

Denaturing of the Atlantic Coastal Environment of Nigeria: The Case of Lagos Area, Western Nigeria.

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The Atlantic Ocean with its coast belt constitutes a unique feature marking the southern geographical boundary of Nigeria. The coast belt comprises a landward stretch of about ten kilometers, within which the major seaports and oil fields are located. Extensive effects of wind, waves and ocean current are felt variably over the predominant natural geomorphic units of creeks, lagoons, swamps and flood plains. Lagos state (with the former capital, and the largest sea port, of Nigeria) covers an area of about 3730 square kilometers, with population density of about 1.5 million persons per square kilometer.

Tidal effects, flooding and erosional processes constitute the major environmental degrading agents of socio-economic significance. Groundwater recharge by chemically charged waters/saline water) elevates its corrosive tendency, and creates problems in potable water supply from economic depth. The Bar-beach, with its characteristic beach sand scenery (an age long symbol of Lagos as a tourist centre) has lost about 60% of its land area in the last 25years. One lane of the Ahmadu-Bello way (a dual carriage highway adjacent to, and originally about 300metres away from, the shore line) had been put out of use due to flooding and coastal erosion. A two-days flooding in the beach area (within the first week of May, 2001) deposited about 0.3metre thick beach sand over the highway, and one dead body in the vicinity, leaving many residential and commercial houses, and water boreholes (within about 200metre distance) out of use for a long while. Available evidences indicate increasing potentials for environmental degradation in the coast belt.

Inefficiency in the earlier erosion control programmes (using gabbions) at the Apapa port end of Lagos is believed to have contributed significantly to the last fast flood disaster. A renewed local interest in initiating more effective control programmes, and enhanced assistance from international sources could restore the lost glory of the coastal environment. Non-sophisticated remedial options such as structural elevation of coastal tips, enforcing discipline in infrastructure development in the coastal area, articulated environmental monitoring programmes for predictive analysis of sea-water related disasters, and rural to urban migration control through grass roots infrastructural development are recommended.