



TREE PLANTING AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION IN ABIA STATE: AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, ECOLOGICAL IMPACT, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS – A CASE STUDY OF RIMROCK HOTEL & HOSPITALITY INITIATIVE

ABSTRACT

This study reports on a tree-planting initiative undertaken by Queen Under Rimrock Hotel & Hospitality in Abia State in late 2025. A total of 1,000 trees of mixed species (economic and non-economic) were planted in collaboration with local schools, youth groups, ministries and civil society organisations (CSOs). The research assesses the level of awareness and participation, the anticipated ecological and socio-economic impacts, and the challenges and opportunities for embedding tree planting within agro-tourism and hospitality development in Abia State.

However, sustainable outcomes depend on post-planting stewardship, species selection, monitoring and integration with broader land-use planning. Recommendations are offered to strengthen public-private partnerships, institutionalise maintenance frameworks, and scale agro-tourism linked afforestation in the region.

The findings suggest that such private-sector led initiatives, when integrated with community engagement and state level green campaigns, can deliver multiple benefits including erosion control, carbon capture, biodiversity enhancement, and youth empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Abia State, located in the southern region of Nigeria, faces mounting environmental pressures including soil erosion, flooding and deforestation. According to a state-level environmental and social management framework, the vegetation of Abia falls within the tropical rainforest belt of Nigeria and is described as being “easily prone to massive sheet and gully erosion” due to sedimentary soils and human modification of land cover. World Bank+1 In response, the Abia State Government recently approved a statewide tree-planting campaign intended to combat climate change, reduce erosion and beautify the environment.

Within this policy context, private sector actors such as Rimrock Hotel & Hospitality can play critical roles by integrating greening into hospitality, agro-tourism and local community development. This research documents one such initiative: the planting of 1,000 trees in late 2025 across selected communities in Abia State, in partnership with schools, youth organisations, ministries and CSOs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the level and nature of community participation (schools, youth, ministries, CSOs) in the tree-planting initiative.
2. To evaluate the anticipated ecological and socio-economic benefits of the planting of 1,000 trees in late 2025 across Abia State.
3. To identify key challenges and propose actionable strategies for embedding sustainable tree planting within the hospitality and agro-tourism sector in Abia State.





3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tree-planting and afforestation initiatives are increasingly used in Nigeria as tools for climate change mitigation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable development. At the regional scale, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has launched tree-planting campaigns across the nine states of the Niger Delta (including Abia State) aimed at restoring biodiversity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Also, policy reviews show that economic tree species such as mango (*Mangifera indica*), oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*), kola nut and other tree crops are widely present in Abia State and form part of the land-use and agro-forestry profile. World Bank+1 Studies emphasise the importance of species selection, maintenance, community ownership and integration with livelihoods for the success of planting programmes.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from:

- Field records of the initiative (number of trees planted, species mix, planting sites).
- Participant records (schools, youth groups, CSOs and ministry representatives).
- Informal interviews and focus group discussions with participating groups and Rimrock Hotel management.
- Review of relevant state policy documents and local environmental frameworks.

4. METHODOLOGY

Also, policy reviews show that economic tree species such as mango (*Mangifera indica*), oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*), kola nut and other tree crops are widely present in Abia State and form part of the land-use and agro-forestry profile. World Bank+1 Studies emphasise the importance of species selection, maintenance, community ownership and integration with livelihoods for the success of planting programmes.

4.1 STUDY AREA

The study area is Abia State, Nigeria — specifically the areas served by Rimrock Hotel & Hospitality and its community outreach activities in partnership with local schools, youth organisations, ministries and CSOs.

4.3 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

- Descriptive statistics (e.g., number of participants, trees planted) were used to assess participation levels. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to derive perceived impacts, challenges and recommendations from interviews. Where possible, findings were triangulated against published state-level data on tree planting and environmental programmes (e.g., the statewide campaign in Abia).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Participation and Engagement

The initiative succeeded in engaging multiple stakeholder groups: local schools (number unspecified here), youth groups, CSOs and relevant ministries. This multi-stakeholder approach aligns with best practices in community-based afforestation.

5.2 Tree Planting Details

A total of 1,000 trees were planted in late 2025. The species planted included both economic tree crops (e.g., mango, oil palm, citrus, kola nut) and non-economic / environmental trees (shade trees, native forest species, ornamental trees). While the exact breakdown by species is internal to Rimrock Hotel records, the mix was designed to maximise both economic value and ecological benefit.

5.3 Ecological and Socio-economic Impacts

- Ecological benefits: The planting contributes to vegetation cover restoration, soil erosion control, carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement. The state's environmental profile notes that Abia's land is "easily prone to massive sheet and gully erosion" due to its geology and land use. | Federal Ministry of Environment | EAD+1
- Socio-economic benefits: By involving youth and schools, the initiative fosters environmental awareness, skills development and potential livelihood linkages (e.g., agro-tourism, economic tree crops). Within the hospitality context, greening enhances the amenity value for visitors and local communities, supporting the vision of Rimrock Hotel to bring "luxury to nature".

5.4 Challenges



- Key challenges identified include:
- Ensuring long-term maintenance and care of the planted trees (watering, protection, monitoring).
- Securing land tenure and clear planting sites, particularly in community lands prone to erosion and competing land uses.
- Monitoring survival rates and ecological performance of the trees over time.
- Integrating the initiative with broader state programmes and ensuring coordination, given the existence of a state campaign for tree planting in Abia.

5.5 DISCUSSION

The initiative illustrates how private hospitality enterprises can adopt afforestation as part of sustainability and agro-tourism strategies. The alignment with state campaigns (such as the Abia tree planting initiative) provides synergy, but also emphasises the need for formal linkages (e.g., MoUs, stakeholder platforms). The mixed-species approach strengthens both economic and ecological value, which is critical for sustainable outcomes.

However, without robust monitoring and maintenance frameworks, the risk remains that the planting may be symbolic rather than transformational. The literature emphasises that post-planting stewardship is the key gap in many Nigerian programmes.

6. POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

From this case study, the following implications emerge:

- **Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Hospitality firms, tourism developers, and private landowners should formalise partnerships with state environment/forestry agencies to scale tree planting, access seedlings, technical support, and monitoring.
- **Agro-tourism Integration:** Tree planting programmes should be embedded into agro-tourism product development (e.g., plantation tours, educational trails, carbon-offset packages) to diversify revenue streams and drive maintenance.
- **Maintenance Frameworks:** Planting alone is insufficient; survival and growth must be tracked. Hotels and community partners should agree on roles (who waters, who protects, who monitors).
- **Community Ownership & Youth Engagement:** Schools and youth groups are effective partners; by giving them clear roles (e.g., tree clubs, monitoring logs) the programme gains sustainability and social buy-in.
- **Species Mix and Local Ecology:** A tailored mix of economic tree crops and native environmental species is recommended to deliver combined ecological and livelihood benefits. The state’s data confirm a diversity of economic tree crops (mango, oil palm, kola nut) in Abia State.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

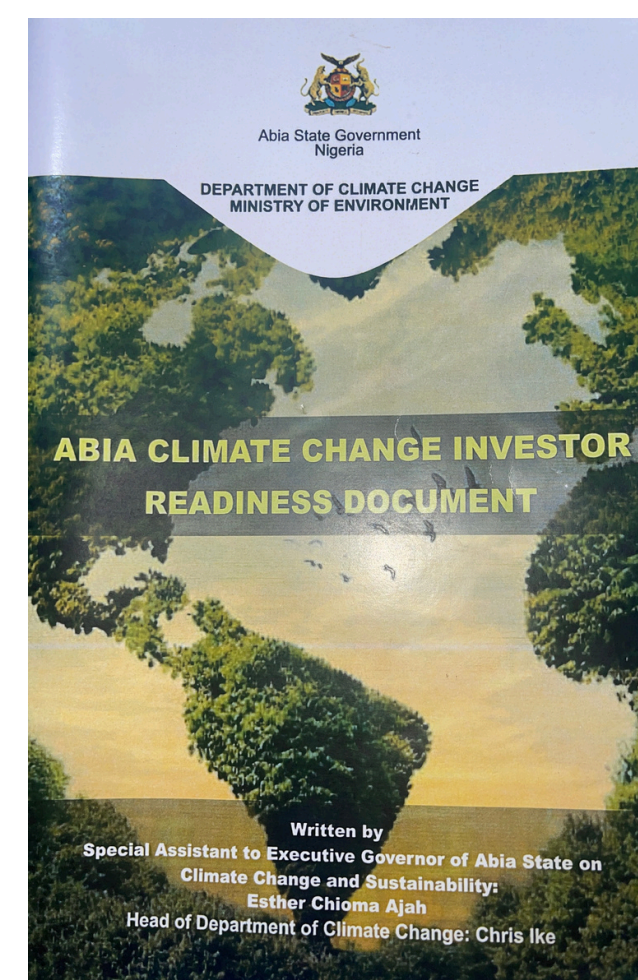
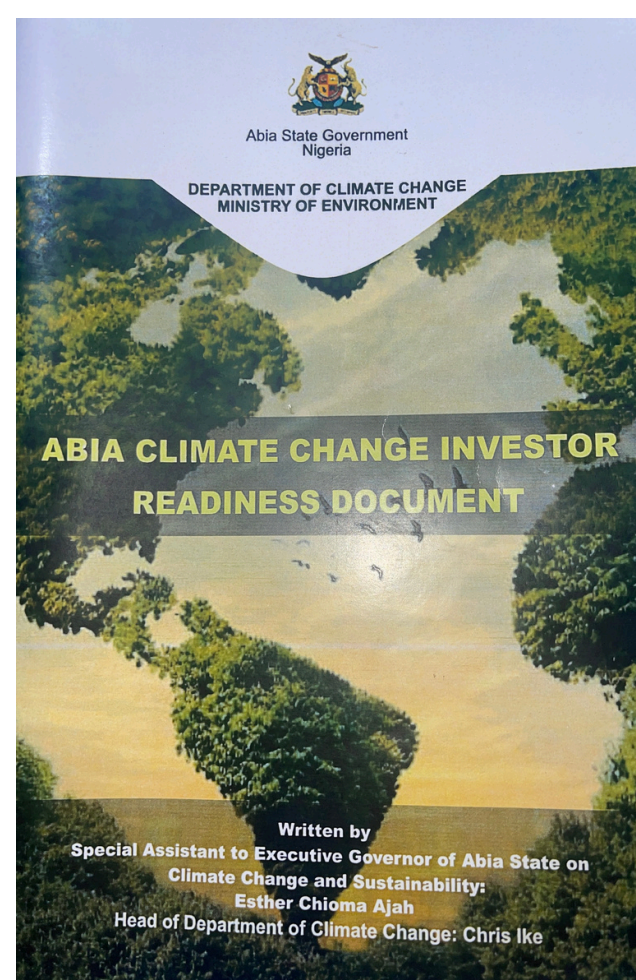
The Rimrock Hotel & Hospitality tree-planting initiative of 1,000 trees in late 2025 demonstrates a promising model of private-sector led environmental restoration in Abia State. By engaging schools, youth, ministries and CSOs, and by selecting a mix of economic and ecological tree species, the programme contributes to both sustainable development and agro-tourism potential.

TO MAXIMISE IMPACT, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE MADE:

- Establish a formal maintenance and monitoring agreement among Rimrock Hotel, community partners and relevant ministries.
- Develop a monitoring protocol (survival rate, growth measurements, biodiversity indicators) with periodic reporting (e.g., 6-, 12-, 24-month check-ins).
- Integrate tree planting into Rimrock Hotel's agro-tourism offerings (e.g., guided tree-walks, visitor planting days, carbon-offset packages) to create economic value and ensure ongoing care.
- Scale the initiative by linking with the Abia State Government's tree-planting campaign and other donor or NGO seedling programmes to plant additional trees across local communities.
- Document and publish the outcomes (both ecological and socio-economic) to build evidence and attract potential funding/partnerships for expansion.
- In sum, tree-planting is not simply a one-off gesture but a strategic investment in ecosystem restoration, climate resilience and community development — especially when aligned with hospitality, agro-tourism and youth empowerment in Abia State.

REFERENCES

- Abia State Government initiates tree planting campaign to combat climate change. BusinessDay NG, 17 Sept 2025. [Businessday_NG](#)
- Abia State revives sanitary inspection, launches tree planting campaign. EnviroNews Nigeria, 28 Sept 2025. [environewsnigeria.com](#)
- NDDC launches tree planting campaign in 9 states including Abia. AgroNigeria, 10 June 2025. [agronigeria.ng](#)
- Environmental & Social Management Framework (IDEAS Nigeria) – Abia State flora, economic trees. [World Bank](#)
- ABISIIDP ABA Roads Draft ESIA Report – flora, economic tree crops in Abia State.



Gallery

