

Background among
others. valuables
climbers and shrubs



Background to the study The acute deforestation and degradation of the Cross River rainforest in recent times, is not only affecting the ecosystem and livelihood of the rural populace, is equally impacting on human being generally by changes in climatic conditions, ecological damage alongside biodiversity extinction (Gbadegesin, 2005). However, increasing pressure presently occurs world-wide for improvement in the quality of utilization of forest resources.

Given the importance of forest resources to man's daily living, the destruction of the tropical rainforest entails the displacement, decimation on a massive scale. The forest in Etung Local Government Area (LGA) is the pivot around which the economic and social well-being of the people revolves. Indeed, forest is the mainstay of the people overall well-being. According to Bisong (1994), the Etung people see forest as a place where lots of things are gathered from forest, for food and cash. This includes bush mango, Mushroom, palm kernel, and monkey kola. Timber and other building materials are also extracted as well as cane rope for making baskets, and staking materials for yam cultivation, medicinal herbs for infertility and childbirth are obtained from the forest. According to Ajake (2009)

the forest comprises of timber along with non-timber resources of the forest. The most common include tree species such as: Bushmango (*irvingia gaboneensis*), Camwood (*pterocarpus osun*), Achi (*Braschystegia Spp*), Iroko (*Melicia Excelsa*) and Small leaf (*Pipterdeniastriun Africana*) among others.

Valuables climbers and shrubs exist such as Afang, (*Gnetem africanum*), Sponge (*Momordia augustisepda*), Hot Leaf (*Piper guineensis*), Editan (*Lasiathera Africana*), Cane rope (*Eremospatha macrocamra*), Otasi

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(Gongronema Latifolia), Atama (Heinsia Crinata), etc. The animal species are Elephants, Gorillas, Monkeys, Pangolins, Chimpanzees, reptiles etc. But the sustainable utilization of forest resources of Etung Local Government Area depends first of all on a sound analysis of the causes behind the deforestation and degradation which vary from community to community. With regards to the unique conditions occurring within each, but were usually liken to the economic products present in individual forest type. It is expected in this unique area that Etung, loggers on commercial scale have a lot to do with the present deforestation along with the consequent degradation in this area.

World Rainforest Movement (2002) " The reason is simple, here it is possible to find enormous trees of species having very valuable wood in both local and foreign market" (P: 33). Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) on the other hand, supplements agricultural process, form the basis for cottage industries and probably account for a better economic well-being of people in tropical forest around the world. The careful use of the tropical forest resources may provide economic returns and support wildlife. However, unwise collection practices of non-timber forest production (NTFP) can be destructive and may lead to endangerment and extinction of fauna and flora species. Other methods of utilizations include the crude or traditional methods of land cultivation such as the land tenure system and shifting cultivation which have led to the widespread exploitation of forest, with the resultant resources destruction in the forest, and equally in the massive ecosystem contamination as well as decimating the local fauna species. The practice of

bush burning, which is part of the traditional farming system has for a longtime been known to be detrimental to forest and it's resources.

Bush burning which is a frequent phenomenon occurs as farmers clear their lands for planting. Also hunters annually burn vegetations causing loss of organic matters and their damages to the environment. According to World Bank (1990) Bush burning causes loss of undergrowth, useful tree barks that are of medical value and soil to used micro fauna and flora. It reduces to ashes the vegetable matter on which insects and soil microorganism live, destroys humus structure, the chances of leaching increases, exposes the soil to rain, sun erosion thereby encouraging oxidation of nitrogen, sulphur and carbon. At this point, it is also pertinent to consider hunting and poaching activities as one of the underlying causes of degradation of forest resources.

Animal species are disappearing due to rapid deforestation resulting from high forest consumption (Anijah-Obi, 2001). Wild animals' diversities have extinct due to increase forest resources consumption and attendant changes in their natural habitats. In the face of these circumstances, Environmental awareness assumes a position of importance within organized effort with regards to the freeing of human from influence caused through ignorance of the changing nature of the environment.

Environmental awareness demand thoughtful observation of process taking place in the environment with a view of making an appropriate intervention within the framework of sustainable development. It is therefore characterized by knowledge of, concern for sensitivity and responsive to

environmental issues or problems. Okpara (1994) observes that ideally the person who is environmentally conscious or aware is suppose to be proactive rather than reactive in his disposition to environmental problems of his locality or nation, as the case may be. According to Inyany-Abia (2005) in Nigeria, environmental awareness is seen by some as “ new phenomenon with epileptic fits, which was abandoned to non-governmental organizations, its origin was traced only to 1930 when Nigeria Field Society was founded by A F B Bridges, and that the society was devoted to the study of plants, animals, environment, people and culture of west Africa with little attention paid to conservation or environmental awareness as we know it today Within the last twenty years, Nigeria as witness a great increase in environmental awareness, according to Anijah-Obi (2001), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF) have succeeded in laying a permanent foundation of environmental concerns in Nigeria with the establishment of Environmental Education Unit at the University of Calabar and College of Education Ekiadolor, Benin in Nigeria”. The Environmental Education Unit so established have gone a long way in creating environmental awareness among Nigeria Populace. It is therefore, mandatory that in order to modify the behavior and attitude of people with regards to sustainable utilization of forest resources, a properly framed educational programme is essential. The fact that it is mandatory for man to exploit forest resources, implies that some damage to such resources becomes unavoidable. In the light of the forgoing, it has become imperative for an in depth theoretical and empirical analysis to be carried out in other to ascertain the extent to which environmental awareness can

modify people's behavior towards utilization of forest resources within Etung LGA of Cross River State.