

# THE MANAGEMENT OF ECOLOGICAL FUND AND NATURAL-RESOURCE CONFLICTS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA, 2009-2013

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between the management of the *Ecological Fund* and natural-resource conflicts in northern Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the effect of the failure to conform to guidelines in the utilization of the *Ecological Fund* on the incidence of natural resource conflicts in the region. The study found that the utilization of the *Ecological Fund* was characterized by non-conformity to stipulated disbursement guidelines, incomplete remittance of the fund to relevant agencies, as well as the unauthorized diversion of the fund. In some instances, the fund was utilized to serve private interests. This led to the escalation of natural-resource conflicts in northern Nigeria. The study recommended the need implement agency review reports that ensure accountability and popular participation of stakeholders.

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**Keywords:** Ecological Fund, Natural-Resource Conflict, Desertification, Climate Change .

## **Introduction**

The challenges of the management of the *Ecological Fund* and the rate of mitigation of climate-related conflicts constitute a major dilemma of environmental sustainability in northern Nigeria. Land is a symbol of identity in most African countries, a means of cultural affiliation, social and economic survival. In Nigeria, land is one of the most cherished resources. Nigeria has a total land area of 983,213 square kilometers of which 773, 783 square kilometers are in the Savanna zone; 75,707 square kilometers are in

the derived Savanna zones and 133,717 square kilometers are in the Forest zone (Omofonwan and Osa-Edoh, 2008). Nigerian population is more than 120 million, yielding an average density of more than 120 persons per square kilometer. Although, this density may vary from one region to another, it is obvious that Nigeria is already experiencing high population density and the interaction of these millions of Nigerians with their respective environment has left indelible mark on the landscape (Omofonwan and Osa-Edoh -2008).

The Northern part of Nigeria is endowed with a large expanse of arable land that has over the years proved to be a vital resource for agriculture and other economic activities, but the *Sahara* desert is advancing southwards at the rate of 0.6 km every year (Odiogor, 2010). Consequently, Nigeria loses about 350,000 hectares of land every year to desert encroachment. This has led to demographic displacements in villages across 11 states in the North (Odiogor, 2010). A UNEP report of 2013 observed that drought and desertification are the most important environmental problems affecting the 15 northern states of the country. Population pressure, over grazing, and the continuous exploitation of marginal lands have aggravated the negative effects of drought and desertification (UNEP, 2013).

In northern Nigeria, there are many conflicts which are environmentally induced. These are conflicts over grazing land, over cattle, over water points and over cultivable land. While there are conflicts over grazing land and over cattle among pastoral people, there are also conflicts over cultivable land among peasant farmers within the same ethnic group and also between ethnic groups (Obioha, 2008). Armed conflict between herdsmen and their host communities had been on the rise in northern Nigeria due to increased competition between pastoralists and farmers for dwindling 'stock' of grazing land (Odoh and Chilaka, 2012). For instance, violence erupted on 18 December, 2009, between these two groups when pastoralists attacked a farming village of *Udeni-Gida* just two weeks after a clash with farmers over a rice field on 6 December, resulted in death of a farmer (Odoh and Chilaka, 2012). Rising cases of indigene/settler conflicts in northern Nigeria led to the expulsion of over 2000 pastoralists from *Plateau* state and over 700 pastoralists from *Borno* state between 2009 and 2013. It is estimated that over 20,000 pastoralists have been expelled by local authorities in northern Nigeria since 2009 (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

In 2013, it was estimated that over 70 million Nigerian have a direct and indirect experience of the negative impact of drought and desertification. *Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Yobe* and *Zamfara* are under intense pressure from the attack of climate change. No fewer than 42 million people are believed to have been affected by this development (FADE, 2013). According to UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report of 2005, Nigeria has the highest deforestation rate of primary forests and this further

worsen climate condition of the country and expose the country to the threat of desert encroachment.

The need to combat the menace of ecological problems facing Nigeria informed the establishment of the *Ecological Fund* through the *Federation Account Act* of 1981, as a pool of funds that would be solely devoted to funding of ecological problems (Ezekiel, 2010). *Decrees 36* of 1984 and *106* of 1992, as well as the *Allocation of Federation Account Modification Order* of 2002, subsequently modified the Act. The fund, which originally constituted one percent of the Federation Account, was reviewed to two percent in 1992, and later one percent of the derivation allocation was added, thus bringing the total percentage to three. Of this amount, 48.5 percent goes to the Federal Government, while 24 and 20 percents are set aside for State and Local governments respectively (Ezekiel, 2010).

Ecological projects are executed on behalf of the Federal Government by the *Ecological Fund Office* (EFO). Since 2009, the Federal Government has approved a guideline for the disbursement of ecological fund that ensures that drought and desertification receive 60 percent of ecological projects in Nigeria. Ezekiel (2010) noted that the guideline is informed by the need to have maximum mileage with the utilization of the fund, as well as ensure that adequate intervention measures that would tackle the menace of desertification are properly executed. The need to devote a larger percentage of *Ecological Fund* to combat the threat posed by desert encroachment and desertification is also informed by its threat to national security. Odiogor (2010) noted that desertification has become a threat to food production and poverty alleviation strategies in the country as those mostly affected are the most vulnerable village dwellers of communities affected by the scourge. This portends grave danger to food security in Nigeria.

The major concern about the continuous shift of the *Sahara* desert southward into Nigeria has informed the Federal Government, within the overall framework of protecting the Nigeria environment, to give prominence to the twin problem of drought and desertification. Thus, 60 percent of *Ecological Fund* is pledged to fight the problem that has escalated as a result of climate change. The focus of this study is the examination of the management of *Ecological Fund* and natural-resource conflicts in northern Nigeria between 2009; when the Federal Government pledged to commit 60 percent of *Ecological Fund* to fight drought and desertification, and 2013.

## **Scholarly Explanations on the Causes of Natural-Resource Conflicts in Northern Nigeria**

Scholars have tried to explain why there have been an escalation of conflicts in northern Nigeria, particularly resource-based conflicts and one common argument in the literature is to associate natural resource conflicts with the generic problem of rent-seeking. Collier and Hoeffler (2001), Anderson (2003) and De Soysa (2002) for instance argued that rent-seeking activities based on resource abundance are prime factor in greed and war. Anderson (2003) argued that natural resource abundance, not necessarily scarcity could be a veritable source of conflict and that is the problem with Nigeria and most African states. De Soysa (2002) also noted that natural resources motivate rapacious behavior and allow the finance of civil war. Thus, conflict is likelier when countries have a moderate level of renewable resources for capital but diminishes with abundance.

Similar to the rent-seeking argument is the claim by writers like Ibrahim and Kazah-Toure (2003) that since the return to democratic rule, the failure of the state to meet the aspirations of the citizens in terms of equitable sharing of national wealth has worsened conflict in Nigeria. They noted that inequitable redistribution of resources means that political mobilization has developed along the lines of zero-sum game and the implication is that rival ethnic groups are obliged to block the access of others or displace those who already have access.

While the resources curse or rent-seeking argument explains the situation in most developing states, it is not a general phenomenon in all resource-rich developing economies. Also, internal conflict is not an exclusive problem of only rent-based economies as internal conflicts have occurred in developed countries like Ireland and Spain in recent times.

Natural resource conflicts in northern Nigeria have also been explained in terms of the interface between human populations and available resources. This argument which has its root in the *neo-Malthusian* notion of carrying capacity of resources has been used by scholars like Odoh and Chilaka (2012) and Obioha (2008) to explain the escalation of violent conflicts in northern Nigeria. Their arguments suggest that since natural resources are fixed and population grows, there is a tendency for population expansion to create resource scarcity that may provoke violent conflicts of high magnitude. Obioha (2008) for instance observed that the decreasing availability of physical, environmental and land resources such as clean water, good agricultural land for arable and animal husbandry could create a condition of 'simple scarcity', 'group identity' and 'deprivation' in the area. The human population explosion argument no doubt explain how growth in population can undermine the carrying capacity of any natural resource, it however erroneously suggest that population growth is at the root of every

natural resource conflict. The argument also underplays the relevance of climate change adaptation initiatives designed to manage situations of over-exploitation of natural resources.

Scholars have also tried to associate natural resource conflicts in northern Nigeria with ethno-religious composition of the region. Nyong (2008) for instance noted that the *Sahel* is a zone of cultural transition, where Islamic culture mingles with the traditional cultures of the south. However the decline in ethnic and religious tolerance creates potential for conflict, as these groups have different interest in the resource base, possess different skills, and claim rights over different resources and areas. Ibrahim and Kazah-Toure (2003) noted that the political history of Nigeria, characterized by mutual distrust by ethnic groups and uneven redistribution of wealth accrued from natural resource endowment, has made ethno-religious crisis a common occurrence in Nigeria, particularly in northern Nigeria that has a large population of southern settlers. This argument however confuses natural resource conflicts with ethno-religious conflicts. While many conflicts in northern Nigeria have taken ethnic or religious dimensions, at the root of most of these conflict is the struggle for natural resources. Thus, there is need to separate the root cause of conflicts from the dimensions of these conflicts.

Arguments by scholars on the causes and reasons for the escalation of natural resources conflict tend to erroneously suggest that such conflict emanate from natural cause and are therefore, inevitable in communities with such poor physical conditions in terms of soils, vegetation, topography and inherent extreme variability of climate as manifested in frequent droughts. Desertification is however a reversible process that requires man's commitment to combat it. Also, the establishment the *Ecological Fund* is an indication that the Federal Government is also committed to reversing the process in affected areas, as well as preventing it in lands that are not yet degraded, or are slightly degraded. It follows that the prospects of mitigation of conflicts precipitated by drought and desertification in northern Nigeria is related to the management of *Ecological Fund*. Thus, this study examines the relationship between the management of the Ecological Fund and natural-resource conflicts in northern Nigeria between 2009 and 2013.

### **Assessment of the Utilization of Ecological Fund before the 2009 Review of the Disbursement Guidelines**

The utilization of *Ecological Fund*, particularly since the return to civilian rule in 1999 has been embroiled in endless controversies that in most cases are hinged on gross mismanagement. According to Ezekiel (2010), rather than serving as a veritable tool for addressing the myriads of the country's ecological problems, the utilization of the fund was embroiled in

endless controversies that is related to transparency. Adekoya (2010) noted that the former Governor of Plateau state, *Mr. Joshua Dariye*, shocked Nigerians with a gripping tale of how N1.6 billion meant for fighting ecological problem in Plateau state was expended to sponsor the 2003 Presidential election of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Also, there were reports of illegal withdrawals from *Ecological Fund* account by the EFO totaling N146.594 billion not relevant to the objectives of the fund (Okoh, 2008). *Thisday* editorial of 24 May, 2008, revealed how former President *Olusegun Obasanjo*, approved the withdrawal of the sum of N1.7billion from the *Ecological Fund* and diverted it for the execution of the 2003 general elections. Also, between 2003 and 2007, the *Senate Public Accounts Committee* reported that over N9 billion of *Ecological Fund* was not remitted by the EFO to the *National Emergency Management Agency* (NEMA) and the money has not been accounted for (Okoh, 2008).

The challenge of the utilization of *Ecological Fund* within this period was also admitted by Federal Government during the 2010 *Eco-Fair* organized by the Ecological Fund Office (EFO). The then Minister of Environment and Chairman, National Committee on Ecological Problems, *Mr. John Odey*, stated that the lack of transparency in the execution of ecological projects across the country was one of the major reasons the fund had not achieved the objective for which it was set up (Ezekiel, 2010).

### **The Utilization of Ecological Fund and the Escalation of Natural-Resource Conflicts in Northern Nigeria since 2009**

In a bid to restore sanity to the management of *Ecological Fund*, the Federal, Government approved a new guideline for the disbursement of the *Ecological Fund* following criticism from stakeholders and the general public against the management and disbursement of the fund.

Table 1: The 2009 Approved Guideline for Disbursement of Ecological Fund

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Percentage of Allocation</b>
Brought of Desertification	60
Soil Erosion/Food/Civilly	25
Pollution	5
Miscellaneous	10

Source: Ministry of Environment (2009) "Guideline for Disbursement of Ecological Fund"  
Available at <http://fmi.gov.ng/latest/10955/>

Table one show the 2009 approved guideline for disbursement of *Ecological Fund*. Following the new guideline, drought and desertification control is expected to receive 60 percent, 25 percent for soil erosion/flood/gully, 5 percent for pollution control, while the administrative matters in the Ecological Fund Office, as well as the National Committee on Ecological Problems and other emergencies will gulp 10 percent which will

be disbursed at the discretion of the President. According to Odey (2009), the new guideline was informed by the need to have maximum mileage with the utilization of the fund. Therefore, Federal Government’s intervention measures would be focused on areas of natural environmental disasters. However, despite the approval of the new guideline, the disbursement of *Ecological Fund* remained arbitrary and at the discretion of the Presidency.

Table 2: Percentage Funding of Anti-Desertification Projects in the 11 Frontline Northern States, 2010-2013

States	Year			
	2010*	2011	2012	2013
Adamawa	18	0	0	14
Bauchi	18	0	0	10
Borno	18	0	0	13
Gombe	18	0	0	18
Jigawa	18	0	0	12
Kano	18	0	0	22
Katsina	18	0	0	18
Kebbi	18	0	0	10
Sokoto	18	0	0	14
Yobe	18	0	0	13
Zamfara	18	0	0	08

Source: Ecological Fund Office (2013) *Report on Release of Ecological Fund*

\*Culled from Ezekiel (2010) “Ecological Fund: Trapped in a Web of Endless Controversy”.

Available of <http://worldpress.com/2010/08/19/Nigeria-ecological-fund-issue>

Table 2 shows that despite the approval of a guideline that requires that 60 percent of *Ecological Fund* is disbursed in combating desertification, Federal Government’s funding of anti-desertification projects in the frontline northern states remain below the 60 percent approved guideline. Federal Government’s non-involvement of states or affected communities in the approval of ecological projects has led to minimal impact of such projects. The Governor of *Yobe* state, *Alhaji Ibrahim Gaidam*, was quoted to have said that the policy of not involving the affected communities or the state government in *Yobe* resulted in only less than 18 percent of ecological projects in the state having direct link with the fight against desert encroachment (Wogu, 2014). This argument was supported by the *House of Representatives Environment Committee* report of 2013 that noted that most of the Federal Government ecological projects in the entire *Sahelian* frontline states of the north are at detrimental to the overall objectives of combating desertification.

The non-conformity to stipulated disbursement guideline has led to further encroachment of the *Sahelian* desert southward into Nigeria and it is estimated at a rate of *0.6 Km* per year since 2009. The total land mass of the eleven (11) frontline northern states account for 43 percent of the country’s total land mass, but between 50 and 75 percent of it is affected by

desertification. This shows that Federal Government's efforts in combating desertification in northern Nigeria are not yielding positive result. This has led to further scarcity of natural resources, particularly fertile land, and rise in the outbreak of natural resource conflicts in northern Nigeria.

The rise in cases of natural-resource conflicts and deaths arising from them shows that natural-resource scarcity in northern Nigeria, associated with further southward encroachment of the *Sahelian* desert is an indication that competition for scarce natural resource has become acute owing to poor effectiveness of anti-desertification programs of the Federal Government in northern Nigeria.

Table 3: Statistics of Cases and Casualties of Climatically-Induced Violent Conflicts over Land Resources in Northern Nigeria, 2009–2013

State	Estimated Rise in cases	Estimated Rise in Deaths	Objectives Sort
Sokoto	7 to 14	61 to 174	Relief from scarcity
Kaduna	6 to 14	350 to 1000	Relief from scarcity
Zamfara	5 to 16	100 to 425	Relief from scarcity
Niger	10 to 17	300 to 1200	Relief from scarcity
Jigawa	5 to 12	63 to 179	Relief from scarcity
Yobe	11 to 20	120 to 747	Relief from scarcity
Plateau	7 to 27	350 to 3000	Relief from scarcity
Nasarawa	4 to 10	38 to 383	Relief from scarcity
Kogi	2 to 14	14 to 124	Relief from scarcity

Source: Human Rights Watch (2013) *Environmental Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*. Washington DC: HRW

While table 3 shows an estimate of only reported cases of natural-resource conflicts by the media, more cases of outbreak of natural resource conflicts have gone unreported or misconstrued by the media to be ethno-religious conflicts because of the ethnic and religious dimensions of these crises. The *Human Rights Watch* report of April 2014 for instance noted that more thousands have been killed as a result of conflicts over natural resources but the unrest is often seen as sectarian in nature since Fulani's are Muslim and the communities with which they are in conflict are sometimes Christian migrants from the south who have settled in the region because of their farming occupation. When this is put into consideration, the report noted that an estimated addition of 3,000 peoples have also died since 2010.

Evidence is also bound to support the claim that the utilization of Ecological Fund by the Federal Government has also been characterized by political challenges. In some cases, *Ecological Fund* was diverted for other purpose by the Federal Government without Senate approval. Umoru (2013) noted that move by the Nigeria Senate to get detailed information on why these funds were diverted without legislative approval and how *Ecological Fund* was being spent remained abortive as top Federal Government officials, particularly the *Secretary to the Government of the Federation*,

continuously shunned Senate invitation. Both the *Secretary to the Government of the Federation* and the *Accountant General's Office* were reportedly involved in the deductions from the *Ecological Fund*, but no representatives of either offices has appeared before the Senate to rationalize the diversion of *Ecological Fund* for other purposes (Umoru, 2013).

**Table 4: Reports of Diversion of Ecological Fund for Non-Ecological Purpose**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Events</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<b>2009</b>	<i>N93.7 billion</i> was illegally transferred from the Ecology Fund to the Consolidated Revenue Fund to fund the acceleration of capital budget advances to state and local governments to meet revenue shortfall and third quarter development fund warrant.	<b>HOR Environment Committee Report of 2009</b>
<b>December 2009</b>	The <i>National Economic Council</i> reported that about <i>N200 billion</i> belonging to the Ecological Fund had been spent on questionable projects that were either non-existent or had no relation to the fight against ecological disasters or problems.	<i>Thisday Editorial of December 14, 2009</i>
<b>June 2010</b>	The HoR raised queries over curious withdrawals and loans to agencies and individuals totaling <i>N146.594 billion</i> , mainly to irrelevant objectives of the fund.	<b>HoR Environment Committee Report of 2010</b>
<b>December 2011</b>	It was reported that an illegal deduction totaling <i>N20.1 billion</i> were made from the Ecological Fund for debt servicing.	<b>Senate Public Accounts Committee Report of 2011</b>

Source: Compiled by the Researchers from Cited Sources

The diversion of *Ecological Fund* for non-ecological purpose has undermined the attempt to successfully manage drought-related conflicts arising from resource use in the *Sahel*. As noted by *Human Rights Watch* report of April 2014, there is a sense of abandonment by people in the affected communities, who now take the law into their hands. This has only aggravated natural resource conflicts in region. Table 4 show some reports of diversion of *Ecological Fund* for non-ecological purpose

Table 5: Causes of Conflicts in Northern Nigeria, 2008 – 2013

<b>Causes</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Competition for Scarce Natural Resources	54
Religious Conflicts	24
Domestic Conflicts	14
Political Conflicts	8

Source: IPCC (2013) Fourth Assessment Report on Climate Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

The table 5 also shows that the IPCC *Fourth Assessment Report* of 2013 attributed the competition for scarce natural resources as the major cause of conflicts in northern Nigeria. The table was compiled by the IPCC using response by respondents randomly selected from the communities where conflicts have occurred in northern Nigeria. The table shows that most

respondents see the competition over scarce resources as a threat to security of lives and properties in the region. However, as noted by Eichelberger (2014), rather than tackle the climatically-induced ecological problems causing scarcity of natural resources, the Federal Government of Nigeria has continued to deny the root cause of the crisis in northern Nigeria, blaming it most times on religious intolerance and activities of perceived political opponents.

According to the report by the House of Representatives Committee on the Environment, remittances to NEMA have been mostly on quarterly basis rather than monthly. This has resulted in over N9 billion of *Ecological Fund* that was supposed to be remitted to NEMA not being properly accounted for. Also, the report noted that the Federal Government violated the *Financial Act* of 2006 by using *Decree 36* of 1984 as the basis for distributing *Ecological Fund*. This resulted in a shortfall of N302 billion that remains unaccounted for (Nzeshi, 2013).

The award of ecological contracts lack transparency and most times, contracts are awarded to incompetent contractors without due process. Odey (2009) noted that there was lack of transparency in the execution of ecological projects across the country as most of the contractors implement jobs below standards. However, Federal Government's promise to fight corruption in the execution of ecological projects remains a mere assurance as government officials are reportedly in collusion with some of these contractors, thereby compounding the problem (Ezekiel, 2010). The poor result of the anti-desertification effort of the Federal Government owing to the challenges of the utilization of *Ecological Fund* has worsened the humanitarian situation in northern Nigeria, particularly in the affected communities as can be seen in table 6.

Table 6: Humanitarian Situations in Northern Nigeria as at August, 2013.

S/N	Humanitarian Issues
1	2.1 million People are food insecure in northeastern states and require emergency food assistance.
2	1.4 million Children under 5 are acutely malnourished with almost half million of them suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).
3	Internal population displacement as a result of natural resources scarcity and conflicts that emanate from it has risen to 45,000.
4	The number of migrants to <i>Katsina</i> state owing to natural resource scarcity has increased the labour force about 20 percent above normal resulting in drop in labour wages and reduced household income.
5	Population displacement associated with natural resource conflicts have led to decline in crop production in <i>Borno</i> and <i>Yobe</i> states causing food scarcity and inaffordability of food items
6	Over 8,000 deaths have been reported in northern Nigeria as a result of spread of radicalization movement. This radicalization is worsened by inadequate efforts of government to resolve natural resource conflicts in the region as many pastoralists and farmers have been reportedly recruited by radical movements.

Source: UN ECHO (2013) *Humanitarian Implementation Plan Report on Nigeria*

Civil insecurity associated with natural resource conflicts has made northeastern Nigeria a fertile region for radical movement in the country. The northern states of the country that are most affected by the threat of desert encroachment present some characteristics of the *Sahel* region with semi-arid conditions, high poverty level, endemic malnutrition and very poor social and human development. This situation has made them vulnerable to deadly activities associated with radical Islamic movements. As observed by Murtala (2013), the effect of climate change in far northern Nigeria has assumed such magnitude that the minimum vegetation cover in *Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Yobe, Maiduguri, Taraba* and *Adamawa* states has already fallen below 10 percent as against the ideal requirement of 25 percent ecological cover recommended by UNEP to support Fulani herdsmen.

Table 7: Some Cases of Natural Resource Conflicts between Pastorals and Farmers in Northern Nigeria in 2013

<b>April 2013</b>	79 people were killed when Fulani herdsmen attacked a village in Zamfara
<b>March 2013</b>	Some 100 people were killed when suspected Fulani Nomads attacked some local farming villages in Kaduna.
<b>March 2013</b>	60 people were killed in Kebbi following a clash between pastorals and farmers.
<b>December 2013</b>	More than 120 people died in renewed clashes between pastorals and farmers during the harmattan season in Katsina state.
<b>February 2013</b>	Clash between traditional rural farmer and nomads in <i>Adogi</i> town, Nasarawa state, led to death of 13 people in February.
<b>June 2013</b>	Clash between indigenes and settlers over grazing rights in <i>Biliri</i> community resulted in 14 deaths
<b>August 2013</b>	More than 5 people were killed in the <i>Song</i> crisis after herdsmen clashed with farmers
<b>October 2013</b>	Some 9 people died in Bali village following indigene/settler dispute over scarce resources in <i>Madagali</i>
<b>November 2013</b>	Over 16 people died in a clash between herdsmen and farmers in the <i>Numan</i> community reprisals
<b>December 2013</b>	Over 25 people were killed in <i>Yelwa/Shendam/Wase</i> in an indigene/settler dispute of scarce farm resources

Source: Murtala (2014) "Fulani Herdsmen, Farmers Clashes: Furor over Grazing land"  
Available at <http://murtalaadogi.wordpress.com/2013/02/08/the-fulani-farmers-conflicts-the-ecology-population-and-politics/>

## Conclusion

Our findings showed that the execution of ecological projects, particularly anti- desertification projects by the Federal Government is done without consultation with the state government or affected communities. This has resulted in such projects not having positive impact on the fight against desertification. This further aggravates natural resource conflicts in the region owing to the feeling of abandonment and deprivation.

Also, the poor accountability of the political leadership leads to abuse of the fund as the leadership sometimes uses the *Ecological Fund* as a security fund where they can make easy withdrawals for any ‘pressing’ matter. This is against the objective of the fund that was created to address only ecological problems. The non-conformity to disbursement guideline, diversion of ecological fund and non-remittance of the *Ecological Fund* by government officials has therefore led to the escalation of natural resource conflicts in northern Nigeria.

In view of the foregoing, we put forward these recommendations for policy implementations:

1. That there is need to separate the *Ecological Fund* from the *Federation Account* and placed under the strict supervision of the Central Bank of Nigeria. This will help prevent unauthorized withdrawals from the *Ecological Fund* account by government officials and guarantee prompt and adequate remittance of the fund to relevant agencies.
2. That there is need to enact a law that would ensure that all withdrawals from the *Ecological Fund* account are approved by the National Assembly before such money is released. This would promote accountability in the administration of the fund, as well as increase public consciousness and debate on how best to tackle ecological problems in Nigeria.
3. That there is need for the Federal Government to involve stakeholders, particularly representative of the affected communities in determining which ecological projects are most necessary in combating desertification and drought. This will ensure that the anti-desertification projects executed by the Federal Government are effective in achieving its expected objectives.

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