

Non-Governmental Organisations and Climate Change Action in Nigeria

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Abstract: Climate change is now a central concern in global governance. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), countries are called upon to take measures to reverse the phenomenon. In this regard, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have emerged as key actors in climate change action. In Nigeria, NGOs have been at the forefront of the advocacy for everyone to take action on climate change. This study reveals that even ahead of government, NGOs are the key players in mitigation and adaptation action against climate change. They also have more capacity in the field of environment. Using scholarly works and interview survey, this study establishes the leading role of NGOs in Nigeria's climate change action. It therefore calls on government to extend full support to the NGOs to facilitate their activities in the field of climate change in the country. It also advocates for domestic carbon market to discourage emission and create a green economy.

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Introduction

Climate change has emerged as a critical subject in social, political and academic discourse. The argument is that the world is rapidly warming up owing to man's industrial activities leading to radical changes in weather pattern called climate change (Duvergne, 2004). This therefore calls for action from mankind to reduce emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) responsible for global warming. The UNFCCC was reached in 1992 as a global regulatory framework on climate change (Rudrappan, 2011). The agreements under the UNFCCC calls on stakeholders in environment (ShE) to pursue climate change action (Dilling & Berggren, 2014). These ShE comprise industrial emitters, government regulators and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This work focuses on the role of NGOs as ShE in climate change action in Nigeria.

Literature Review

It is important to have conceptual clarity on the meaning of Climate change. The term climate change has assumed a plethora of meaning and interpretations and has become a serious issue of global discourse. According to the US National Research Council definition (2010), Climate change is a change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns when that change

lasts for an extended period of time (such as decades to millions of years). Some literature on climate change use the term global warming to describe 'climate change'. For example, NASA (2011) using the term global warming defines climate change as the change in average weather conditions, or in the time variation of weather within the context of longer-term average conditions.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2006) which happens to be the global coordinator of climate change related activities forwards a similar definition when it refers to Climate change as a change which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. For UNFCCC (2006) the Earth's climate has always changed and evolved. Some of these changes have been due to natural causes but others can be attributed to human activities such as deforestation and to atmospheric emissions, from, for example, industry and transport, which have led to gases and aerosols being stored in the atmosphere. These gases and aerosols are known as greenhouse gases (GHGs) because they trap heat and raise air temperatures near the ground, acting like a greenhouse on the surface of the planet.

194 countries including Nigeria, signed the UNFCCC showing a near universal agreement that there is a problem and that action is required and urgently too. The Convention agreement encourages all Parties to take action on two fronts, Mitigation and Adaptation (UNFCCC, 2014) simply described as follows:

- i) Mitigation: activities that inhibit climate change through information and practices on greenhouse gases.
- ii) Adaptation: activities that guard against the impact of climate change, comprising financial and technological assistance to developing countries.

In the case of Nigeria with its high dependence on fossil fuel, proximity to the high sea and sahel region, the impact of climate change are identified as clear and present danger (Opara & Yerima, 2014). As a state party to the UNFCCC framework, Nigeria also experiences the devastating impact of climate change.

From the desertification in Northern Nigeria, ravaging 11 states; the shrinkage of Lake Chad and the intense floods that we experience. It covers the question of sea level rise along our 853km coastline, gas flaring and the heavy oil pollution of the Niger Delta. These are all accompanied by a severe loss of biodiversity" (Nnimmo, 2015, p.4). In 2010 alone, the National Emergency Management Agency reported that 250,000 people were rendered homeless as a result of flooding in all parts of the country. Rise in atmospheric temperature has also been recorded in all parts of the country (Opara & Yerima, 2014).

The UNFCCC calls on all stakeholders to take measures in combatting climate change. These measures are called climate change action. Article 4.1b of the UNFCCC enjoins all parties to formulate and implement national or regional programmes containing measures to facilitate adequate adaptation to climate change, (UNFCCC, 2015). Climate change action or measures here encompass initiatives in the area of adaptation and mitigation. Part of the problem regarding the status of developing countries like Nigeria in terms of climate change is that real facts about their climate change actions are not common (IPCC, 2010). This is in spite of the Kyoto Protocol's provision for regular information on measurement, reports and verification by parties to the framework as the practical way out. But there is ample literature on the impact of climate change.

In a recent study, Oludoro (2015) accuses the Multinational corporations (MNC) of carrying out extensive environmental damage that ordinarily will not be condoned in the western world (Oludoro, 2015, p.15). His work exposes the double standards displayed by industrial emitters in Nigeria vis-à-vis their behaviour in other climes. As for the government, his treatise accuses her of sacrificing sustainable development on the altar of momentary revenue from oil, in view of the fact that oil accounts for most of the country's income.

Still on Nigeria's climate change action, Amobi and Onyishi (2015) having underscored the devastating impact of climate change in Nigeria, conclude that several initiatives by the government point to the fact that generally, Nigeria has taken climate change actions. However, they are of the view that Nigeria's initiatives are hampered by the policy making model which they say is incremental. Thus they recommend that, "an eclectic contrivance from Herbert Simon's satisficing and Geoffrey Vickers appreciating model, may be more useful in planning and presenting result oriented programmes on climate change mitigation and adaptation" (Amobi & Onyishi, 2015, p.10). In essence, they are of the opinion that a synergetic approach involving elements from several sectors will more effectively enhance Nigeria's compliance to climate change.

While the emphasis has been on environmental impact, there is need to examine climate change action by stakeholders. This work focuses on initiatives of Non-Governmental Organisations in Nigeria as critical stakeholders in Environment.

Methodology

A descriptive research design will be used in this study because it assumes a-priori knowledge of the research questions and problems. Also, descriptive research design allows for diverse method of data collection that ensures adequate process and procedure in obtaining extensive information regarding the research questions.

It is basically a qualitative research using interview survey to gather primary data. A descriptive research design will be used in this study because it assumes a-priori knowledge of the research questions and problems. Also, descriptive research design allows for diverse method of data collection that ensures adequate process and procedure in obtaining extensive information regarding the research questions.

In the absence of official records of ShEs in Nigeria, we shall apply purposive sampling to determine the interview sample from the indefinite population. Barbour & Schostak (2005, p.46) expound purposive sampling as "...a sampling technique in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sample of a specific population; this group being 'focused' on a given topic." Given the central role of knowledge of the subject of climate change, this sampling technique is most suitable. The choice of purposive sampling is also based on its ability to meet specified targets while gathering large information for the study.

Using purposive sample, interviews were conducted with 5 interviewees from regulators, private sector and NGOS. Interview using purposive sampling does not have an ideal number. What is emphasized is the depth of knowledge of interviewees. In purposive sampling, the focus is on the extensive views of the interviewees rather than the number of respondents.

The outcome of the interview is analysed against documented evidence.

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Climate Change NGOs in Nigeria

According to Koblosky (2015) Nigeria's civil society has been quite active regarding its participation in domestic climate politics. Various interest groups have been founded lately which regard climate change as one of their key activities. Ukonu (2012) observes that even the supposedly vocal Nigerian media is subsumed under NGOs in terms of climate change issues in Nigeria. This conclusion is drawn because the media relies on the support and training from the NGOs to grasp the nuances of environmental problems, most especially climate change. In most cases, reports on climate change are either activities of the NGOs, NGO-sponsored feature stories on climate change adaptation or mitigation or news items stimulated by NGOs. Consequently, the disposition of the media on climate change in Nigeria is a reflection of the NGOs (Falaki & Adegboya, 2013). In climate change matters, the supposedly separate groups like NGOs and media operate as one entity. Simply put, "the media in Nigeria appear to be relatively aloof in matters of creating awareness on climate change issues, that Nigeria risks the ravages of global challenges posed by climate change (Batta, Ashong & Bashir, 2013).

These NGOs have found their way into the policy process and are trying to guide government's attention to the various problems connected to climate change. Some of these NGOs are in close contact with government bodies, consulting them and conjointly elaborating political concepts.

Civil society has provided government with various workshop programmes focusing on climate change to raise awareness among government officials. As earlier discussed in this paper, civil society actively participates in the elaboration of bills and concepts for parastatal bodies governing climate change, such as the new Secretariat for Adaptation Strategy Development.

Examining the actions implemented, it becomes clear that civil society is a very active player in promoting the political process on climate change in Nigeria. The number of NGOs participating in creating a civil society network is growing. The way that Nigeria's civil society is participating and has participated in the elaboration of climate policy thus becomes clearly an issue for further research as it seems to be a driving force behind the whole process.

Analyzing Climate Change Action by NGOs in Nigeria

The recorded interview conducted with Government officials, private sector and NGO workers revealed that the government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are the main drivers of climate change action in Nigeria. Of these two, the NGOs are the most assertive. Government merely engages in policy formulation and multilateral negotiations, while the corporate private sector merely operates from the rear. But if Nigeria's determination must yield positive results the private sector must drive innovation in clean technology. A commendable initiative by the private sector revealed by the interviewees is clean energy partnerships in the markets in Kano and Aba that run on off-grid solar power.

The Pan African University Lagos also has a domiciled climate innovation Centre. It is instructive to underscore that these private sector actions are executed with the initiative and support of the NGOs, knowing that progress can only be made if the private sector is fully involved in climate change actions. Hence, greater investment in green and clean technology deserve more participation by the private sector in Nigeria. The most visible activities of the private sector in climate change action are based on individual efforts in the purchase of solar

panels that are not corporate in nature nor coordinated for planning purposes. As a result, records are unavailable to support a lot of Nigeria's drive in climate change action. Agricultural practices are not left out in this technological pursuit. The sovereign green bond initiated by the federal government of Nigeria is a veritable medium to be harnessed for this purpose.

Given the limitation of governments in developing countries to initiate climate change action as recognized by the UNFCCC, it is no surprise that NGOs have led climate change action efforts. It is instructive to note that even in the 1980s and 1990s, it is agency-action through NGOs that raised public awareness on the need to focus on the environmental. The writings of Kenule Saro Wiwa which concentrated on environmental activism, rallied public support on the destruction of the environment by the oil majors in the Niger delta. The actions of NGOs resulted in the creation of Federal Environmental Protection Agencies and Ministries of Environment at the federal and state levels. There are also significant initiatives by NGOs outside Nigeria. In 2013, Friends of the Earth, leading a coalition of NGOs instituted court action in Netherlands on behalf of oil producing communities in the Niger delta (Oluduro, 2015). The action resulted in a favourable judgment amounting to millions of dollars to the communities. NGOs were similarly responsible for a court action in London against shell for its failure to install spill detection and warning devices on its pipelines (Oluduro, 2015). In the final analysis, NGOs have more experience in environmental action in Nigeria and so have developed better capacity over the years.

Bearing in mind the dearth of capacity on the part of government in driving climate change action, NGOs should be encouraged to drive the process with particular attention to the country's adaptation need being the focus for developing countries under the UNFCCC. Already the Henry Boll Foundation from Germany is prominent in her engagement with the department of climate change and other government departments. Her publications on the subject have served experts in climate change research and action even though the reports emphasize the need for mitigation action. Even the government officials during the interview session attested to the indispensable role of NGOs as critical stakeholders in building Nigeria's capacity in climate change adaptation and mitigation action. Their interview sessions revealed that NGOs were instrumental in liaising with donors and development partners in the provision of finance and technical support from developed countries.

The coordinating role of the UNDP with the NGOs in the media significantly contribute to awareness creation and publicity in vulnerable communities about adaptation measures as a response to climate change. Nigeria's NDC also buttresses the role of the NGOs in its assertion that "intermediate NGOs are critical in building community support for adaptation (NDC, 2014, p.22). Being the most widespread climate oriented body, the harnessing of NGOs is central to the success of climate change measures in Nigeria where government is still hamstrung by domestic and international commitments in several fields. But being the closest think-tank to both government and the international community, the NGOs are the most strategic to national adaptation response and should be harnessed and more coordinated.

It is however unfortunate that despite efforts to coordinate the activities of Climate change NGOs to work strategically, these organisations still prefer to be autonomous. The present scenario where NGOs work independent of each other creates disharmony in the strategy for climate change action in Nigeria. The NGOs are currently the main sources of capacity building on climate change action in the country. Without harmonizing their activities in this regard, there is great tendency for duplication of capacities in one area while skills that are

needed elsewhere are abandoned. It is the NGOs that train journalists and sponsor reports and awareness campaign in the media. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in a 2008 report established that public perception of climate change is impacted by the media (Batta, Ashong & Bashir, 2013). The report found that the media and schools constitute Nigerians' main source of information. Unfortunately, the NGO support to the media has not been sufficient to build climate change awareness to the desired level. In the end, there is poor appreciation of the issue of climate change by the media in Nigeria. This was clear from the interview with experts.

Mare (2011) reflects the same situation in South Africa where he says media reports are fond of making sweeping comments to create impact without reflecting urgency of the situation or contextualizing it to facilitate understanding. In the case of Nigeria, climate change issues are hardly reported except there is a major event or even, when controversial issues arising from climate change occur (Ukonu, Akpan & Anorue, 2012). Otherwise if it is not news worthy, climate change is rarely reported and without follow-up. The focus is usually on current news and timely events that sell. And this general inclination of remaining with news stories makes climate change not to receive the in-depth analysis it deserves. Another time when climate change issues are reported is in the appeal for fund or assistance. One analyst puts it succinctly when he said that throughout the tenure of Nigeria's former minister of environment John Odey's appearance in the media "out of nine times...it was only in one story that he did not talk about funds or aid to Nigeria to tackle climate change (Ukonu, Akpan & Anorue 2012, p.28). Interestingly, there were no follow-up stories on this appeal for aid. Take for instance a vanguard story of Tuesday 15 December 2009 containing a news item of the US pledge of millions of LED batteries to the developing world facing electricity challenges. There was no follow up to the story (Ukonu, Akpan & Anorue 2012).

It is unfortunate that climate change coverage by the media is low with specific focus on agreements, funds and meetings. The issue of biophysical occurrences are seldom reported. This imbalance in media coverage in Nigeria results in shallow reports. Giving readers and the public shallow understanding of the complexity of the issues. The fact is that the manner of media coverage of scientific subjects affects public perception which also influence policy. Consequently, apart from the actual actors on climate change action in Nigeria, very few persons in position of leadership in the country are informed about the causes of climate change. This is what happens when the media coverage is inadequate and cannot be said to be purposefully pursued to achieve societal change. It is in this light that Nwabueze (2007) observes that the press in Nigeria is failing even in covering pollution in the Niger delta that is localized, not to talk of gas flaring or oil exploration which is 30% of carbon emission nationwide (Batta, Ashong & Bashir, 2012).

The above brings to fore the concern of a former Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Dr. Mohammed Barkindo that poor media showing on environment is connected to the fact that the issue is not vital in the national corporate agenda (Batta, Ashong & Bashir). The onus is therefore on the media in Nigeria to step up to this challenge in the area of climate change. In effect, the Nigerian journalist has not mastered the complexity of climate change. It is suggested that "Nigerian newspapers can scale up their coverage as well as engaging in framing of climate change issues in terms of what communities can do (Batta, Ashong & Bashir, 2012, p.61). These may include greening of neighbourhoods, landscaping, and reflective roofing sheets. Through framing, the wording of a situation are constructed to affect mental perception. It is to influence thinking by involving interpretative schemes (Schenfele, 2000, p.309).

Using framing, a journalist decides what to emphasize to promote action on them. From the study conducted by Batta (2012) we see that the few stories on climate change emphasized mitigation. It occupied 55.2% of the coding frame. Terms like alternative energy, carbon reduction, emission reduction, and green technology are common in the literature. There is also huge emphasis on the catastrophe and the urgency for action. Meanwhile mitigation is only obligatory for developed countries which Nigeria is not a part of. So in most cases the action that are promoted by these stories cannot be acted upon by communities or government's concerned. The Nigeria newspapers are even at a loss on pro-emission solution to climate change that they advocate (Batta, Ashong & Bashir, 2012).

Meanwhile the UNFCCC enjoins developing countries to pursue adaptation to take measures that will build resilience to climate change. For the ordinary person to be involved, the narrative should be framed to focus on natural climate occurrence that he can associate with and solutions on how to survive them. The current mitigation framing excludes a lot of people who cannot afford to mitigate. Talking about mix farming, new skills and tree planting as adaptation methods elicit better result. But as concurred by the interviewees, the media are like appendages to the NGOs and so will reflect and frame their reports to suit their sponsors. Looking at this critically is not surprising.

In the case of Nigeria, the NGOs are mostly euro-centric climate change advocates with emphasis on mitigation. Principally countries like Germany, France and Britain. It is therefore natural that the emphasis in the media is on complex mitigation action that in most cases are cumbersome and distant to associate with remote reality of the local communities. But in fairness to the media, they are transmitting the agenda of their sponsors, the euro-centric climate change advocates. The only way to change the narrative to adaptation will be to approach NGOs from countries that promote the same agenda. Principally these include the United States of America, Canada and the Russian Federation. Given the critical role of NGOs in Nigeria's climate change action, there is the need to invite more social forces to involve in climate change action. This calls for more stakeholders leading to more publicity and more action.

Cognizant of the above, this study proffers the following recommendations.

- i) Government should increase its engagement with NGOs both within and outside the country to assist the country build capacity in climate change action.
- ii) Government should encourage the establishment of NGOs that encourage adaptation which is cost effective and more exigent.
- iii) To complement the support of the NGOs, government should encourage the operation of green economy. This may include the establishment of a domestic emission trading and tax system that will persuade industries to adopt carbon neutral operations and work with the NGOs.

Conclusion

NGOs constitute a critical social force in Nigeria's climate change action. They have been at the forefront of environmental concerns in the country and remain the key facilitators of climate change action. Thus for government to succeed in its climate change action, it is necessary to collaborate with the NGOs. The NGOs are also critical to the implementation of externally initiative climate change action in the country. It is in this light that this study identifies NGOs as the key actors in Nigeria's drive to encourage and pursue climate change action.

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