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“It is difficult to talk to policymakers and decision-makers without an economic argument.”

The Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team (NEST) focuses on sustainable development and environment

projects, but in recent years it has joined the growing global community that is tackling climate change head on. Eight years ago, in response to environmental phenomena never before seen in Nigeria, NEST became one of the first Nigerian organizations to become actively involved in attempting to understand how the country’s habitats and the people that depend on them are vulnerable to the effects of climate change and also to promote adaptation to the environmental turbulence now occurring and that is likely yet to come.

NEST is currently implementing a 4.5-year project that will see several adaptation pilot projects take shape throughout the country. This is a follow-on project to a successful Canadian International Development Agency-funded initiative to build Nigeria’s capacity to respond to climate change, which focused on awareness-raising to foster understanding and support for the urgency of the matter and on identifying vulnerability and adaptation options to suit the Nigerian context.

“We have been witnessing climate change induced changes in Nigeria for years, with desertification occurring and intensifying in the north and flooding increasingly occurring in the south. But one of the challenges we faced was that people did not grasp the concept of climate change and ascribed climatic impacts to various factors that they could relate to more, like that it’s a punishment from God.” Aneni highlighted this challenge that NEST faced in the early days of championing climate change abatement efforts in Nigeria.

These days, awareness levels have increased and there is greater capacity to begin to implement adaptation projects on the ground. However, support and buy-in at the political level are of vital importance if there is to be widespread adoption of climate change abatement systems and, thus, lasting impact. Aneni believes that to attract attention to the issue at the political level, there must be a strong socioeconomic argument. “We have to be able to approach policymakers with hard data on how climate change impacts livelihoods and the economy,” he says.

NEST has an established monitoring and evaluation toolkit that it uses to gauge the impacts of its projects. So far, its evaluation tools are project specific and embedded in the terms of reference for their consultants and in the project implementation plan

submitted to the donor agency. But now, NEST it is looking to strengthen its toolkit to enable it to assess the impacts of climate change on livelihoods in a quantitative fashion. According to Aneni, “Planned pilot projects focus on adaptation for poverty alleviation but evaluations are so far mostly qualitative.” NEST is seeking to collaborate with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) to introduce a much-needed economic angle into NEST’s evaluation processes.

Inspired by IIED’s efforts in Namibia to put a price tag on natural resources and incorporate their value into the country’s national accounting system, NEST got in touch with IIED to explore opportunities to adopt that process in Nigeria.

“The models are there, but we need to adapt them to our situation in Nigeria and IIED would help us do that,” says Aneni. “In collaborating with IIED, the benefits to NEST are massive because evaluation is a key tool to assess effectiveness. Without proper tools of evaluation, we may be spending a lot of resources and manpower but not really hitting the mark.”

This is where Aneni highlighted the value of the International Conference on Evaluating Climate Change and Development, which he feels has brought him closer to collaborating with IIED as a result of face-to-face interaction with the institute’s representative at the conference. Adding this personal element to the ongoing communications between the two organizations is more likely to result in concrete steps forward. He also said that the conference brought into focus, and sharpened, issues related to monitoring and evaluation.

When asked about next steps in developing NEST’s climate change evaluation capabilities, Aneni remarked, “Even though the conference is only for a few days, it doesn’t just end here; there is potential for networking and interactions,” which he is sure to capitalize on to support climate change abatement efforts in Nigeria.

For more information, please visit
www.nestinteractive.org/
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