



Transparency: A Tool for Effective Environmental Governance in Nigeria

Saheed Matemilola, Isa Elegbede

Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, Cottbus and Senftenberg, Germany

Email: matem7_saheed@yahoo.com

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Abstract

In the recent past, there have been calls for transparency in governance from different quarters. These calls testify to the importance of transparency to the overall social welfare. There is virtually no aspect of contemporary life that is unaffected by the system of governance, but governance today is almost entirely devoid of transparency. Transparency mechanisms encourage public officials to act in the interest of the public. Corruption has real political, economic, and social costs and as researched in Columbia University and analyzed by Transparency international, perhaps the more expensive cost is the environmental damage which often suffer either direct or indirect from bribery, extortion, unfair policies, and other forms of corruption. Thus, it has been widely acknowledged that increased transparency and public participation significantly enhance the quality of decisions impacting the environment. These findings offer an intervention avenue in the shape of conservation, preservation, and environmental justice—through the tool of transparency. Resurgent interest in the evaluation of development implications on the environment is not usually accompanied by the requisite transparency to address longstanding effectiveness problems. In order to sharpen the effectiveness, this paper examines the transparency instruments of environmental governance. Analytical examples are used to explore the nature and significance of transparency in environmental policy making and implementation. This paper will heighten the discursive consciousness of the transparency instrument which in itself will catalyze the journey to effectiveness.

Subject Areas

Human Geography, Politics, Sociology

Keywords

Transparency, Corruption, Regulation, Civil Society, Environmental Governance, Consultation

1. Introduction

A healthy environment is an indication of a healthy nation as the environment is a life support system and every national government has the responsibility to protect the environment beyond rules and policy making. The incessant down-turn in the health of the global environment today is reflected in the ravage of the large scale of erosion, deforestation/desertification and the various forms of environmental pollution. Although, numerous intra and international policies and regulations abound around the world aimed at protecting the environment, there are often missing links between policies and implementation. In Nigeria, numerous policies and legislation have been dating as far back as 1915 in a bid to curtail the anthropogenic environmental degrading activities [1]. Researchers have shown repeatedly that many of these policies are fragmented and ineffective to solve the environmental challenges. However, more than the fragmented policies, implementation has often shown no positive turns [1].

Various agencies and institutions have been established and charged with responsibility to ensure implementation of these policies and protect the environment. While the Department for Petroleum Resources (DPR) is the statutory institution responsible for enforcing compliance to guidelines, regulations and petroleum laws in the Oil and Gas Industry in Nigeria, National Environmental Standard and Regulations Agency (NESREA) under the Federal Ministry of Environment is charged with the responsibility of enforcing all environmental laws, policies, guidelines, standards and regulations in Nigeria excluding the coverage of DPR [2].

Every year, these various agencies come up with new rules, regulations and policies aiming to create a healthier environment for the overall benefit of the public. However, the design and procedure with which these rules and policies are made can both determine their quality and legitimacy, thus shaping the overall outcome for the society. Quality is enhanced if the design and procedure improve overall welfare and comfort of the public. Legitimacy is improved if design and procedure ensure government officials treat regulatory problem with fairness and respectfully listen to the public perspectives [3]. Therefore the need for transparency in effective policy making and the implementation there-off. Transparency is a regulatory tool that can significantly enhance the quality and legitimacy of rules and policies [3]. It was a major theme at the G8 summit hosted by the UK in 2013. The world is finally waking up to appreciate the need for transparency in governance [4].

Although, progress has been recorded in some countries, however like most other countries environmental policies are still struggling to make the desired impact in Nigeria owing mostly to manipulations and poor or lack of transparency. Resurgent interest in evaluating effectiveness of policy implementation is not often accompanied with requisite openness. This study therefore seeks to examine the significance of the transparency instrument in environmental governance. Analytical instances will be used to explore the nature and significance

of transparency in policy making and implementation. This research will heighten the discursive consciousness of the transparency instrument which in itself can catalyze the journey to effective environmental governance.

2. Background to the Study Area

Nigeria is a West African country which lies roughly between latitude 4° and 14° North and latitude 3° and 15° East with a land area of about 923,768 km². Though, Nigeria occupies only about 14% of the west African land area, with about 164 million population as at 2011, it account for almost half of the west African population and is the most populous African nation. Nigeria is bordered by Niger republic to the north, Republic of Benin to the west, the Atlantic Ocean to the south and Cameroun to the East. Nigeria's terrain spans from coastal swamps in the south to open woodlands, tropical forests and the northern semi-desert. With the Niger delta region of the country covering over 80% of its coastline which spans more than 853 km, it is regarded one of the world's largest wetlands. Also, Nigeria's mangrove forest is the largest in Africa and third largest in the world. In a nutshell, in ecological terms, Nigeria is endowed with vast lush forest including the mangrove, fresh water swamp and rain forests in the south, paving the path for guinea savanna in the middle belt, while the arid and semi-arid northern region is dominated with savanna woodland and thorny vegetation [5].

Nigeria's natural resources endowment is vast. According to National Population Commission, 2009, Nigeria's proven crude oil and natural gas reserves are in excess of 37 billion barrels and 187 trillion standard cubic feet respectively while also sitting on an enormous solid mineral reserve including coal, tin, gold, limestone, bitumen, topaz, iron ore, lignite, lead, zinc columbite, gypsum, barite and talc. The country is also famous for its vast amount of agricultural resources which include cocoa, cassava, coffee, rubber, groundnuts, cashew, gum-arabic, cotton, shea tree, rice, sorghum, oil palm, maize, beef, dairy, poultry, leather, fisheries amongst other major ones [5] [6].

Nigeria operates a Federal government system with 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

3. Environmental Governance and Dimensions in Nigeria

3.1. The State of Environmental Governance in Nigeria

Governance is a concept which pre dates human civilization. Governance according to United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is "the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented". There are however, formal and informal actors involved in a governance system. While government is only one of the actors, other actors will depend on the level of governance under consideration. For example in a typical rural setting in Nigeria, other actor can include land owners, peasant farmers, religious leaders, research institutes, financial institutions,

NGOs amongst others. Therefore, as stipulated by UNESCAP, **Figure 1** shows the feature which a governance system must exhibit to be considered good governance. These features of good governance ensure that the various forms of malpractices are subdued to the maximum possibility and the perspectives of the minorities are considered in decision making [7].

In the years before Nigeria's independence, only little or no attention was given to environmental protection. Environmental governance was plagued by weak monitoring of compliance and poor enforcement of environmental policies, regulations, standards and laws. However, there have been tremendous improvements in the past two decades as environmental protection has grown to become central to every governance regime. A wide range of programmes are now being put together to protect the Nigerian air, water, ecosystems, flora and fauna, natural resources and human wellbeing from the various forms of environmental pollution, hazardous waste disposal [8]. Efforts are also now being made at the various levels of government to promote environmental sustainability in a bid to achieve national sustainable development [5].

In 2007, the Federal environmental Protection Agency Act was repealed by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) Act following series of criticism of the former Act. Besides the assessment of impact of federal agencies activities and coordination of anti-pollution research activities, NESREA is also charged to develop and enforce national environmental standards and to work with the Federal Ministry of Environment to develop national programmes. However, despite the transformation and the consistent declaration of the government's commitment to pursue sustainable development through an effective environmental and resources management, all efforts have failed to yield any effective environmental protection. Strategies and solutions formulated have repeatedly been entangled in the web of a polarized governance system. The result was effectively reflected in the

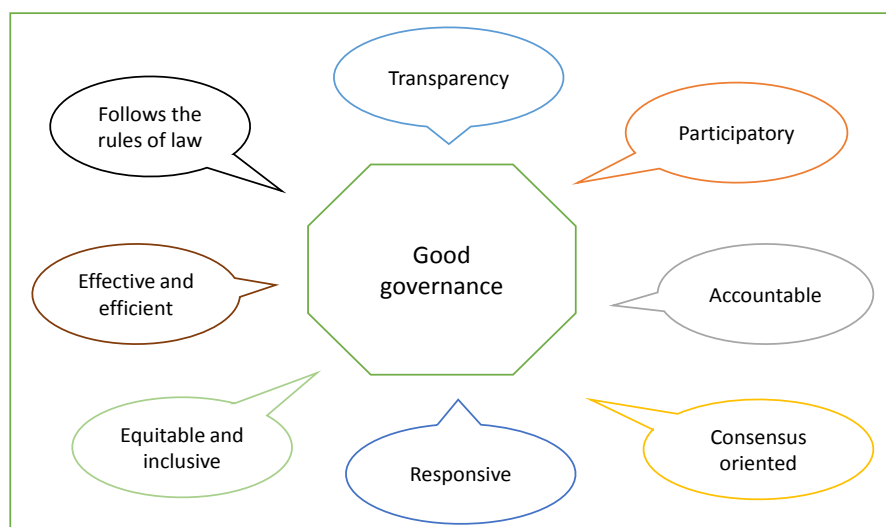


Figure 1. Features of good governance. Source: adapted from [8].

2012 Environmental Performance index which ranked Nigeria 119 out of 132 countries assessed globally and 19th out of 21 sub Saharan African countries [9].

Based on the foregoing, it is therefore undeniable that the government efforts to provide an effective environmental governance for the citizens have neither produced any significant environmental transformation nor a better quality of life. A number of scholarly works have tried to outline the factors responsible for this dysfunction. Very prominent amongst other reasons suggested in Fagbohun [9] are corruption amongst regulatory agencies and lack of transparency. Other reasons include:

- *Preference for social affiliations in appointment of public officials*
- *Irrational support for organs/parastatals of the state*
- *Irresponsible exercise of discretion by public functionaries*
- *Irrelevant controversies and unending face-offs between regulatory agencies*
- *Lax enforcement*
- *Reluctance in the use of criminal sanctions*
- *Unrealistic nature of some laws*
- *Absence of procedural and implementation mechanisms*
- *Lack of financial resources*
- *Lack of technical and administrative resources*
- *Lack of political will*
- *Overlaps and inconsistencies in laws*
- *Non-involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups*
- *Poverty*
- *Problems of access to justice*

In Nigeria, like in many parts of the world, the marginalization of the public in the policy making process has resulted in so much attention for the economy at the expense of the environment and the human health [2].

3.2. An Overview of Development of Environmental Laws and Policies in Nigeria

Because environmental protection was not an issue of priority during the pre-independence era, there was hardly any law or policy designed to protect the environment. Disputes relation to environment was treated as mere nuisance which does not warrant state intervention. The only law that relates to the environment was the Criminal Code Act of 1916 which criminalized activities that could cause water or air pollution. There was also the Public Health Act of 1917 which also contained provisions regulating land, water and air pollution in a broader scope [10].

After independence in 1960, and upon the discovery of oil in Nigeria, it soon became obvious that the existing laws relating to the environment were grossly inadequate. This is because most of the provision relating to the environment was only inferred from other laws. The decade following the independence saw a lot of development in the environmental regime in response to the rapid indus-

trial growth that followed the discovery of oil. Most of the laws then, however, were only an emergency response to arising situations [10].

The Nigerian environmental regime experienced a significant improvement in the period between 1980 and 1990 mainly due to Nigeria's ratification of a number of international environmental instruments. This period saw the establishment of the defunct Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in 1988 which was later subsumed into the Federal Ministry of Environment in 1999 [11]. Since then, the institutional and policy framework on environment has been receiving tremendous attention from the Nigerian government and even the various states have established their own State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) [5]. With the increasing concern for the environment, the Federal Ministry of Environment was however created in the year 1999 to effectively coordinate all environmental issues which were previously fragmented and handled differently by various other ministries and agencies like the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) and Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA). The mandate of the Federal Ministry of Environment as contained in Federal Ministry of Environment report [5] include to:

I. Securing a quality environment conducive for good health and well-being of fauna and flora.

II. Promoting sustainable use of natural resources.

III. Restoring and maintaining the ecosystem, ecological process and preserve biodiversity.

IV. Raising public awareness and promoting understanding of linkages of the environment.

V. Cooperating with relevant Ministries/Departments/Agencies, the private sector, NGOs, and International organizations on environmental matters.

Also, some agencies have been established to address some environmental problems of peculiar natures. These agencies include amongst others:

National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) established by Act No. 15 of 2006 to address the persistent environmental degradation and devastation that is ravaging the Nigerian coastal ecosystem particularly in the oil rich Niger-Delta region.

National Environmental Standards and regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) established by NESREA (Establishment) Act, 2007, repealed the Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act Cap F 10 LFN 2004. This agency was established to enforce compliance with all Nigerian environmental laws, policies, guidelines, standards and regulations in, as well as other international agreements, treaties, protocols and conventions on the environment to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) established in 2006 as the apex regulatory and promotional agency in the Nigerian maritime industry. The Agency was result of the fusion of the National Maritime Authority and Joint Maritime Labour Industrial Council (both being former parastatals

of the Federal Ministry of Transport. The Agency was established for the purpose of enforcing compliance with the Maritime Safety Seafarers Standards and Security, Shipping Regulation, Maritime Labour, Promotion of Commercial Shipping and Cobatage activities, Pollution Prevention and Control in the marine environment, the Agency also implements domesticated International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions [12]. In addition, several laws and regulations have been mustered to ensure proper and effective management of the Nigerian environment while also being party to several Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) [5].

The environmental regime in Nigeria has developed significantly from its humble beginning starting from the pre-independence period. Today the Federal Ministry of Environment is the mother institutions administering the Nigerian environment (as revealed in **Figure 2**) with cooperation and support from other ministries and agencies including the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals Development, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Federal Ministry of Water Resources; Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), National Environmental Standards and regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA).

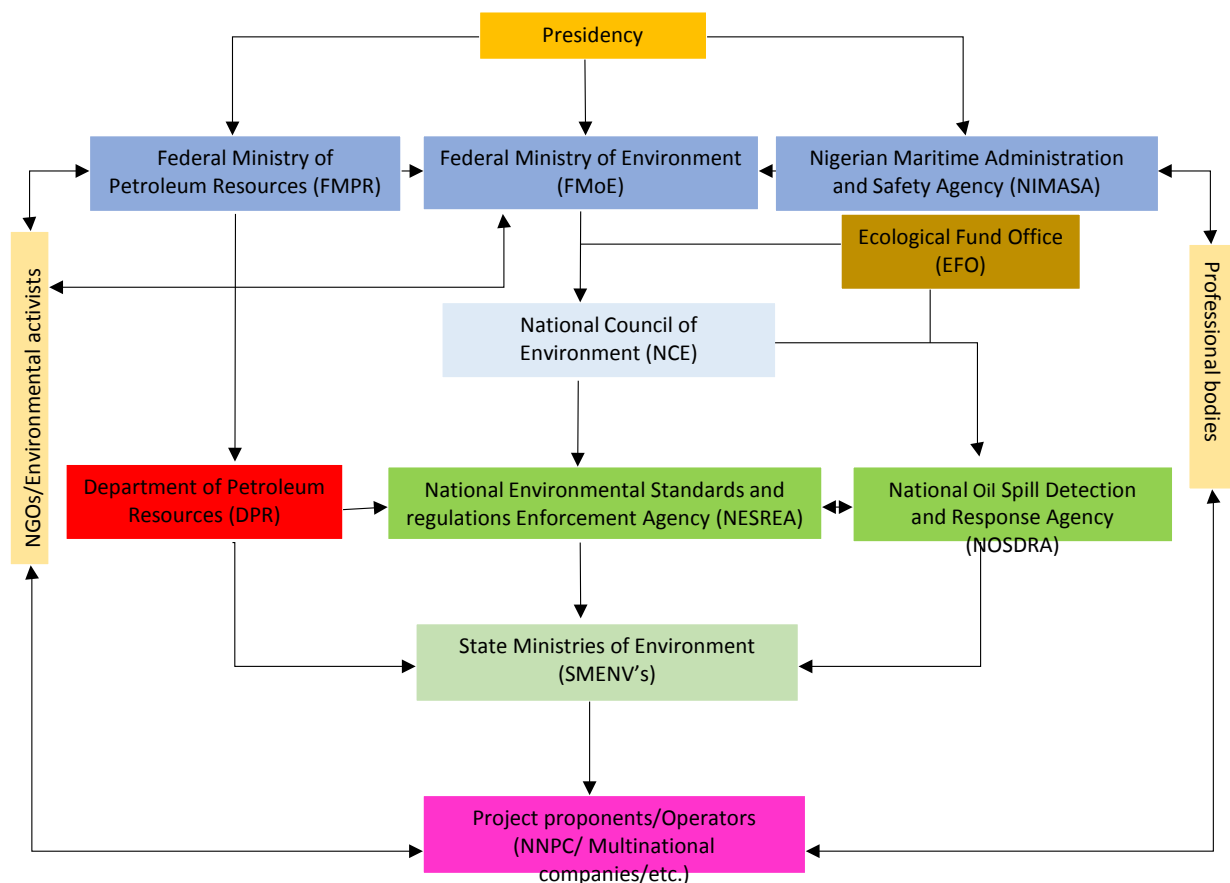


Figure 2. The structure of environmental administration in Nigeria. Source: [11].

4. Transparency as a Regulatory Tool in Nigeria

4.1. The Concept of Transparency

The term transparency probably one of the most “un-transparent” terms we can have [13]. No single definition can lay claim to holding what actually constitutes transparency and there is no single system agreed upon for measuring it. The notion of transparency has been defined differently in various academic literatures. Among the variety of definitions put forward by social scientists and practitioners for transparency include “active disclosure” and “the publicizing of the incumbent policy choices”. From these two definitions, disclosure of information for the benefit of the public can be understood to be a key feature of transparency [14]. From the perspective of the regulators, “transparency is the capacity of regulated entities to identify, understand and express views on their obligations under the rule of law” [13]. However, from the foregoing, transparency is not only about disclosure of relevant government information rather such disclosure should be in a manner that it can be accessed and clearly understood by the public.

Transparency therefore needs a public that will be able to access, comprehend and utilize relevant government information received. Thus, Non-Governmental Organizations which primarily serve as public watchdogs also have their perspective of what transparency means. Transparency International, a global anti-corruption NGO that seeks to unmask and fight corruption in government activities defines transparency as “a principle that allows those affected by administrative decisions, business transactions or charitable work to know not only the basic facts and figures but also the mechanisms and processes” [15]. Transparency International further buttress that government officials, managers and trustees should act in way that is visible, predictable and understandable to the public. Another organization, The Sunlight Foundation, an NGO committed to helping the public get more access to government information through making them available online, on its part did not give a specific definition of transparency according to a report published in Sun Foundation (2015). It rather outlines 10 principles of government openness as follow:

- I. Completeness*
- II. Primacy*
- III. Timeliness*
- IV. Ease of physical and electronic access*
- V. Machine readability*
- VI. Non-discrimination*
- VII. Use of commonly owned standards*
- VIII. Licensing*
- IX. Permanence*
- X. Usage costs*

Measuring or quantifying transparency has been attempted with variety of approaches by scholars and other practitioners. It may be argued that no partic-

ular approach is the best but transparency is understood in practice. Global integrity, an NGO committed to tracking corruption in governance globally, for an instance measured corruption in governance using journalists' reports and structured survey. This measure may have captured the public perception of government openness and corruption but may not have captured the nation's effort to be transparent. Likewise, Transparency International, in a bid to create "Corruption perception index" surveyed variety of people and institutions perception of government transparency in selected countries. Here the index assumes that perception of corruption implies perception of transparency. Though, they may be interwoven, it can however be argued that perception of government corruption may not reliably measure government transparency [14]. Transparency International's index assumes that corruption is the direct opposite of transparency, thus, higher corruption rating would imply low transparency rating and *vice versa*. It means in the corruption index, if a country is ranked high, then its transparency ranking will be low.

Scholar, Archun Fung, in his extermination of "transparency of a system" or "the mandate of a government to provide the public with useful information about their activities" argued that transparency can be evaluated in terms of the accessibility and usefulness of the information provided to the public [16].

"No matter how accurate or relevant new information is, it cannot provide a foundation for a successful transparency system unless it is made available at a time, place, and in a format that fits in with the way consumers, investors, employees, and home buyers make choices as information users and the way corporations, government agencies, and other organizations make decisions as information disclosers" [16]

In this case, Mr. Fung is of the opinion that only when highly relevant information is made easily accessible, such that the users can incorporate the information into their mundane decision-making can a system be effectively transparent.

4.2. Transparency in Nigeria's Environmental Governance

There is no doubting the high place of transparency on the agenda of the public, researcher and non-governmental organizations when it comes to national and international environmental politics and governance. Transparency is gradually growing into one of the most researched topics in the international environmental politics. In the present day environmental governance, transparency is often evaluated based on two criteria sets; the normative and substantive criteria. The normative criteria set evaluate an environmental governance system based on how democratic and participatory it is and the extent to which the public have access to government information. Substantive criteria set relates to how much environmental protection is provided [17]. Pundits have however questioned the ability to relate the normative and procedural transparency with the substantive improvement provided in the form of environmental performance.

Nigeria's environmental politics and governance for example, has so far brought mixed fortunes to the public primarily because of the oil industry which remains the country's main economic backbone. Although Nigeria is famous for its enormous oil and gas resource placing sixth in global crude oil producing nations, corruption and mismanagement has remained the bane of the country. The public hard feel the benefit of the wealth garnered from this resources. Unlike other oil producing nations especially in the gulf countries, Nigeria ranks as low as 151 in 171 countries on the global Human Development index. Corruption was reported by Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to be costing Nigeria 40 percent of its annual oil revenue. Thus, 70 percent of the Nigerian population live below 1 USD per day [18].

At an international conference held in Abuja on 22 and 23 July 2014, with the theme "Beyond Transparency: Oil and the crises of Democratic Governance in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea", *Social Action reports* that experts and activists were consensual in their view that formal transparency frameworks in Nigeria (e.g. Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)) are incapable of delivering good environmental governance. Assisi Asobie, a former Chairman of the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) confirmed at the conference that the initiative has not been able to enforce accountability in the extractive industry nor reduce poverty. Faith Nwadishi of Publish What You Pay Nigeria added that though the initiative made laudable progress in publishing many data relating to Nigerian oil and gas sector online, it failed to implement the reports and recommendations of the NEITI audits. In a similar tune, DaudaGaruba of the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) posited that since NEITI was established in 2007, to promote due process and transparency in extractive revenues paid to and received by government as well ensure transparency and accountability in the application of extractive revenues, there has not been any public bid for oil blocks in Nigeria [19] [20].

It is therefore imperative that transparency in environmental governance is just not practiced on the pages of documents. There is the need for transparency to be connected to a more robust approach such that the role of the public in environmental resource governance is central to the system.

4.3. Challenges of Transparency in Environmental Governance

While transparency is expected to bring about significant progress if employed into environmental governance, a number of regulatory bottle-necks are envisaged to undermine the effectiveness of transparency. Some of the challenges include but not limited to:

- Transparency slows down regulatory responsiveness: regulators often perceive transparency as a trade-off for urgency. A transparent and consultative governance system is generally perceived to reduce regulatory responsiveness. This is perhaps the reason for resistance to transparency measures amongst regulators and government officials.

- Transparency causes consultation fatigue: despite governments efforts to increase transparency in environmental governance through wider reach of consultation, there have been widespread of dissatisfaction from the public. Groups and individuals have in some cases withdrawn their participation in a consultative program due to consultation fatigue. It implies that increasing transparency is not about increasing the quantity of transparency initiatives but the quality of the initiatives adopted. There is therefore the need to design a concise program to safeguard the important role of consultation in ensuring transparency.
- Lack of confidentiality: confidentiality is certainly at odds with transparency. However, regulators must learn to deal with information that is regarded confidential. Because of the increase in the frequency of public/private consultation by the government to increase transparency the risk of loosing the confidentiality of some government intellectual properties becomes high. In fact, in Nigeria like many other countries, the adoption of the “Freedom of information” bill (legislation/principle in some countries) has become very controversial.
- Consultation can quickly become concertation: during consultation, civil society groups and individuals actively participate in reaching a decision with the regulators. The situation can however become different when organized group with larger stake have interest in a particular matter. Such group may tend to predominate and influence the decision making process making the participation of other groups and individuals passive. The government’s responsibility to provide transparent governance becomes compromised.

4.4. Transparency Pathway to Improved Environmental Governance

In rulemaking, access to information is key to both government officials to engender good decision making and for the public to help them understand and participate in the process of rulemaking. Transparency therefore is rested on the partnership between officials and the public. Government officials on the one hand, must make information accessible while on the other hand there must be persons or an organized group that are willing to make use of such information. A transparent government must make clear; what it is doing, how it is doing it, why it is doing it, who is involved in the process and what decisions are made. Though, some have argued that transparency slows down governance but without it, good governance will make little sense to the public.

Kosack & Fung, in *Does Transparency Improve Governance?* (2014) stated that Fung *et al.* developed a set of criteria for transparency policies that can successfully induce transparent practises in government officials. Fung *et al.* (2007) referred to the discloser-user interaction as an “action cycle” which consists of four elements as illustrated in **Figure 3**.

The action cycle depends on the embededness of a particular information is in

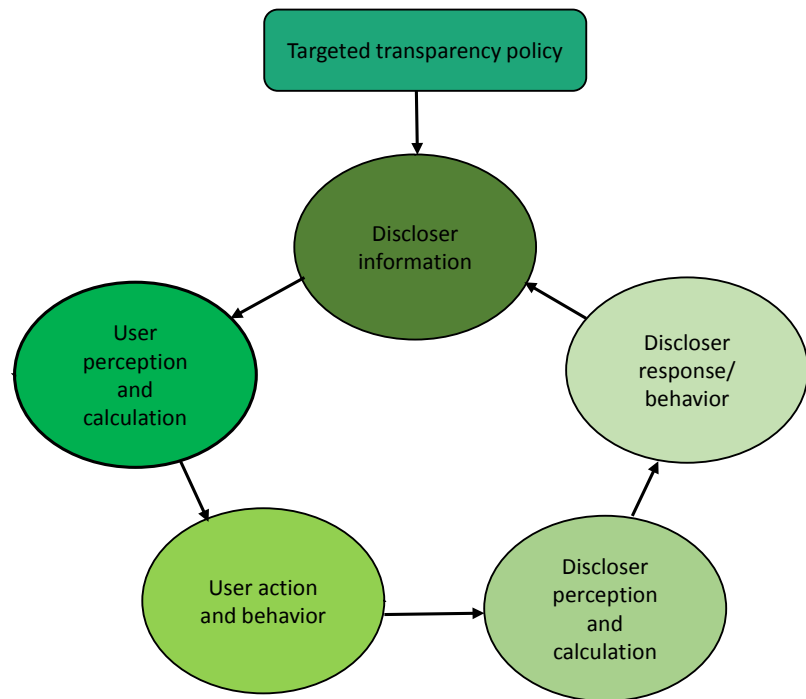


Figure 3. Transparency policy effectiveness. Source: [21].

the process of decision making by users and discloser. As can be seen in **Figure 3**, the impact of a targeted transparency policy (or disclosure of information) is first determined by how much the users of the information understand and adapt it into the decisions they make and is reflected in their behavior (such as their choice of products or what they choose to do in a particular situation). The actions which the users undertook out of their various decisions will have effect only if such actions are understood and acted upon by the discloser. The discloser's action will depend heavily on their ability to identify the changes brought about by their disclosure of the information and how much changes alter business performance. Effectiveness is finally determined by the extent to which changes in discloser's behavior enhance social outcomes [21].

As illustrated in **Figure 3**, the action cycle helps to establish the effects and effectiveness of transparency policies. A transparency system is effective if the information it produced is received and understood by the users which consequently change their behaviors and when information disclosers recognize these changes and respond to users behaviors [16].

Therefore, in order that transparency policies may achieve effectiveness in changing the behavior of the public in a particular manner, stringent conditions have been set on how information is presented, interpreted and integrated in decision making. Transparency initiatives or a disclosure must be designed with a clear understanding of:

- I. Who are the users of the information and how are they likely to respond to the information
- II. The profile of the discloser, the market where they will operate and their

incentives

III. The role of the government and other third parties in providing or aggregating information into the most useful form for the users.

4.5. The Nigerian-Canadian Coalition: A Case of a Working Transparent System

In 2003, the Nigeria-Canada Coalition (NCC) with the support of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Canadian Institute of Sustainable Living otherwise referred to as One Sky (a non-profit making Canadian NGO) triggered a coalition project of five Nigerian environmental NGOs [22]. This partnership project which is based in Cross River State of Nigeria is formed under the Cross River Environmental Capacity Building Project is called the “Cross River Environmental (CRE) Coalition”. The Nigerian environmental NGO that became partners to this project under the coordination of One Sky are Centre for Education, Research, and Conservation of Primates and Nature (CERCOPAN), Development in Nigeria (DIN), Living Earth (Nigeria) Foundation (LENF) Calabar office, South-West Regional Office of Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF) and the NGO Coalition for Environment (NGOCE), which is an umbrella body for some 41 NGOs and CBOs in forest conservation in Cross River State [22] [23].

The goal of CRE is to empower Non-Governmental Organizations to affect policy change and bring about improvement in the Cross River environment [23]. Therefore, One Sky is striving to build the capacity of environmental NGOs (ENGOS) so that they can serve as instruments to provide support to communities and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the buffer zones of the major protected areas viz the Guinean Lowland Forest Ecosystem in Cross River National Park and the Montane Ecosystem of the Obudu Plateau in the Cross River. These two protected areas are the largest remaining connected tropical moist forest with the highest biological endemism in West Africa [24].

The Nigerian-Canadian Coalition through the CRE project intends to bring about change in the behavior of the local communities by developing their capacity—particularly women—to help them make informed decisions regarding the ecosystem (the two protected areas), their social life and economic security in the Cross River watershed bioregion [24]. The approach adopted by the NCC was to promote alternatives to the conventional Euro-centric and science biased ideologies. In this case, the civil society organizations play a key role in forming and informing governance in Cross Rivers State. The NCC built the capacity of the ENGOS and CBOs to work with communities as vehicles of change [18].

The NCC’s partnership approach interphases among three scales of action as shown in **Figure 4**; *community-based, partnership-informed and recipient-led*. This approach ensures that the voice of the local community is heard and reckoned with in development activities. It enables the local communities to come up with their own agenda for sustainable development and take the center stage in defining the direction of the sustainability of the local resource which is of

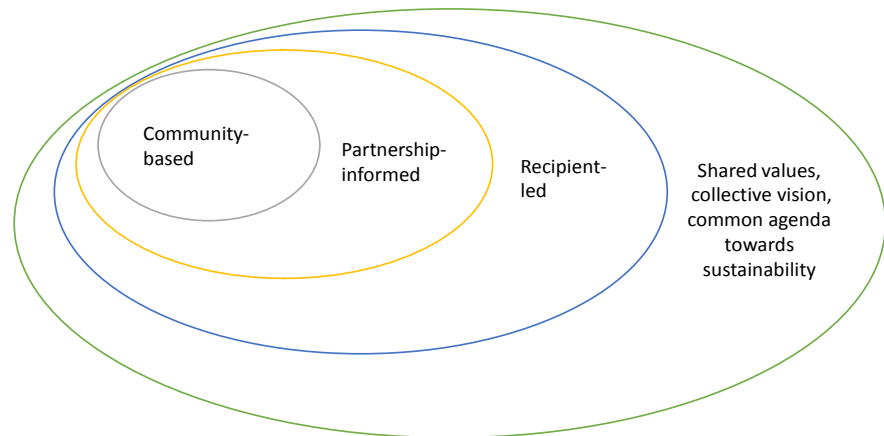


Figure 4. NCC's recipient-led development approach. Source: [18].

global significance under the coordination of One Sky and other local NGOs [18].

This North-South partnership promotes dialogue and re-interpretation of what sustainability really means and what is needed to achieve it so that it makes sense in the local context. The partnership also serves as a platform to re-interpret some international frameworks like Agenda 21 and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

The CRE project which is enshrined on the foundation of partnership is fashioned to take direction from the Canadian partner—One Sky—and to respond to the changing needs of these groups and their local communities. However, the over-arching global intention of the coalition is to create a sustainable solution for conservation of the critical ecosystem which are of global interest [18].

NCC's capacity development in Cross River State focuses on:

- *Participatory Planning Process*
- *Environmental Management and Poverty Alleviation*
- *Participation in Policy Dialogue*
- *Organizational and Project Management Capacity*
- *Communication and Engagement*
- *Gender Mainstreaming*
- *HIV/AIDS Education, Prevention and Policy*
- *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation*

The NCC-One Sky's CRE project therefore represents a transparent environmental governance system that is achieving its objectives through an inclusive governance by giving the civil society a sense of responsibility in developing an agenda for solving the environmental problem within their enclave.

5. Conclusions

The concept of transparency, its desirability and inevitability have grown to become a major subject of discussion in global environmental governance. It is considered one of the ingredients to achieving sustainability in global environmental

governance. The transparency shift in global environmental regime can be seen Multilateral Environmental Agreements, openness/disclosure initiatives and public-private partnership. In the past, good governance, especially in the third world countries is often connected to how much project is carried out and completed by a regime. Thus, in an environmental regime, little or no consideration is given to consultation of the public to determine their needs or wants as the case may be. This has often led to public rejection, misuse or conversion of a development for other needs where compatible.

The transparency concept is a multifaceted one which is often discussed along with topics like corruption, accountability and public participation in governance to a feature that has made it a common issue of discourse in Nigeria. Several international and local NGOs have been advocating for transparency and public consultation in governance to improve quality of governance and check the alarming corruption rate in Nigeria. Public access to government information is inseparable from transparency concept. However, information on its own is not sufficient to enable the public make significant impact on decision on environmental issues, there is a need for the people who are affected by a development must also understand the information to enable them adapt it into their decision making process. Therefore, if transparency must thrive in any society, it requires a public that is informed to enable them process and make best use of public information. The Nigerian government must do more to build the capacity of the public through educational and enlightenment programs rather than leave them at the mercy of NGOs and foreign supports. The regime must create the enabling environment for the public participation in environmental regime. These will awaken their sense of responsibility as stakeholders in the environmental governance.

This study has shown how to institutionalize transparency and make it an ingredient of environmental governance through the integration of civil society group in the regime. Civil society groups such as NGOs and CBOs will normally lead the demand for transparency in governance. The Nigeria-Canada Coalition (NCC) collaboration with the Canadian Institute of Sustainable Living otherwise (One Sky) that gave birth to the Cross River Environmental (CRE) Coalition was exhausted to exemplify a success story. Efforts, therefore should be made to adapt the approach of NCC or similar frameworks that have been tested in other government organs.

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