

# Environment and Development

*The urban economy has an impact on the environment within and outside the city.*

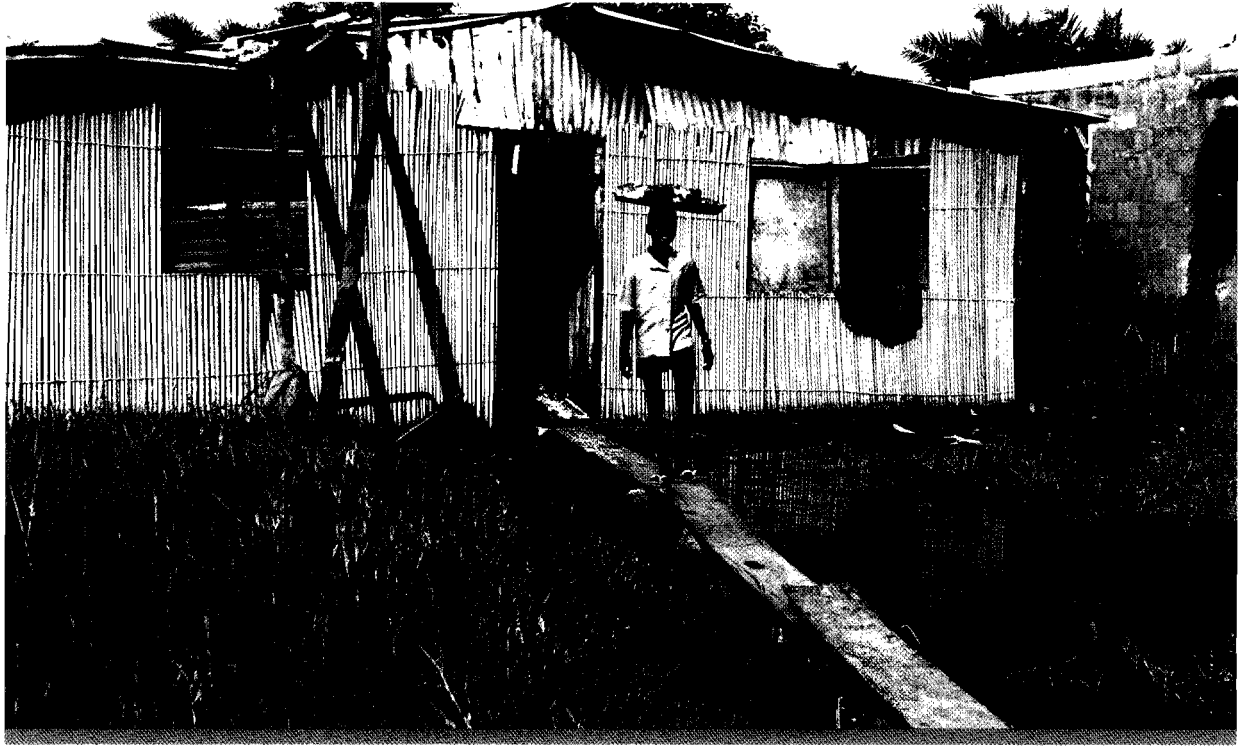
The environment and sustainable development are recurring themes in many of Professor Mabogunje's works. His writings on cities, for example, address the issue of urban environmental degradation. The urban economy impacts the environment both within and outside the city. At the core of environmental degradation and sustainable development is population. The rapid growth of human populations, especially in the developing countries, has intensified the demand for natural resources and led to increased exploitation of nature in ways harmful to the environment.

Manufacturing, which is generally associated with rising living standards, is the cause of a range of environmental problems. Today, globalization and the freer movement of capital are facilitating the relocation of manufacturing industries to developing countries where environmental laws are less stringent. Thus, environmental problems are appearing in new locations, even though many are global.

Poverty also has implications for the environment. For example, low incomes and high energy costs in developing countries mean that fuelwood is the primary domestic energy source. The demand for fuelwood, particularly in the face of rapid population growth, leads to rapid deforestation. Rapid population growth also leads to increased demand for farm land, which contributes to deforestation and causes soil degradation. Extreme poverty forces people to prioritize physical survival over concerns for the environment. In these circumstances, the environment is exploited to eke out a living without an eye on conservation.

Promoting sustainable development now occupies centre stage in both academic and policy circles. The question is how to satisfy the needs of the current generation without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations. The development of effective sustainable development strategies requires a proper understanding of

Curt Carmemark/World Bank



Urban life is often a balancing act

complex interactions between societies and nature. Sustainability science is an outcome of the quest for this understanding. This chapter reviews Professor Mabogunje's works on sustainability and environmental management.

His concern with the environment—as well as other topical issues, such as housing and housing finance—is symptomatic of geography's search for social relevance. The structural

paradigm turned geographers' attention to pressing societal problems. The sustainability of the earth's life support system is one example.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Professor Mabogunje's papers on this topic include *Sustainability Science and the Management of the Nigerian Environment: Connecting*

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*In Africa, poverty rather than economic growth is a major cause of environmental degradation.*

*with the World Wide Web of Life and Geography in 21st Century Nigeria: The Challenge of Sustainability Science.* Both depict sustainability science as a new paradigm and as a multidisciplinary endeavour. He is of the view that this new paradigm provides the knowledge base for effectively addressing sustainable development issues and for policy prescriptions.

Among other things, Professor Mabogunje's paper on sustainability science and environmental management in Nigeria<sup>1</sup> examines the possible contribution of sustainability science to the management of Nigeria's environment. The environment has both intrinsic and utilitarian values. The relationship between nature and human society in the process of development gives rise to concerns with sustainable development. However, the knowledge needed to effectively address the issue of sustainable development is not available. Hence, the international movement to create the new sustainability science paradigm.

Nigeria's population growth is putting multiple pressures on the environment. Consumption has increased, fallow periods have shortened, forest resources are being denuded, and water courses increasingly polluted. In spite of government efforts, the development process is moving in an unsustainable direction. Therefore "effective management must evolve strategies that will help to reduce the incentives for the continued unsustainable

ways we presently exploit both animal and plant life in the country," including establishing a central land register and a biodiversity institute. The new sustainability science will "enhance our capacity to analyze and predict the behaviour of this complex organizing systems of nature and society. . . ."

In the paper *Geography in 21st century Nigeria*,<sup>2</sup> he reviews the paradigm shifts in Nigerian geography and the contributions of geographers to the country's development. Their primary contributions have been in the fields of census and population, urban development, rural development, and transportation. Globalization has facilitated the operations of multinational corporations and spurred global



Children lining up jerry cans for scarce water



Gautam Banerji/UNEP

Life amidst environmental waste and squalor

economic growth, resulting in increased pressure on the environment. In Africa, poverty rather than economic growth is a major cause of environmental degradation. This has brought about “a growing international movement to reconnect science to the on-going political agenda for sustainable development through the emergence of the new paradigm of sustainability science” (p. 6). The paper identifies the core scientific issues in sustainability science that will ensure sustainable development, and notes that no single scientific discipline can provide all the answers to the questions. A multidisciplinary endeavour, sustainability science must involve scientists, stakeholders, advocates, citizens, and others. This objective is reconnect science to the political agenda for sustainable development.

## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Professor Mabogunje’s work on environmental management includes two papers: *Towards an Environmental Policy in Nigeria* and *Poverty and the Environment*. He believes that urban problems should inform urban environmental policy. However, because Nigerian cities differ in degree and kind, there cannot be one single blueprint. Decentralization and participation can facilitate the process of tackling poverty and protecting the environment.

The paper on environmental policy in Nigeria<sup>3</sup> elaborates on urban environmental problems in the country, including the basic demographic definition of an urban centre. The country’s urban environmental policy should seek to maintain a high level of well-being among urban inhabitants, make cities more functional by improving access to amenities and facilities, and improve the orderliness and cleanliness of urban areas.

To achieve these objectives, it is important to know which “settlements shall be regarded as urban; the second is the recognition that within the urban category there are different classes of cities with environmental problems which are sometimes different not just in degree but almost in kind” (p. 6). Other important concerns are pollution, the management of urban waste, and the machinery for policy implementation. The paper stresses that

"a good machinery for implementing an urban environmental policy is thus one that encourages in most urban residents a strong proprietary sense about their environment" (p. 11). The Federal Ministry of Housing and Environment should adopt an appropriate structure and build capacity to deal with different aspects of environmental problems.

In the short term, large metropolitan areas should be broken up: "Smaller units of administration ensure greater sense of participation and reduce the level of social alienation" (p. 13). However, the paper fails to point out that decentralization will make it difficult to tackle metropolitan-wide problems, even in the short run.

His work on poverty and the environment<sup>4</sup> is primarily concerned with the link between poverty and environmental degradation. It stresses that poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon and, therefore, cannot be adequately defined in simple income terms. He adopts the broad UNDP definition of poverty as deprivation of opportunities for a decent life. Poverty makes people feel that they have no roots in the community and displaces the poor to environmentally unsafe areas. Poverty is not just a local matter. "therefore, it is necessary to situate the discussion within the global political economy" (p. 2). Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have found it difficult to attract capital and transform their economies. Large segments

of their population still remain poor, despite globalization.

Poverty, coupled with rapid population growth, leads to deforestation, desertification, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, water pollution, and urban pollution. In cities, squatter settlements and urban slums are examples of urban environmental problems associated with poverty. The paper does point out the paradox that "whilst the poor whether in urban or rural areas manage to impact negatively on the environment, they are also the most vulnerable to environmental hazards and natural disasters" (p. 9). This results from inadequate environmental management of areas inhabited by the poor.

A positive benefit of globalization is its contribution to worldwide concern about human rights, the status of women, and the implications of poverty for environmental degradation. International civil society organizations have sprung up to fight for the disadvantaged and to pressure governments and multinational corporations to be more socially responsible. Good governance, including decentralization and participation, are important mechanisms for tackling poverty and protecting the environment. Local governments must be made transparent and accountable. More importantly, "to ensure the enhanced participation of the poor in economic growth, special attention must be given to reforming those laws and regulations which impair their access to land, credit, public infra-

structure and services. Improving the access of the poor to land through secure tenure is consequently one way of enhancing their sense of ownership of a portion of the earth's surface whose environmental health they can be expected to care for" (p. 13).

### ENDNOTES

1. "Sustainability Science and the Management of the Nigerian Environment: Connecting With the World Wide Web of Life." Text of the Special Lecture to Mark the Year 2001 World Environment Day, Organized by the Federal Ministry of the Environment in Collaboration with the National Committee on Sustainability Science held at the National Universities Commission on Tuesday, June 5, 2001.
2. "Geography in 21st Century Nigeria: The Challenge of Sustainability Science." Keynote Address Presented to the 44th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Geographical Association, held at the University of Ibadan on July 30–August 2, 2001.
3. "Towards an Environmental Policy in Nigeria." Text of a Special Lecture Given at the 34th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Geographical Association held at the Bagauda Hotel, Kano on April 7, 1981.
4. "Poverty and the Environment." Text of a Paper Presented at the 2001 Open Meeting of the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Research Community held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 6–8, 2001, under the auspices of the Brazilian Academy of Science.