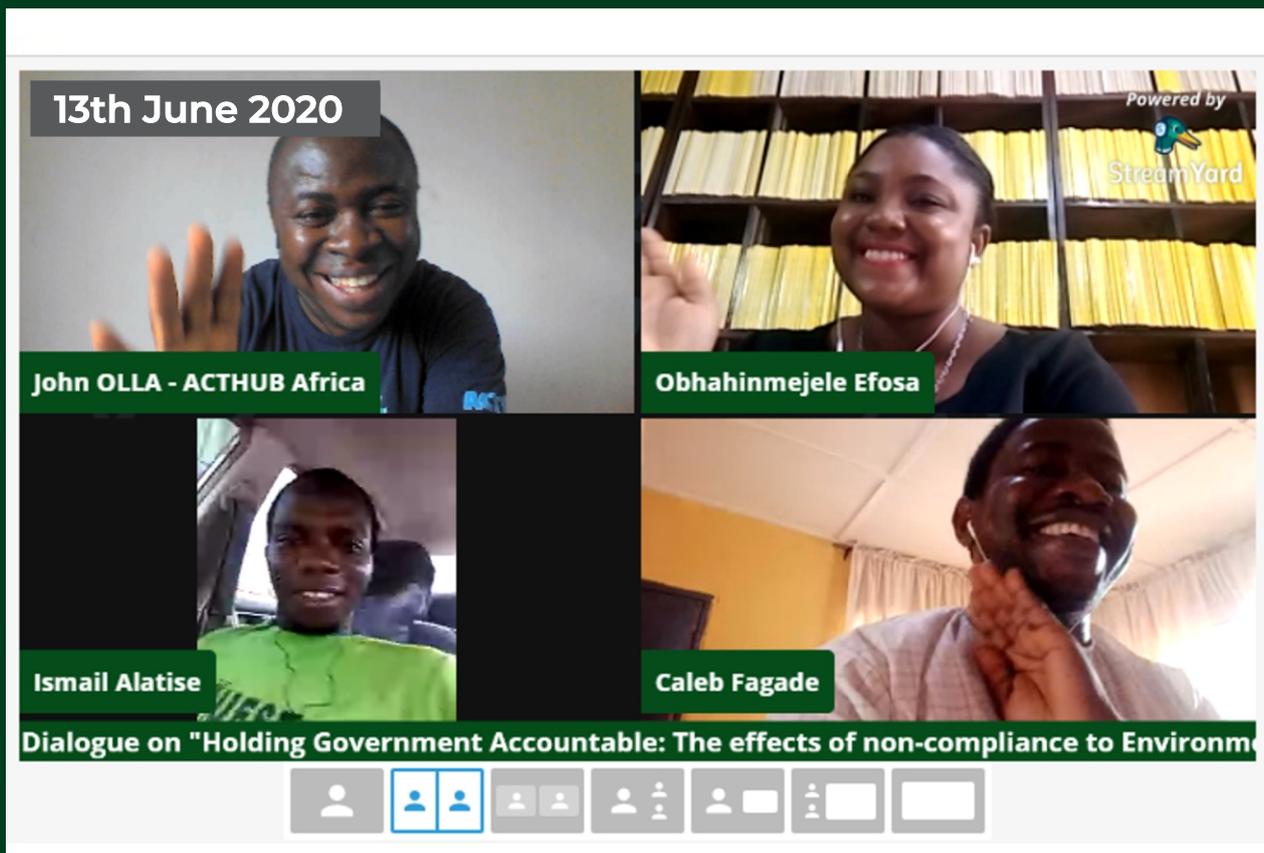




SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT ROUND TABLE DIALOGUE

**Holding Government Accountable: effects on non compliance
to EIA on social lives, health, livelihood and environment**



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SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT POLICY DIALOGUE

Theme: Holding government accountable: effects of non-compliance to Environmental Impact assessment (EIA) on social lives, health, livelihood and environment

Act Hub Africa held her signature programme **The Policy Dialogue** on her live platform tagged the “The Chat”. The event took place virtually on Thursday, June 13, 2020, which focus on the topic; **“Holding government accountable: effects of non-compliance to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on social lives, health, livelihood and environment”**. The dialogue tried to find the nexus between executing development projects and its effects of social lives, health, livelihood and environment. The dialogue was designed to air and document ideas and perspectives about how EIA is being perceived from various field especially in the angle of holding government accountable as well as protecting the communities from the negative effects of non-compliance.

Some of the discussant during the dialogue include an Engr. Caleb Fagade, Ms Efosa Mejele (Budding Lawyer), Mr Ismail Alatise and Ms Mujidah Ajibola with John Oluwafemi OLLA, the team lead for Act Hub Africa an Accountapreneur with Accountability Lab Nigeria as the host and moderator.

The event started at 12.30 pm and ended at around 2.30 pm with participants from 2 major platforms (youtube and Facebook).

Issues for discussion

The following issues were raised and formed the basis for discussion. Among the issues that were discussed are:

- A lot of people in our society are not acquainted with Environmental Impact Assessment, its legal provisions, community engagement during EIA, reporting of non-

compliance to appropriate authority etc.

- the high cost of conducting EIA as the reasons why most companies, organization are not placing appropriate importance on carrying out EIA during developmental projects, instead there is an accusation that they find their way-out with the regulatory agency involved by paying some token (sometimes inform gratifications) to get their project approved.
- few cases where Environmental Impact Assessment processes are carried out for developmental projects, the local community are not always involved during EIA (before, during and after), thereby leaving their thought out of decision making and how it affects them.
- how hosting a community of development and extractive project people would know when companies/organizations or particular projects are not complying with EIA standards for projects as contained in the environmental laws in Nigeria.
- Why companies prefer not to do Environmental Impact Assessment or comply with EIA standards apart from the high cost of conducting Environmental Impact Assessment.
- The need to identify which government agency or parastatal that is responsible for Environmental Impact Assessment monitoring and compliance.
- The need to get people acquainted with their rights to environmental compliance and how they can go about it and getting results.
- Whether compensation alone is sufficient for flaunting environmental or EIA laws, considering the social lives of the people that might have been affected, their livelihood, health, environmental attachment to their community and the environment at large.
- And on accountability, we need to develop the capacity of communities to engage meaningfully with these organisations so that they can get the best from what their environment has to offer them while holding organisations accountable to negative externalities.
- What are the roles of civil societies in the process of raising awareness as well as

Recommendations from the dialogue

The following were the recommendations:

- That civil society like Act Hub Africa and government agencies should regularly create awareness (continuity is the key) for people via various channels and in some required languages that the people can understand. Some these recommended channels are infographics to simplify contents, flyers in native languages of the society, social media, community engagement, town hall meeting, traditional medium (Print, Television and Radio).
- The government officials who are in the practice of circumventing the environmental impact assessment should desist from this act, and those with understanding about EIA should always get themselves involved by supporting the regulatory government agencies in making sure that EIA processes are carried out for both extractive and development projects.
- That local community representatives, Civil Society Organization CSOs, Non-Government Organization NGOs, Faith-Based Organization FBOs etc. should always be carried along during planning and implementation of EIA for projects.
- That whenever a developmental project is having or would likely have negative effects/impacts on the people nearby or environment without any mitigating measures in place. e.g. gas flaring, dusty environment during a project, illegal dumping of hazardous wastes by companies etc. people should raise a red flag about the impending danger.
- Nigeria citizens should be trained on how to track basic signs of non-compliance in their communities. This duty should be the responsibility of both the government and civil society although the government has the frontline responsibility of leading in the process.
- That fines/penalties attached to non-compliance are too cheap which. Hence, the government should review (ace-up) the EIA laws or acts to attract more stringent penalties and financial fines attached to EIA standard violation should be reviewed upward as some of these fines are better paid than obey the law.
- That NESREA, Ministry of Environment, waste management agencies, states' environmental protection agencies and others should be the first point of contact to the people for the people to report cases of non-compliance. It was also recommended that environmental right organization such as Act Hub Africa and other Civil Society organization should build their capacity to be able to help community people in addressing some of these cases.
- That government and civil society organizations should compile various environmental laws/acts as well as their attached penalties available in a single document and make it available and accessible in a simplified language that people will understand.
- That it depends on the stage of flaunting the law, as well as the project involved. sometimes, compensation would do, while in other compensation with fines, doing the project in another location or area, or outright stoppage or cancellation of the project.
- That compensation may not be enough when it comes to the untold impact of non-compliance to EIA on social lives and the displacement of indigenous people from their natural habitat. The recommendation further stated that psychosocial angle of people should always be put into consideration in a case where people living in a community has to be relocated to another place because of a project being carried out whether by government or private individual.
- All the discussants and participants were of the opinion that the state should domesticate the environmental law in such a way that it will take care of all the flaws in the present environmental laws in the country. They also suggested that federal laws on environmental issues should be review to take care of better penalties and involvement of community people in all the processes of planning and implementation of EIA.

Conclusion

From our qualitative and quantitative data collected on the people's awareness about Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), it is clear that only 8% of the public have basic knowledge of EIA, 58% have never heard of it while 34% of the public have either heard of it or come across it somehow.

This research corroborates the recommendations gathered from the Act Hub Africa's Policy Dialogue on non-compliance to Environmental Impact Assessment and its effects on social lives, health, livelihood and environment at large.

As an organization with a focus on using research and data to expand the frontier of knowledge as well as developing home-grown solutions to identified issues around governance, social and environmental audit, we believe our collaboration can bring even better solutions to issues confronting our society.

Excerpt from our EIA awareness survey

 **8%**

8% of the public have just basic knowledge of EIA

 **58%**

58% have never heard of it

 **34%**

34% of the public have either heard of it or come across it somehow



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