

CONCEPT NOTE:

**GREEN EDUCATION INITIATIVE
(G.E.I)**

BACKGROUND / INTRODUCTION

As the seconds go by, man is interacting with his environment and vice versa whether he knows it or not, whether he denies it or not. The Environment comprises of the conditions, objects by which one is surrounded per time, it involves the physical, chemical and biotic factors (such as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community. Are we truly products of our environment(s)? Yes, and the good news is that we can all create and modify our environment.

What we give out to the environment, either immediately or over time the environment gives back to us. This is the reason for Environmental Education, like the popular saying; “if you knew better, you will do better”. This brings to fore the need for ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION. *Environmental education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions.* Everyone regardless of age and social status should be armed with the basic knowledge and information on how to relate with the environment. Our actions and inactions have direct and indirect consequences on our lives and the future of our planet. Environmental Education ensures a people-oriented approach for dealing with environmental concerns where individuals and groups can come up with innovative methods and systems to deal with their environmental challenge relatively has it affects them locally.

Nigeria is a diverse country and has the largest economy in Africa with an area of 923,800 square kilometer (Sq. km) and according to the United Nations, has a population of 186 million people, ranking number one in the Africa. Nigeria also boasts of the largest youth population in the World.

With rapid development, urbanization, and land fragmentation taking place coupled with the geometrically rising population, more industries springing up and increased consumption and emissions, the nation is faced with looming environmental challenges. Nigeria features significant contrasts in terms of environment, economic and social outcomes: robust natural resources endowment, economic growth and yet modest poverty reduction; dynamic urban growth centers, isolated rural areas and ineffective waste management; and widening social and income disparities in the context of abundant natural and human resources.

According to The International Agency for Research on cancer (IARC), air pollution is the leading cause of cancer. Learning about ways and sustainable practices that keep the atmosphere and environment clean will ensure good health and wellbeing (SDG 3). The most common system of waste disposal in Nigeria is open dumps and burning, a lot of people consider open burning as a good solution but are not aware of the damage being done to the atmosphere and ozone layer by burning plastics. Acquainting the people with the

right knowledge and information on sustainable better practices to manage their waste will go a long way in ensuring sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). According to the United Nations, Nigeria ranks second in the world when it concerns open defecation. A lot of people naturally know that this practice (open defecation) is not appropriate but whenever nature calls and there is no infrastructural facility to collect these feces, people find the nearest corner or stream polluting the environment, water bodies and air leaving us with the challenge of clean water and sanitation (SDG 6). The importance of knowing what is right and wrong in the environment cannot be overemphasized.

In the E.U, there is a policy mandating that Environmental Education be taught to all and sundry through their elementary and high school levels of education. This will inform better decisions on the part of the children and youth as they grow up and integrate into the society. Nigeria can adopt this policy to help protect the environment.

According to World Atlas (2018), Nigeria is has the largest and the fastest growing population in Africa. Nigeria is currently faced with solid waste challenge. Solid waste cannot be eliminated realistically speaking; therefore, the focus should be on the effective Management of it. If not properly managed, Solid Waste can pose a major risk to human and environmental health. Municipal Waste Management has proven to be inadequate, catastrophe looms if private stakeholders do not come in to salvage the situation. Daily human activities create waste but the real issue is not the creation of it but how it is handled, managed or disposed; this will have a significant effect on the wellbeing of the people and the environment. For Waste Management to be effective, a holistic approach needs to be adopted. For an efficient and effective SWM, the problem has to be tackled from the individual level. Everyone, every household must be actively involved and private Waste management must be engaged. This leads us to investigating the behavior and attitude of individuals towards SWM. The right and positive attitude is necessary for an upward push in the quest for effective SWM and to achieve this, education in any form (talks/lectures/awareness/sensitizations) is necessary. **A change in the behavior and attitude of people to SWM is the first step. Behavioral and attitudinal change can be best achieved through education programs with reward systems. Attitudinal and behavioral changes that are rewarded are more likely to be repeated and incorporated into daily routines and lifestyles.** Waste Management in Nigeria is still poor especially as there are little or no data of amounts of waste generated, what constitutes the bulk of the wastes, the collection techniques and disposal of toxic and harmful waste. That lack of environmental education in forms of teachings and awareness about SWM and ignorance of the harmful effects on man and the environment has further complicated the problem.

CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES

Environmental Education is not included as a subject in the curriculum taught across primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. To achieve a population of well-informed people on environmental issues to ensure a sustainable future for Nigeria, Environmental Education should be included in the educational curriculum taught across primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

The increasing awareness and consciousness that most environmental challenges are a result of daily decisions of ordinary people as opposed to being solely the fault of corporations and governments is awakening a majority to the fact that we all have a role to play in environmental management and sustainability. To surmount these environmental challenges, the solution will be attitudinal which starts with the right information, awareness and knowledge of the best practices.

One of the reasons for this difficulty is technological advancement and modernization. A skyrocketing economic growth has been witnessed in the 21st century and this economy growth coupled with global population increase has significantly contributed to the amount of waste generated. These waste generated as a result of increased consumption of resources can be very harmful to human and environmental health. There is inadequate data on Solid Wastes in most developing nations and this must be addressed. There is need for a proper system of data generation year after year for each area where there is Municipal waste management. Important to note also are the other effects of improper SWM which include; blockage of drainages which encourage flooding, discarded waste serving as breeding grounds for disease vectors. **In the end, the people who have left it all to government authorities to manage their waste end up bearing the consequences.** Also, food waste management is gradually becoming a serious challenge in developing nations; it poses itself as a threat to sustainable development. As a result of the inadequate and inefficient food waste management systems on-ground in most developing countries, these countries are left to deal with sanitary and environmental problems. The idea of compost to manage food waste has not yet been fully adopted in developing countries.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overarching objective of this Green Education Initiative is Environmental sustainability, protection and conservation through environmental education at the developmental/formative years to help build environmental friendly attitudes and habits. This Initiative hopes to:

- Create **AWARENESS** to assist individuals develop a consciousness and sensitivity to the total environment and its allied problems.
- Increase **KNOWLEDGE** on basic environmental issues and problems. To help individuals gain and acquire a variety of experience and understanding regarding the environment.

FACTS ABOUT GREEN EDUCATION INITIATIVE (G.E.I)

- ▶ Nigeria has the largest youth population in the world and this opportunity should be seized to effect long lasting change in the society.
- ▶ Education is a potent tool to effect change(s) in the society.
- ▶ This Initiative is an addition to the numerous existing methods/efforts/initiatives aimed at protecting and improving the Environment and mitigating climate change.
- ▶ This Initiative will adopt education as the vehicle to bring about a positive behavioral and attitudinal change in people with regards to the environment.
- ▶ The best stage to learn and develop habits is at the formative years between 6 to 18 years.
- ▶ After the home, the schools are the next socializing point for children. This makes it a perfect ground for ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION.

GENDER STRATEGY

The Green Education Initiative (G.E.I) will uphold gender equality and ensure that the female gender is not left out in any aspect of this project. In training of instructors, women will have full representation and also, data on the number of girl-child formally enrolled in schools will be collected while advocating for more girl-child enrolment in schools for proper education.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

Below listed out are the proposed activities outlined to achieve the objectives of the Green Education Initiative:

- Development of an Environmental studies curriculum for Secondary and Primary Schools.
- Establish Environment clubs in selected model schools and plant at least a tree per school and encourage garden cultivation by school environmental clubs.
- Environmental Policy advocacy
- Creation of inter-school environment competitions and Set up an award / recognition for “Most Environment Friendly School” annually.
- Development of Environment gaming application (which shows positive/negative impact of all human activities in environment) to increase and encourage kids participation and interest in environmental issues.
- Outside the classroom awareness and training for general public (especially women).
- Skill acquisition for women on waste recovery (for example; making jute bags).
- Investigate the state of school toilets to address open defecation, water and sanitation.
- Training of environmental studies instructors/teachers.
- Provision of teaching and learning materials for teachers and students.
- Introduction of color-coded bins across secondary and primary schools to help waste sorting and management.
- Sensitization and awareness through mass media (television, radio, newspapers etc.)

PROJECT EXECUTION STAGES:

- Development of Environmental Education curriculum
- Training and teaching
- Infrastructure (Providing necessary facilities to aid environment friendly attitudes such as; color-coded bins, improved toilet systems in schools etc.)
- Conservation (Tree planting)
- Management

EXPECTED OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

- Development of an Environmental Studies syllabus specially adapted for teaching in Primary and Secondary schools in Nigeria.

- Establishment of Environmental clubs and plant a tree per school in the selected model schools.
- Adoption of Environmental Studies as a subject across secondary and primary schools.
- Improved water, hygiene, sanitation and toiletry systems and facilities across schools.
- At least 10,000 educated young people on environmental issues and preservation.
- Development of environment friendly habits and attitudes.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION: The project implementation method will adopt the constitution of a project Monitoring and Evaluation committee. The M & E committee will design progressive data monitoring approach including monthly evaluations of inputs and outputs, progress reports, examination of challenges encountered and designing of immediate solutions.

PROPOSED STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Federal Ministry of Environment

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

State Ministry of Environment

United Nations Environment Programme

UNICEF

National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA)

IITA