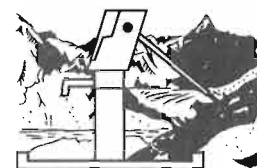




WATER, ENVIRONMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Managing urban environment in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on environmental policy management in African countries. Institutional and policy strategies and models are reviewed within the framework of structural adjustment programs (SAPS) devised by the World Bank and IMF, and underway in many African countries. The need for an alternative to SAPS that ties in with African realities calling for small-scale initiatives is highlighted. The paper concludes with outline suggestions on how small-scale initiatives can be integrated into a total policy framework.

KEY WORDS Environment, urban management

1. INTRODUCTION

The command and control approach and economic strategies constitute the two principle policy tools used to manage urban environment. (Bernstein, 1991)

The command and control approach has tended to be the prominent strategy since inception of environmental policy. Encompassing direct regulation, supplemented with monitoring and enforcement, this approach specifies standards, permit systems, enforcement procedures and facilities, liability assignment and penalties for non compliance. The responsibility for defining and enforcing standards as well as other requirements is shared in legislative specified ways between National and Local bodies and institutions.

In recent years many countries, particularly those in the developed world have adopted economic instruments (pollution charges, marketable permits, subsidies, deposit and return systems, enforcement incentives etc) to create greater flexibility, cost-effectiveness and efficiency in environmental management. This approach incorporates polluter-pays and user-pays principles to varying degrees.

Until recently, Kenya, like other developing countries has tended to use the command and control approach to environmental management. Only with the

introduction of the Local Authorities service charge regulations (1988) have economic instruments been introduced in Kenya.

2. STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

Having embarked on comprehensive reforms through structural adjustment, programs (SAPS) about half the countries in Africa (Kenya included) have undergone major policy changes during the 1980's. These programs have consisted of currency devaluations, reductions in government deficits, liberalisation of domestic product markets, trade and exchange rate and institutional reforms aimed at renewal of economic growth.

In spite of these changes, Sub-Saharan Africa has now witnessed almost a decade of falling per capita incomes and accelerating environmental degradation. (World Bank, 1989).

As stated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), 1991, SAPS, imposed on Sub-Saharan African countries by the World Bank and IMF, had the following environmental implications:

-in seeking the narrow and outward looking objectives of foreign debt repayment, balance of payments equilibrium, budgetary and other financial balances, SAPS ignored basic problems of structural and environmental balance that generated and sustained the African crisis.

-by saddling these countries with substantial external debt service payments (amounting to 40 to 50% of annual exports for some countries) an immense pressure has been placed on Sub-Saharan Africa to maximise export production and foreign exchange earning. This has resulted in denial of essential and badly needed resources for environmental protection, particularly in urban areas.

-Although the sources of Africa's economic and environmental degradation cannot all be ascribed to SAPS, these have none the less contributed significantly to aggravation of already pervasive environmental problems in four ways; by reducing the ordinary man's capacity to become self-reliant, reduction of resources available for environmental

protection, curtailing resources available to the public sector while environmental protection is an essential public service, and by undermining collective and co-operative response of African countries to their environmental problems.

It was the debilitating impacts of SAPS on Africa that called for an alternative tied into African realities and resulted in the 'African alternative' to SAPS. This alternative must, it was argued be anchored holistically to the salient structural characteristics that determine the profile of production and local consumption as well as the nature of the associated environmental problems (Economic commission for Africa, 1991).

3. THE AFRICAN ALTERNATIVE

As stated by ECA (1991) the main objectives of the African alternative are

"...achievement of regional food self-sufficiency and food security; the elimination of poverty through the satisfaction of basic needs for food, water, shelter, clothing, health care, education and transport achieved through the efficient utilisation of natural resources; the drive towards national and regional self-reliance through market and production integration and the conservation of the environment through the planned use of resources to maintain a dynamic balance between, people, ecology and development."

Policy directions and strategies for the pursuit of these objectives included strengthening and diversification of resource transformations by:

- changing inappropriate production and consumption patterns
- creation of an enabling environment for development through popular participation
- effective capacity building focusing on human resource development
- strengthening of science and technology
- rehabilitation of infrastructure
- improved public expenditure patterns
- increased domestic resource mobilisation and utilisation

4. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Environmental problems in Kenya and other African states stem largely from perverse demographic dynamics. Rapid population growth and the resulting poverty in rural and urban areas has been persistent in contributing to environmental degradation in many ways. The relationship between population, environment and sustainable

development, thus needs serious investigation.

Overcrowding of cities is leading to rapid growth of squatter and slum developments. These settlements lack even basic services as infrastructural development has not kept pace with urban expansion. Not surprisingly, therefore, urban cities in Africa suffer from water and air pollution, inadequate sewage and solid waste collection, treatment and disposal, noise pollution, and poor building maintenance, giving rise to serious health and environmental problems. (Obudho et al 1991, Malombe 1991)

5. POLICY APPROACHES

The ideal approach to environmental policy is the total approach which addresses all sectors of economy and all functional areas in society in an integrated manner.

The most important reason for indifference to environmental management of African cities, is poverty. African countries being marked by food shortages, scarcities of imported goods, swelling populations, unemployment and collapsing manufacturing industries are faced with crisis management of foreign debts and fiscal accounts, leaving them with little time for concerns such as the environment.

Under these circumstances, it is naive to assume that ideal conditions i.e no bureaucracy, a wholly committed Government and people and a productive economy so necessary for total policy making will exist in Africa for some time to come.

A less ambitious alternative is to adopt partial approaches addressing one sector or functional area at a time.

Accordingly the case for application of small scale and partial initiatives attempting to solve specific environmental problems is strong for Africa.

If small-scale initiatives are part of a systematic approach to environmental policy making, then these can form the basis of a strategic approach; By strategically implementing small-scale initiatives, the results of each experience can be used to provide inputs for subsequent activities, the ultimate objective being to bring the country to a point where the total approach can be adopted. As well as maximising benefits from each small-scale initiative this approach is flexible and does not require

sophisticated management skills so lacking in most African countries.

Formulation of a systematic framework within which small scale environmental initiatives can be devised is the most urgent need of these countries at present.

6. THE SYSTEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The components of a total urban environmental policy program are detailed in figure 1 below.

A systematic framework for a total approach to urban environmental policy would call for the integration of all these components into a single policy program.

Within this framework, it is easy to integrate contributions of any small-scale initiatives into the total policy option

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Few reports exist that provide in-depth evaluations of application of regulatory and economic instruments to environmental management in developing countries. Much research is needed, therefore to provide sound guidance to developing country officials in the process of establishing new policies and programs and selecting policy instruments in these countries.

This also holds true for the total policy framework described in Figure 1.

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