

Lagos State has and still faces its own share of challenges as a bustling city. Among these is the poor environmental sanitation. There are so many environmental concerns, from blocked drainage channels to improper waste disposal and a lot more. All of which have contributed negatively to Lagos' ecosystem.

These problems, however, have not been without proposed solutions. The question is whether those solutions are effective or not, and of what impact they are today? One of the introduced measures to address the environmental issues was the criminalization of the felling of trees in 2011 by the Lagos State Park and Gardens Agency (LASPARK).

Although it began in 2011, with restrictions against unauthorized felling of trees, it became intense in 2013 with the public warning issued to residents and attachments of penalties for violations of the law. Over a decade later, the question of how effective have those precautions been still linger, is the law still in force? And what difference has it made to Lagos and its environment? It must be understood that Lagos' environmental concerns have multiple dimensions.

The criminalisation of unauthorised tree felling, therefore, addresses only one aspect of the broader problem and should be treated as such. The LASPARK Law was introduced against the backdrop of the loss of trees and green spaces to urban infrastructure and development.

The problem had also been linked to the effects of the oil-boom era, which contributed to Lagos' rapid urbanisation and the gradual loss of some of its natural greenery. The concern, however, was not about beauty and decoration alone.

The loss of trees also had direct environmental consequences. Trees contribute to shade, air quality, temperature regulation, biodiversity and overall environmental resilience. More specifically, a 2024 study on urban forestry in Lagos found that significant tree and forest losses in the state could be linked to rapid urbanisation.

The regulation was, therefore, a necessary intervention. Yet, more than a decade after its introduction, a more important question remains: how effective has it been in addressing the specific problem it was designed to tackle? The law is still very much active.

LASPARK reportedly planted 19,875 trees across the state by July 2025 through its #TreesForLagos Campaign.



Over a decade of the criminalization unauthorized felling of trees in Lagos, what has changed? | 2

In July 2026, The current Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu reiterated the state's position on the law, that anyone who unlawfully fells a tree without a permit is required to replace it with five trees. As of June 2026, 13,401 trees had been reportedly planted by the state, 67% of its target of 20,000 for the year. The agency also states that there are 373 green areas across the state.

This evidence doesn't just answer the question of how effective the law has been, it births another: was the law capable of tackling the problem in the first place? Was it the right solution? There are so many dimensions to this one branch of Lagos' environmental problem. While regulation continues to be enforced, it doesn't fully address the problem, urbanization continues to expand rapidly.

Although trees are being planted, it does not necessary compensate or the loss linked to the mass urbanization experienced by the city. Additionally, private property owners are also affected by this regulation but how tactical is it for property owners to fully comply to it?

The institutions have been set up, the law in place, and strategies formulated, which all translate to active effort to reshape the city's environmental issues, however other issues such as rapid development, urbanization as well as other environmental problems are all intertwined. Hence, a single aspect of the problem, in this case, the loss of trees cannot be addressed in isolation. It might address the problems but it fails to address the actual cause of why trees seem to be reducing. The problem in this case is not whether the solution is valid, it is whether is can solve any problem when there other lingering issues tied to it.