

Public Trust in Regulatory Systems and Environmental Assessment



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Topic

REBUILDING CONFIDENCE AND OPENNESS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

A COMPARATIVE INSIGHT FROM NIGERIA AND CANADA

CORE OBJECTIVE

Compare Nigeria and Canada

Examines:

Transparency

Participation

Information Integrity

Shows how these shape public trust in EA

- Trust in EA is not automatic
- **Trust is built**



THE PROBLEM

Crisis of Trust in Environmental Assessment

- Public compliance no longer guarantees legitimacy
- Public trust in EA is declining
- Information systems remain fragmented
- Participation is often merely procedural
- Communities question institutional credibility
- Distrust weakens legitimacy

EA may satisfy legal procedure, yet still fail socially



The Focus What shapes Trust in EA?

Transparency

- Access to credible information
- Openness in decision-making

Participation

- Meaningful public engagement
- Influence over outcomes

Information Integrity

- Accuracy and reliability
- Trustworthy communication systems

Weakness in one weakens the others



EA as communicat ive governance

- *EA is more than a procedure*
 - *Communication shapes legitimacy*
 - *Trust depends on information systems*
 - *Participation builds public confidence*
 - *Inclusive knowledge strengthens legitimacy*
 - *Governance depends on public confidence*
- EA succeeds legally only when trusted socially*



Nigeria (Ogoni) Information Failure & Institutional Breakdown Ss 2, 7, 15, 16 EIA Act

- Legal frameworks exist formally
- Implementation remains inconsistent
- Information access is uneven
- Participation is often limited
- Communities distrust institutions
- Law-practice gaps weaken legitimacy

Procedural compliance does not ensure public Trust



**Ss 11, 22, 27, 51 IAA
Canada:
Strong Design,
Contested Trust**

- Institutional safeguards are stronger
 - Transparency is more structured
 - Participation mechanisms are established
 - Complex processes limit accessibility
 - Decisions remain socially contested
 - Trust remains uneven across groups
- Strong institutions alone cannot guarantee legitimacy



Comparative Insights: Governance Dimensions of EA Trust

NIGERIA

Transparency-

Information gaps persist

Limited disclosure consistency

CANADA

Strong disclosure systems

Persistent complexity barriers

Participation

Weak influence in practice

Consultation is often procedural,

Formally structured

Varied in practice

Trust

Low institutional confidence

Legitimacy is frequently contested

Higher baseline

Trust is still contested

Trust reflects governance experience, not jurisdiction



Reframing Trust in EA

Transparency + Participation + Information Integrity



Governance Credibility



Public Trust



EA Legitimacy



Trust in EA is synonymous with medical diagnosis



Policy Transformation n Operationalizing Trust in EA Governance

Policy Logic

Governance inputs must be institutionally reinforced to generate trust outcomes by:

Improving disclosure systems

Enhancing meaningful participation

Strengthening verification mechanisms

Improving accessible communication

Trust cannot be legislated into existence.

It must be generated through credible governance practices





Conclusion

**Trust is the
Basis of EA
Legitimacy**

**EA legitimacy
depends on
public trust**

Legitimacy exceeds
procedural compliance

Trust shapes governance
credibility

Transparency
strengthens public
confidence

Participation influences
legitimacy outcomes

Information integrity
sustains credibility

Closing

*As I close, let me leave us
with this question*

*If EA does not generate
public trust, on what basis
can it claim legitimacy?*

Thank you



Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

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