defined Green Economy as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In its simplest expression, a green economy is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive (UNEP 2012). Green economy according to (UNEP) aims at reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities with the aim at sustainable development without degrading the environment (Nwoke, 2014). To actualise this, a green economy will depend on public and private investments to reduce carbon

emissions and pollution and also enhance energy and resource efficiency. It will also prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. (Oluwatosun 2012)

Green Economy sectors have in its package the following: renewable energy, low-carbon transport, energy-efficient buildings, clean technologies, improved waste management, improved freshwater provision, sustainable agriculture, forestry, fisheries etc. These will depend on national policy reforms and the development of international policy and market infrastructure. Manish et al 2011 says Green Economy is an alternative vision for growth and development; one that can generate growth and improvements in people's lives in ways consistent with sustainable development.

In the past few decades, the universe has grappled with harsh realities that, today, continue to put human existence at great risk. One of such realities, which we now contend with, is the health of our environment (Nwoke et al 2008). The deteriorating global environmental conditions or factors are now affecting human existence. Considering the fact that climate change has been a direct result of negative human practices and

activities over a prolonged period, the United Nations have put the necessary machinery in place to bring a desirable change to the global

environment by first of all minimizing those activities detrimental to our world. To portray the seriousness of this situation, the UN set aside the 5th day of June to mark world environment day.

Nwoke (2014) observed that to protect man from climate change and other consequences of environmental degradation, it is expedient to put in place ecologically acceptable strategies in all human activities to ensure sustainability of the environment. In other words, the sustainability of our social and economic activities should ensure that the biosphere and its ecosystems remain intact and productive, so that life on earth will continue to draw sustenance from them.” This will also guarantee generations unborn to benefit from this same environment.

Green economy has been linked to sustainable development in developed countries and will equally impact positively on less developed countries when implemented. With good national policies and institutions in place, a global green economy can enhance economic growth and contribute significantly to national environmental and developmental objectives (Omueme 2013).

WHAT IS RENEWABLE ENERGY

Energy according to the Oxford Advanced learner’s dictionary of English language (2010) is the ability to put effort and enthusiasm into an activity. It plays an outstanding economic, social and political importance in a nation. Availability of energy played a major role during the industrial revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries. Energy still remains a force in the industrialization of any economy.

Renewable energy is one of the sectors of green economy. Renewable energy includes Biofuel, Biomass, Geothermal, Hydropower, Solar energy, Tidal power, Wave power and Wind power. It is generally defined as energy that comes from resources which are naturally replenished on a human timescale such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides waves and geothermal heat (Anon, 2013). They are commonly used for electricity generation and motor fuels. Solar energy can be used directly to heat up and provide lighting to homes. It can also be used to generate electricity for cooling and for other

industrial and commercial uses. Sunlight drives the wind and wind energy is harnessed using wind turbine. Evaporation which is caused by wind and solar energy leads to precipitation and runoffs into water bodies. Energy is also captured through hydroelectric power. Biomass from organic matter is used to produce electricity and the energy from it is called bioenergy. Hydrogen when separated from other elements can be used as fuel or converted into electricity. Other forms of renewable energy is geothermal energy which harnesses the earth’s internal heat to produce electricity and Oceanic energy derived from tides and waves. (www.renewableenergyworld.com)

BENEFITS OF CLEAN ENERGY

Renewable energy is clean energy. It helps decrease emissions of carbon dioxide and other green house gases into the atmosphere. Increasing the use of renewable energy sources will enhance viability of the energy systems and will also enhance energy delivery. Renewable energy sources will reduce dependency on the use of fossil fuel and energy sources that damage the environment. This green initiative is taking place all round the world and Nigeria cannot be left out. Renewable energy is a cleaner and more secure energy source yet Nigeria is depending more on fossil fuel based energy at present. According to Ohunakin (2012), Nigeria’s is blessed with vast renewable energy sources (mainly hydro, solar, biomass and wind) which have remained untapped. Ohunakin equally observed that Energy is a very important ingredient for development and it is difficult for any country to develop beyond subsistence level economy without ensuring at least minimum access to energy services for its population. Energy is undoubtedly very fundamental to the provision of the basic needs of the people.

Apart from the non-replenishment of the fossil fuels they are great threat to global climate through the release of waste heat. In the words of Nwoke et al 2008, there is need to protect man from the impact of global warming and climate change given what is happening in our ecosystem. We must begin to design and adopt ecologically accepted strategies in all our activities to ensure sustainability. This includes imbibing the green economy initiative. Green economy is all about environmental sustainability in all of mans activities including abandoning the over dependence on fossil energy

which is impacting on the human environment negatively.

In many countries for example Jamaica and Guyana, green policies and investment function as new growth engines and lead to higher income and employment. There is great potential for job creation as the economy goes through a green transformation.

Green economy will help to provide diverse opportunities for economic development. Jobs will be created in agriculture, renewable energy, waste recycling etc.

THE WAY FORWARD

Having noted Nigeria's great potentials of low carbon profits and rich natural assets, the development of a green economy would make the environment more sustainable because of the less dependent on fossil fuel-based technologies.

To start with, there should be awareness of what green economy is. The populace should be made to understand what they stand to gain from it. Awareness should be created through the radio, television, newspapers etc. The message should be clear that the choices we make impact on the environment either negatively or positively.

Green economy will increase investments in natural assets that are used by the poor to earn their living and this will end up enhancing their livelihood. The use of renewable energy will lead to energy efficiency which will result in significant energy security, climate change mitigation and economic benefits (IEA, 2012.) The necessity to use renewable energy to meet our electricity needs globally has been motivated by global warming and other ecological problems as well as economic concerns.

CONCLUSION

The green economy is an approach to overcome the deepening ecological and development crisis. Nigeria's dependence on fossil fuel has been affecting the environment negatively. Renewable energy is one major sector of the green economy that will help reduce green house emissions into the atmosphere.

With the abundant natural resources of the nation, Nigeria can solve the energy problem that has besieged the nation for a long time. If Renewable energy replaces the conventional fuel which is degrading to the ecosystem, it will result in climate

change mitigation and can transform a nation from its very poor state to a new level of prosperity (Nwoke 2014)

A green economy is low carbon and resource efficient. Nigeria should create awareness throughout the nation and restructure our economic policy in favour of renewable energy which will provide clean energy. Green economy will also help create employment for the jobless in the society who have been susceptible to all kinds of crime and restiveness in the nation. According to Verolme, this will finally make Nigeria's search for the good life realizable. The green deal for Nigeria is therefore not a luxury but rather a necessity. In as much as there may be some initial challenges, the long term benefits will surely outweigh the initial sacrifices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There should be the political will to start and implement the green initiative.

The government should create enough awareness through education and sensitization of the people to know the benefits of green economy and what they stand to gain in it.

The government should make policies and measures that will promote more environmentally sound and sustainable economy.

The government should try to restore the ecosystems that have already been degraded.

There should be targeted public expenditure to actualize the implementation of renewable energy in the country.

The private sectors should also be encouraged to follow the sustainable development pathway for maximum impact in the society.

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