POPULATION, DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT - ISSUE IN SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Population growth and its impact on the environment has become so pervasive that population concerns have become topical issues in contemporary development planning. Human populations ultimately depend on the environment for food, fibre, and other needs. The impact exerted by teeming populations can render the environment vulnerable to many adverse effects, deliberate or inadvertent. The fall out of intense human activities on ecosystems in an effort to meet developmental needs often leads to environmental degradation which manifests in soil erosion, desertification, pollution, and climate change, which undermines biological productivity and environmental stability. Ecotourism emphasises nature in its untouched state and, as such, leans heavily on the environment and culture of host destinations. Sustained unsustainable human activities inherent from population pressure is antithetical to environmental stability; as it can also, by extension, prove detrimental to sustainable ecotourism. This paper examines the dynamics of population, the environment, and their concomitants in national planning and development in Nigeria, especially as they affect ecotourism. The study relied on desktop review of available literature for gathering relevant information. Nigeria’s population and development picture are such that would impose unbearable strain and encourage vulnerability of the environment to rapid degradation; which in turn would hinder sustainable ecotourism. It recommends the integration of population and environment concerns in development planning and implementation to encourage sustainable ecotourism as a contributing partner in national development.

Keywords: Population, Development, Environment, Sustainable Ecotourism, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In the past, natural hazards such as disease, accidents and warfare had kept a check on human populations (Ominde and Ejiogu 1981). Death rate nearly balanced off birth rate, leaving a slim chance for population increase. With the advent of the scientific revolution in the 17th century, man’s standard of living improved significantly. Scientific knowledge has led to a reasonable control of the major killers namely plague, tuberculosis, small pox, yellow fever, and typhoid. Consequently, while death rates have decreased substantially, birth and natural increase rates have continued to increase, leading to a quantum leap in world population.

At the national level, population growth naturally attracts the question of population size in relation to available resources, and also the impact of ensuing increase in human activities on the environment. Population indices – mainly size, characteristics and distribution - logically provide the database for development planning. This is because development in all ramifications – physical infrastructure (roads, housing, water and power supply, and communication), socio-cultural, health, educational and economic opportunities – is targeted for the improvement of the living standards of human populations (UNDP, 1997).

Population pressure on resources (overpopulation) tends to compromise human welfare and exerts unbearable strain on the environment within the affected region. Hence, the UNDP (1997) viewed overpopulation from the context of lagging food availability, inadequate housing, insufficiency of health, education and other social services, and reduced opportunities for social and economic self actualisation. The resultant low productivity and poverty and human underdevelopment predisposes affected populations to heavy reliance on land-based subsistence economic activities which naturally degrades the environment due to unsustainable rate of exploitation of natural resources (Holand, Allen, Barton and Murphy, 1989; Reo, Nelson and Sandbrook, 2009). Tourism constitutes a critical sector of the modern economy. It has been seen to greatly support the economic and social development of many countries in terms of job creation, revenue generation, foreign exchange earnings, and general improvement in the standard of living of people.

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Ecotourism is the vogue of contemporary tourism. Traditionally, ecotourism (ecological tourism) is conceived from the point of rural nature-based tourism which is based on the ecology of the visited destination. Thus, it is heavily dependent on the environment. Whatever affects the environment one way or the other, can also affect ecotourism within the affected area or region. Ecotourism’s anchorage on the environment heavily lends it towards high regard and respect for the ecology, culture and people of the environment in which it takes place, as a self-perpetuating measure since it depends on these attributes. According to Elthringham (1984), Ayodele and Falade (1993), Lameed (1999) and Ngoka (2007), the greater proportion of the tourism to Africa (and Nigeria) can be attributed to wildlife (an important eco-based attraction).

The above disposition underscores the interactions of population, the environment, ecotourism in sustainable development. Hence, the present study examines the impact of population and development on Nigeria’s physical environment, and discusses the implications of prevailing socio-economic indices on development of ecotourism for sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Concept of Sustainable Development**

National development plans the world over are aimed at raising the quality of life of people for whom they are targeted. At the turn of the century, the United Nations (UN) articulated key developmental goals which are recommended to the various nations of the world in their efforts at alleviating poverty and improving the quality of life of their citizens. The areas of emphasis as articulated by the UN are called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which, in broad terms, cover the areas of:

- Poverty eradication
- Universal education
- Gender equity and women empowerment
- Reduction of child mortality
- Improvement of maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Developing global partnerships for development (UN. Department of Information 2003).

Consequently, most developing nations of the world drew up development plans based on the MDGs; hence the emergence of Nigeria’s vision 20 - 2020.

Further, the UN Sustainable Strategy Team (UNSST) came up with a vision statement which advocates for ‘development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (UN, 2005). Thus, the concept of sustainability has been popularized by development theories adopted by the UN for implementing the MDGs such that economic growth, the alleviation of poverty and sound environmental management are mutually consistent objectives (World Bank, 1988; The UN, 2005).

Sustainable tourism is seen as all types of tourism (conventional and alternative forms) that are compatible with, or contribute to sustainable development. It is the type of tourism development that takes into account issues of social justice, fairness and stability, and concerns itself with the respect for local communities, their environments, and their ways of life (Monkgogi, 20110). This is the leaning of ecotourism. Lascurian (1992) defined ecotourism as consisting of the travelling to and from, visiting places that are relatively undisturbed with an express objective of seeing, studying and admiring the features of the landscape, flora and fauna as well as any cultural aspects, both the present and past that may be found in such places. Cooper, Fyall, Gilbert, and Wanhill (2005), Obua (1997), and Ngoka (2007) conceive ecotourism to embrace conservation and protection of pristine environments, the preservation of cultural entities, and improvement of the economic and social life of visited places. Hence, in their view, ecotourism is more than a visit to a natural destination. Eco-tourism can be defined as purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity; taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people. Thus, ecotourism is tourism that is environment friendly, sustainable, and contributes to sustainable development.

**Population Pressure**

Onokreh (1985) explains that the human species like plants and animals are such that many children can be born to ensure that enough survive to continue the race. For quite long, natural hazard had kept the global
population rising rather slowly. But since the scientific revolution, the world has been witnessing rapid population growth caused by the upsetting of the apparent balance that used to exist between fertility.

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and mortality. This has resulted in huge excesses of births over deaths. The very success man has achieved in controlling disease, improving agriculture, extending health services, and raising living standards has produced the most serious consequence.

The population Reference Bureau (1976) estimated that by the middle of the 17th century, life expectancy was only 25 years, and infant mortality rate stood as high as 40%. By 1975, the life expectancy in most developed countries was 75 years with only 3% infant mortality rate. This explains why it took world population some 1,600 years to double from 250 million to 500 million between the Christian era and the industrial revolution in 1650, but only some 325 years between 1550 and 1975 for world population to increase eightfold to 4 billion (United Nations Population Division 1975).

Yet, the disproportionate distribution of persons on the earth’s surface poses another angle to global population considerations. The United Nations Population Division (1975) projected that by the year 2000, the countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) would account for some 28% of total world population; while the developing regions of Latin America, Africa, and most of Asia would contain the remaining 72% of the earth’s inhabitants. Ironically, world population is concentrated in the underdeveloped regions of the world which already have low standards of living. Succinctly put high populations with corresponding high growth rates are found in exactly those regions whose countries are least able to provide large additions of youngsters with the opportunities for accessing the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, housing, education, jobs; while trying to break out of the vicious cycle of poverty. After all, a nation’s capacity to provide its citizens with opportunities for attaining their material, intellectual, social and other requirements for self-actualization is what national development is all about. Figure 1 shows the time relationship between any single birth and future services requirements (see fig. 1). Thus, national development and environmental protection can hardly be effectively tackled in isolation from population considerations.

Figure 1: Time Relationships between a Birth and Future Service Requirements

Source: Adapted from National Academy of Science, USA in Rapid Population Growth
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Population – Resource Equation
Populations lean on available resources to attain development and depend on the environment for material inputs needed for development. Population size can affect the rate of resources exploitation, especially in view of the finite nature of material and human resources. Hence, any analysis of the growth or distribution of population must be taken in relation to available resources - the so-called population - resources equation. The nature of the relationship that exists between population and resources in any area is always evaluated against the background of the concepts of optimum population, overpopulation, or under population. Optimum population has been associated with the total population which is the ideal size to live and work in an area vis-a-vis the totality of available resources. In such a region, a higher total population would result in overpopulation and a lower total population would be under population. Despite its limitations, one of the available measures of socio-economic progress toward the attainment of better food, improved access to education and health care and greater opportunities for gainful employment is the growth of per capital income. This refers to the growth of national income adjusted for growth of population. Knowledge about the size and structure of the population will help the economic planner make meaningful estimates about the bulk of the task at hand. Population census including the characteristics of the population provides the database for socio-economic planning and sustainable development.

Population, Environment and Sustainable Development
Overpopulation precipitates socio-economic and environmental problems which reinforce each other. Continued application of technology to meet the needs of growing populations may create major problems of environmental pollution and soil and water degradation. Increased use of pesticides and chemical fertilizer, large scale irrigation schemes, the reclamation of marginal lands, clearing of forests, and unsustainable overexploitation of natural resources in an effort to meet the growing needs of teeming populations may have serious ecological consequences that might threaten the stability of natural ecosystems and the environment. Relentless increase in population may accentuate the pressure of rural-urban migration. In the cities, the inability to invest in gainful employment due to the capital-intensive bias of industrial technology, coupled with the natural increase of urban populations themselves, may lead to massive unemployment, squalor, crime and social unrest. Since ecotourism depends on the environment, environmental degradation occasioned by overpopulation can impact negatively on its potential to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

Ecotourism and Sustainable Development
From the environmental perspective, tourism has contributed to the conservation and protection of species that would have become extinct in the absence of the phenomenon called tourism (Okoli, 2001; Cook, Yale and Marqua 2006), and also the preservation of exotic cultures (Ngoka and Onyebinama, 2008). On the economic continuum, tourism is the second largest US retail industry earning some $200 billion annually, and has become a source of foreign exchange earnings for many countries including Britain, Canada, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, India, Thailand, Costa Rica, Brazil, and Kenya (Sutton, 1995). Consequently, it has become the policy of many countries to develop and promote the tourism industry as a means of projecting their cultures and creating economic opportunities for their people. Tourism has been seen to greatly support the economic and social development of many countries in the areas of job creation, revenue generation, foreign exchange earnings, and general improvement in the standard of living of people. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2006), tourism generated 350 million jobs and more than $3.5 billion in gross output; which amounted to 6 percent of the World’s Domestic Product, and 18 percent of all consumer spending in 2005. Okoli (2001) noted that tourism as a sector has become one of the most striking phenomena of our time, positively impacting on the lives and wellbeing of many people and nations the world over. Nigeria is endowed with ample potentials for development of the tourism sector such that it can play a major role in the national economy and sustainable development (Omofonmwan, 1993; Lammed, 1999; NTDC 2001; Ngoka, 2007). However, development of tourism as a key sector of the national economy in Nigeria is a recent aspiration that is yet to be fully actualised relative to other countries on the African continent or at the global scale (Maguba, 2002). Through diversification of the economy, Government hopes to reposition the tourism sector as a vital instrument for achieving Nigeria’s 7-point agenda for its vision 2020-2020 development programme.
Ecotourism and National Parks development in Nigeria

As a concept, national park management is largely about the conservation of unique ecosystems born out of the desire to embrace environmental conservation and nature tourism for sustainable development (Maguba, 2002). Increasing pressure from excessive hunting, overgrazing, logging, slash and burn agriculture, wild fires, shifting cultivation, and other developmental needs of a nation with some 160 million people that are largely dependent on biological systems for food, fibre and medicine carries a high vulnerability of the environment. In the light of the international significance of natural resource conservation to sustainable development, Government, right from the colonial era, thought it wise to embark on the protection and proper management of the nation’s natural environment. Hence, the establishment of a number of game reserves, forest reserves and sanctuaries (NTDC, 2001). These early reserves formed the springboards for today’s national parks, now numbering 8, established as representative samples of various ecosystems of Nigeria. These include Kainji Lake National Park, Yankari National Park, Chad Basin National Park, Cross River National Park, Gashaka Gumti National Park, Old Oyo National Park, Kamuku National Park, and Okomu National Park (NPS, 2000). Tourism constitutes a major reason for the establishment of the parks, as great opportunities are believed to lie for capturing revenue through ecotourism within the reserves (NPB, 1995).

Population, Environment and Sustainable Ecotourism in Nigeria

Due to poor access to modern energy sources which includes electricity, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and kerosene, poor households in developing countries tend to fall back on fuel wood as their main energy source (Hosier, 2002; Sathaye and Meyers, 2005; Igwiro, 2008; Leach, 2008). In the rural economy, fuel wood is part of the wider development problem since its use cannot be separated from other aspects of the local production system. In this respect, the rural poor live in a biomass–based economy in which local land resources provide for the bulk their survival needs. Wood and trees are part of an integral part of the economy in Africa (Hosier, 2002; Sathaye and Meyers, 2005).

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2002) 2.4 billion people in developing countries use biomass as a source of energy for cooking, heating and lighting needs. According to the EIA (2002), countries within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) derive over 72% of their household cooking energy from electricity and natural gas; proportionately used at 69% of this for space / water heating, 21% usage for appliances, and 5% for lighting and cooking. This contrasts remarkably with the situation in the non OECD countries including Nigeria with 53% of household energy use coming from renewable material sources mainly biomass.

Fall outs of carbon emission, degradation of watersheds, drying up of inland water resources, desertification, soil erosion, and soil and water degradation are inherent, all of which have catastrophic implications for the environment and ecotourism development. Ecotourism depends on the environment. Environmental attributes form the attractions which inform ecotourism (Ngoka, 2007). The present study thus sets out to investigate the prevailing population, economic and environment indices might affect ecotourism as a significant contributor to sustainable national development.

Methodology

Extensive exposition of available literature on Nigeria’s population picture, the environment and the economy was embarked upon. Indices on the population, socio-economic and environmental parameters as obtained from desktop literature review were discussed in relation to the implications of prevailing situations for ecotourism development and the totality of the tourism sector as a potential significant contributor to sustainable development.
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Findings

- Demographic Picture

**TABLE 1: Some Population Statistics on Nigeria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Parameter</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Millennium population</td>
<td>120 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population project (2015)</td>
<td>178 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanization (1963)</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanization (1999)</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age (1999)</td>
<td>17.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth rate (2012)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household size</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy (2012)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 15 yrs (1999)</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female married at 10-18 yrs</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male married 10-18 yrs</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female unmarried at 45 – 49</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male unmarried at 45 – 49</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic dependency ratio</td>
<td>25.9/ workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of malnutrition</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1 shows some population statistics for Nigeria since the dawn of the millennium. The UNDP (1997) estimated Nigeria’s population at 105 million in 1996, up from 56 million in 1963, and with an annual growth rate of 2.8%. Millennium population stood at 120 million, estimated at 166 million in 2012 with a growth rate of 3%, and projected for 170 million by 2015 (UNDP, 2006, 2012; Mbanaso, 2012). Forty-four percent of the population was below the age of 15 years. Nearly 70% of the population is aged 0-29 years and persons 30-59 years accounted for 27%, with only 3% of the population composed of persons 60 years and above. Women in the reproductive ages of 15-49 years comprised 49.5% of the female population. Birth rate has remained high at 50 per 1000 persons. Average household size stood at 5.6. Death rate had declined to 15.4 in 1993 while life expectancy had increased to 50.4, up from 45 in 1963. All fertility indicators show that Nigeria is and will remain a young population for quite some time to come. This presupposes a high dependency ratio - 25.1 (UNDP 1997, 2006; National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). According to Ominde and Ejiogu (1981), when the proportion of the society under 15 years of age is over 40% and rising, it becomes increasingly difficult for such a society to pull itself out of poverty due to the huge recurrent needs of the many children which makes savings for capital investment impossible; thus posing pertinent challenges for socio-economic development.

**Economic Climate**

**Table 2: Nigeria National Poverty Indices (% of Population 2004 and 2010)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>*Food Poor</th>
<th>*Absolute Poverty</th>
<th>*Relative Poverty</th>
<th>*Dollar / day &amp; below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Derived from the Nigeria Poverty Profile 2012 in Mbanaso, 2012.

Table 2 shows that poverty by all facets has increased in Nigeria during the period 2004 to 2010. The percentage of the population who were food poor increased from 33.6% in 2004 to 41.0% in 2010, while people earning less than one dollar/day increased from 56.6% in 2004 to 61.2% in 2010 (Mbanaso, 2012).

Development wise, Nigeria ranks 137th among 174 countries evaluated for Human Development index (HDI) by UNDP (1996). Using the combination of purchasing power, with measures of physical health and educational attainment (income, longevity and knowledge) as yardsticks, Nigeria had a HDI of 0.400 in 1996 (UNDP). The HDI value for a country represents the distance it has to travel to reach the maximum possible value of 1, i.e. the gap between 1 and a country’s HDI value shows its shortfall in human development.
Situating Nigeria’s development in contemporary global context UNDP (2006) concluded that Nigeria is at the bottom of the development ladder no matter the indicators used. This is happening against the backdrop of frightening population parameters.

Also, the there has been a continuous decline in real per capita earnings both in and out of agriculture since the dawn of the millennium. There was a systematic deterioration in the conditions of the country’s infrastructure and social services; thus corroborating that living standard has significantly declined in the country and millions of Nigerians had become impoverished during the SAP years of 1985-1992 (UNDP 1997). Twenty percent of under-five children were classified as undernourished in 1994 according to the weight for height index (Federal Office of Statistics (FOS 1995). Primary school drop-out rate stood at 30.05 in 1992 with 79.5% of pupils completing five years of schooling (Federal Ministry of Education 1996). Education received only 9.7% of total government expenditure representing 2.9% of GDP/GNP; while health received 4.9% representing only 1.2% of GDP/GNP. Nigeria’s expenditure in these sectors fell among the lowest, even among listed developing countries (World Bank 1996). The proportion of the population per medical practitioner stood at 4,309 in 1993 (Federal Ministry of Health 1993). On the whole, the incidence and dept of poverty in the country has been on the increase.

3) The Environment Scenario
The World Bank (2008) estimated that some 90% of the Nigerian population use kerosene for domestic cooking and lighting. According to reports, the daily demand for Dual Purpose Kerosene (DPK) stands at between 8 – 10 million litres. Due to scarcity and high cost of the commodity, many are unable to access this product. Scarcity of petroleum products including kerosene has been attributed to low local refining of crude oil due to dysfunctional local refineries. Nigeria is the 6th largest producer of petroleum in the world, but has been unable to refine her crude. Nigeria’s refineries have at best been able to meet only 35% of domestic demand; while the country relies on importation for sourcing the balance of 65%. The importation of petroleum products including DPK has over times had a significant effect on the national budget and the economy at large, amidst controversies and national riots over petroleum products pricing. Long queues at chaotic filling stations have become a regular feature of life in Nigeria; with consequent loss of useful man hours by people. Adulteration of petroleum products has become common place, with indescribable catastrophic consequences. Oil pipeline vandalism with occasional fires coupled with kerosene lamp explosions have claimed many lives and maimed several people in the face of the scarcity of petroleum products. These, among yet several other factors, affect virtually all Nigerian homes, especially the ordinary people who find DPK either inaccessible or too expensive. The result has been for the larger segment of the population to fall back to traditional sourcing of energy for domestic use. This naturally leans on the environment and the ecosystem – people coppicing vegetation to source for fuel wood. In Nigeria, this has given rise to a booming fuel wood and charcoal market which rests on exploitation of the country’s depleted forest vegetation, at a period when continued deforestation has already devastated our environment.

DISCUSSION
The UNDP (1997) predicted that the greatest menace to the health and welfare of the people of the world in the years ahead is overpopulation. Excessive population means that most of the national income has to be spent on the sheer necessities of food, clothing, shelter and health needs for the increasing population. A smaller share of the annual income will be available to raise the consumer level per capita, and to provide the capital investment which is essential for increasing productivity; which alone, can make possible a higher standard of living. Human over-reproduction means economic underproduction, culminating in less food, less education and poor living conditions; thus the cycle of underdevelopment is completed. The situation will be worse in young populations such as identified in Nigeria. Oninde and Ejigu (1981) inferred that among other things a great percentage of the earnings of the labour force that could go into savings for capital investment will be ploughed instead to providing the extra food, shelter, clothing, education, health services, and other social services needed by the many children.

Apart from subjecting people to low standard of living, overpopulation leads to overcrowding. There is the tendency for people to desert the rural areas for the cities in search of greener pastures, resulting in overcrowding in the cities and a wide range of social problems associated with urban living. Rapidly rising population gives rise to the problem of pollution and environmental degradation, and brings unwelcome pressures to bear on resources. Therefore, sustainable national development can hardly be attained in Nigeria unless population considerations are taken in conjunction with development programmes.
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The UNDP (1997) noted the impact exerted by Nigeria’s teeming population following intense human activities and past development effort which failed to integrate improvement in the quality of the environment as an objective of development. The effect which a degraded environment, coupled with the turbulence in the population and political economy of the nation can exert on ecotourism can better be imagined than described. According to Okunbor (1998), outdoor recreation is virtually non-existent, and Government has not been able to provide the enabling climate for tourism to thrive on a sustainable basis.

As the Nigeria society moves further away from subsistence towards an industrial economy, people will be left with more discretionary time at their disposal through automation for vacations, during which they can embark on ecotourism. Also, urbanization in Nigeria has increased from 19% in 1963 to 36.3% in 1999, and is predicted to maintain a steady increase for a long time to come (UNDP, 1997). Urban infrastructure such as roads, housing, power and water supply, health services, and the few existing open spaces will be overstretched by every dimension (UNDP, 1997). Even then, more Nigerian urbanities are expected to become better empowered economically. These will increase the demand for open space active tourism in rural destinations such as national parks and game reserves.

As already expressed, tourism is, at the moment, poorly developed in Nigeria in terms of policy framework, planning, public education, infrastructure, management, research and evaluation. There is thus the need for the stake holders to take bold steps to position tourism for the role it will have to play as an integral component of national development, in view of its vital contributions to human welfare, the environment, and the ultimate realization of the vision 20 - 2020 national development goals.

CONCLUSION

Rapidly growing population, combined with growing aspirations in the Nigerian society is already exerting unbearable strain on the environment and the lean resources of the nation. This is likely to impact heavily against sustainable national development. Development planners should recognise that in order to increase the productivity of power and the efficiency of labour, the conditions of physical and social infrastructure in the country must improve. This might prove impossible in the face of high population growth. Development programmes should therefore be taken in conjunction with population and environment programmes to encourage ecotourism as a significant contributor to sustainable national development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Emphasis on national development should embrace areas such as agriculture, education, health, technology, physical infrastructure, opportunities for gainful employment, productivity, social security, internal and national security, population and environment programmes. Due to the apparent incompatibility between development and environmental protection and the tremendous damage done to the environment by past development efforts which ignored the simultaneous pursuit of these twin objectives, the imperative of integrating improvement in the quality of life with environmental objective becomes glaring to enable Nigeria develop the capacity to sustain its growing population.

- There is also the urgent necessity for public education regarding family planning policies and programmes which should be made both realistic and attainable in order to keep population growth at a manageable rate. Also, regular demographic sample surveys and vital registration such as the compulsory registration of births, death and other demographic data should be intensified as this would provide valuable inventories for material and human resources database.

- Although tourism development is already incorporated into Nigeria’s national development goals in line with UN vision statement in the MDGs, there is the urgent need for tourism programmes to transcend memoranda and civil service red tapes to practical actions by the stake holders, so that Nigeria’s tourism can leave the drawing boards to a field experience as we already have in East Africa.

- Because the environment gives essence to ecotourism in many perspectives, environmental considerations should be built into all tourism plans and projects to improve the quality of facilities and services, make the sector competitive on the global scale, and to ensure sustainability.

- In partnership with the private sector, the relevant government agencies should develop rural tourism by establishing tourist circuits through harnessing of the nation’s natural tourism potentials.
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