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THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ENHANCING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

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. This therefore calls for action from mankind to reduce emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) responsible for climate change and global warming. In this regard, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have emerged as one of the key actors in climate action for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals(SDG) 13. In Nigeria, NGOs have been at the forefront of the advocacy for everyone to take action on climate change. Our special case study includes the Project Green Initiative, Green Environment and Climate Change Initiative (GECCI), and African CleanUp Initiative. This study reveals that even ahead of government, NGOs are the key players in mitigation and adaptation action against climate change in Nigeria. Through literature review and participant observation, this study identifies the leading role of NGOs in enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria. It concludes with a clarion call on government at all levels in Nigeria to extend full support to the NGOs to facilitate their activities in enhancing climate resilience for sustainable development.

Keywords: Climate Change, Education, NGOs, Resilience, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization(WHO) Director General on the World Health Day 2008, "Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Climate change will affect, in profoundly adverse ways, some of the most fundamental determinants of health: food, air, water. In the face of this challenge, we need champions throughout the world who will work to put protecting human health at the center of the climate change agenda (Chan, 2008)". Climate change has been described as an existential threat to human well-being. Globally, it affects the social and environmental determinants of health: clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. The effects of climate change are far-reaching and include heat waves and severe weather, deteriorated air quality, displacement and migration of vectors resulting in increase of a range of diseases related to water and ecological factors. Increasing incidences of mental health issues are being recorded and identified as a consequence of environmental change(Lu, 2016; PAHO, 2013). Generally, climate change is caused by natural and human activities. Human activities are subdivided into those that either emit large amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere contributing to the ozone layer depletion or activities that result in reduced carbon absorption from the atmosphere (Anabaraonye, Okafor & Hope, 2020). In the first category are industrialization, burning of fossil fuel and gas flaring. The latter include deforestation, alterations in land use, water pollution and agricultural practices(Lu, 2016; PAHO, 2013). Climate change adaptation refers to the ability of a system to adjust to climate change (including climate variability and extremes) to moderate potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences. Climate change mitigation is any action taken to eliminate or reduce the long-term risk and hazards of climate change to human life, property and the society. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change(IPCC) defines mitigation as: "An anthropogenic intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases" (GGW,2018; IPCC,2007a).Climate resilience is the capacity for a socio-ecological system to absorb pressures and maintain function in the face of external stresses imposed upon it by climate change (Folke et al., 2010; Moench, 2014; Shamsuddin, 2020). It also includes the ability and capacity of an ecosystem to adapt, reorganize, and evolve into more desirable configurations that improve the sustainability of the system, leaving it better prepared for future climate impacts (Carpenter et al., 2001; Folke, 2006). This study identifies the role of Non-governmental Organizations in enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Data used for this study is derived from literature review of published works including academic articles, journals, conference papers, textbooks and internet materials. The researchers gathered materials for the research but summarized the characteristics that centered more on "the role of Non-governmental Organizations in enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria." This enabled the researchers to generate the synthesis of various researchers' views on the subject matter and further recommend strategies for adapting and mitigating climate change for sustainable development in Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nigeria is significantly populated, boasting as the most populated country in Africa. Nigeria is counting over 223.8 million individuals in 2023, and is also projected to increase to over 401 million

people by 2050 (Saifaddin, 2024). The population growth of Nigeria rapidly intensifies the need for actionable climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience strategies that incorporates community based approach and highlights nature-based solutions. Africa is perceived as the most vulnerable continent to the impacts of climate change even with her minimal contributions to climate change(Azour.J et al,2023). Nigeria, known to have the largest economy in Africa sits at risk to these impacts. Climate resilience is of high importance and requires an extensive indigenous approach in Nigeria. Agriculture, water resources, infrastructure, and public health in Nigeria are severely susceptible to climate change impacts such as increased temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events like floods and droughts. According to the United States Agency International Development(USAID), the agricultural, fishery, and forestry sectors on which the economy of Nigeria heavily relies on are vulnerable to climate variability (USAID, 2023). Agriculture is a significant contributor to Nigeria's GDP and a primary source of livelihood for many citizens. Climate shocks can disrupt these sectors and may lead to decreased productivity, income losses, and increased poverty levels. Communities need to anticipate, withstand, recover from, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Climate resilience, mitigation, and adaptation no longer stand as just an option, but a necessity. The essential purpose of these necessities are to reduce vulnerabilities, enhance adaptive capacity, and promote sustainable development in the face of climate change induced risks and uncertainties. Government administrations have critical roles to play in response to climate change to foster climate adaptation and resilience in rural communities where the threats of climate change grow worse each day. Simultaneously, the role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in enhancing climate resilience and promoting adaptation cannot be ignored. Civil societies play significant roles in addressing diverse range of climate issues. With their previous experiences and established relationship of trust with various communities, they stand the best chance of administering the medicine required to tackle climate change in these communities. The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in monitoring the implementation of international treaties, their relevance in the organization of development projects cannot be over-emphasized. Moreover, many UN agencies work closely with NGOs. NGOs have played an important part in numerous environmental conventions, and their role is becoming more clearly defined. The unique community structure of NGOs provides several avenues through which such organizations make climate solutions a reality. Awareness about climate change and its impacts can be shared to the public through educational campaigns, advocacy efforts, and public outreach activities. NGOs mobilize communities, engage policymakers, and promote public dialogue to drive action on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Through capacity building programs, NGOs build capacity of local communities, governments, and other stakeholders to understand, mitigate, and adapt to climate change. NGOs also collaborate with governments, businesses, and international organizations to implement climate change projects at the grassroots level. Such projects when implemented require professional observation, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Therefore, the relevance and role of Non Governmental Organizations in fostering climate resilience can never be over emphasized.

SOME NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ENHANCING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN NIGERIA

Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria are actively engaged in climate resilience projects, implementing various strategies and interventions to mitigate the impacts of climate change on local communities. In Nigeria, a substantial number of NGOs exist although at different levels and with unique focus or orientation. Most of them are internationally based while there are other major state and nationally based NGOs. They are known for their unique focus, with several projects servicing such area (Igwe, 2006; PAMNET, 2008). Green Environment and Climate Change Initiative (GECCI), is one of such organizations which has spearheaded Initiatives and projects for ecosystem restoration, climate resilience and sustainable development. Through strategic tree planting activities in communities and engaging the indigenous people in every process, GECCI's Green Action Pathway project was focused towards combating desertification, restoration of degraded lands, and enhancement of ecosystem resilience in Anambra State, Nigeria. The organization has also implemented other laudable projects with support from within and outside Nigeria. The Ebenebe Climate Resilience program initiated in Anambra by the organization increased the awareness and enlightenment of the community on the need for conservation and protection of their forests.

African CleanUp Initiative (ACI) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) registered with Corporate Affairs Commission in Nigeria with head office in Lagos State. ACI is driven by the desire to raise environmentally responsible citizens. Having started operations in 2010 with a sanitation and advocacy project – Clean Up Nigeria, the organization's major focus areas include environmental sanitation, environmental health, environmental education and community development(Anabaraonye,2023a; ACI,2021).

Another Prominent Organization, The Project Green Initiative which is an arm of the Benjy Poetry and Global Music Concept focuses on climate education through poetry, lectures, and workshops. The organization has been supporting and evidently acting for growth in climate education, environmental sustainability, and alternatives to crude oil exploration. In 2023, the organization launched the International Virtual Climate Change Education Summit (IVCCES), with presentations of over 10 high quality research papers on climate science, renewable energy, green entrepreneurship, alternative, etc. (Anabaronye, 2023b).

These NGOs' efforts have recorded success stories, including restored ecosystems, improved livelihoods, and enhanced community resilience to climate change, underscoring the critical role of civil society in advancing climate resilience agendas at the local level. Collaboration between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various stakeholders, including government agencies, international organizations, and local communities, is paramount for scaling up climate resilience efforts, and graciously, these collaborations need to be fostered(Eggers and MacMillan, 2013).Through Partnerships, NGOs can leverage diverse expertise, resources, and networks to implement holistic and sustainable solutions to climate change impacts. Through collaborations, the skills needed for stakeholder engagement and co-creativity brings competitive advantage. Government agencies provide policy support, funding, and regulatory frameworks, while

international organizations offer technical assistance, global expertise, and funding opportunities. Local communities contribute valuable knowledge, cultural insights, and grassroots support, ensuring that climate resilience interventions are contextually appropriate and inclusive (Anabaraonye, Okon, Dibia, Onwuzurike, Olisah and Ewa, 2022). Successful partnerships have been exemplified in initiatives such as the African CleanUp Initiative(ACI)'s collaboration with government agencies, other NGOs, and local communities in initiating Climate Resilience Project in various indigenous communities around Nigeria, which has led to the sensitization of the indigenous people, and has improved conservation initiatives, reduced deforestation, enhanced ecosystem resilience, and minimized unregulated logging activities in the communities.

Facilitating Government Support for NGOs in Enhancing Climate Resilience

Government support for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience efforts is crucial for achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes. Relationships between governments and NGOs are both complex and diverse, reflecting the myriad rationales and modalities for cross-sectoral action. By providing financial resources, policy frameworks, and institutional support, governments can empower NGOs to implement effective climate resilience projects and initiatives (Najam, 2000). Government backing enhances the credibility and legitimacy of NGOs, enabling them to access additional funding opportunities, forge partnerships with other stakeholders, and scale up their impact. Moreover, government support can facilitate collaboration between NGOs and local communities, ensuring that climate resilience interventions are aligned with national development priorities and responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations. According to Fox et al. (2002), government plays vital roles in fostering a conducive and enabling environment for NGOs to thrive and ripple their impacts. He clarified that this government action can be categorized under a classification of a series of actions including the following: mandating, facilitating, resourcing, partnering, and endorsing. Since the adoption of sustainability as a benchmark for development has been affected by ambiguities in definition and interpretation, sustainable development can be perceived as an active role for government in efficient and equitable management of natural and environmental resources (Pearson, 2013). In Nigeria, the role the government play at all levels in facilitating sustainable development is broad and multifaceted, encompassing policy formulation, regulation, planning, and resource allocation (Ejumudo, 2015). At the federal level, the government sets overarching development agendas, formulates national policies, and coordinates inter-sectoral efforts to address environmental challenges, including climate change. State and local governments play a critical role in implementing these policies, translating national priorities into actionable strategies, and mobilizing resources for local development projects (Ejumudo, 2015). Through effective governance, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement, governments at all levels can create an enabling environment for sustainable development and foster collaboration with NGOs and other partners to advance climate resilience agendas (Olaniyan, Oyeranti, and Bankole, 2013). Like all initiatives which encompasses a broad spectrum of influence and services, climate resilience actions also have their unique challenges. Challenges such as limited funding, inadequate institutional capacity, and gaps in implementation hinder the impact of these initiatives. To strengthen the policy framework, it is

important to improve the coordination among government agencies, streamline regulatory processes, and allocate sufficient resources for implementation (Ejumudo, 2015). Additionally, promoting multi-stakeholder engagement, fostering partnerships with NGOs, and prioritizing community-based approaches can enhance the policy's effectiveness in supporting grassroots resilience initiatives(Anabaraonye, Okon, Dibia, Onwuzurike, Olisah and Ewa, 2022). Moreover, continuous monitoring, evaluation, and review mechanisms are necessary to track progress, identify gaps, and ensure accountability in achieving climate resilience goals. Government funding and grants are vital mechanisms to support NGO projects aimed at addressing climate resilience and other societal challenges.

The World Bank Group also has a vital role to play in enhancing climate resilience by supporting NGO projects on green entrepreneurship in Nigeria(Anabaraonye, Ezuma, Emone,Olisah & Ewa, 2023). Furthermore, supports to NGOs from government can come in various forms, including grants, contracts, reimbursements, vouchers, special tax deductions for contributions to certain kinds of organizations or through special tax breaks to supplement the general tax exemption that NGOs enjoy (Frumkin & Kim, 2002). In Nigeria, accessing such funding can be challenging due to bureaucratic processes, limited awareness of available opportunities, and competition from other sectors. There has also been cases where NGOs are denied tax exemption in Nigeria without concrete reasons. To overcome some of these challenges, NGOs can enhance their capacity for grant writing, grow their knowledge of their rights and privilege as NGOs accessible to them as an organization in their country of operation, establish strong partnerships with government agencies, and actively participate in government-led initiatives and consultations.

Collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) holds significant potential for advancing sustainable development in Nigeria. By leveraging their respective strengths and resources, government agencies and NGOs can complement each other's efforts, enhance the effectiveness of development interventions, and promote inclusive and equitable growth (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2003). Government entities bring policy formulation, regulatory oversight, and financial resources to the table, while NGOs contribute grassroots knowledge, innovation, and community engagement. Together, they can address complex development challenges, such as poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, healthcare delivery, and climate resilience, in a coordinated and holistic manner.

Role of NGOs in Monitoring Implementation of International Treaties

It is known that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) do not have a legal capacity to conclude international treaties, however, they can play a major role in influencing international relations. International treaties related to climate change encompass agreements among countries to collectively address the global challenge of climate change, and these treaties typically outline commitments, targets, and mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting climate resilience, and facilitating climate finance and technology transfer (Giorgi, 2018).The monitoring and implementation of treaties for sustainable development is highly important. Effective monitoring ensures transparency, accountability, and progress tracking towards meeting treaty obligations and

climate goals. Without the monitoring of treaties made towards climate actions or environmental sustainability, the execution and sustainable implementation of these treaties are threatened. Implementation, on the other hand, translates commitments into concrete actions, policies, and measures at the national and international levels. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role in monitoring the implementation of international treaties related to climate change, such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These NGOs act as watchdogs, independently assessing and evaluating government actions, policies, and progress towards meeting treaty commitments and climate goals (Giese and Lucas, 2017). NGOs' monitoring activities play a significant role in shaping the organization of development projects by influencing policy-making and project implementation. As a typical contemporary phenomenon, NGOs play an important social and economic role in the development of society. Through their research, data collection, and advocacy efforts, NGOs provide valuable insights into the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of development initiatives. Reports and findings produced by NGOs often serve as evidence-based inputs for policy-makers, informing decision-making processes, guiding resource allocation, and shaping development agendas (Giorgetti, 1998).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Challenges faced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in monitoring the implementation of international treaties related to climate change include limited access to data, resources, and technical expertise, as well as political and institutional barriers(Giorgetti, 1998). The strategies and other institutional frameworks and tools to support mainstreaming climate adaptation in policy, and the lack of political will from governments constitutes the bulk of the challenges faced by NGOs. Regardless of these challenges, there remains numerous opportunities for collaboration between NGOs, governments, and international organizations. Stakeholder management can serve as an avenue to enhance data sharing and sustainability by harnessing the strengths and resources of these stakeholders(Anabaraonye, Okon, Dibia, Onwuzurike, Olisah & Ewa, 2022). This will birth mutual accountability in monitoring and evaluation efforts. To overcome challenges and maximize impact, NGOs are encouraged to implore strategies of collaborative work as this can strengthen monitoring mechanisms, enhance accountability, and advance the implementation of international treaties for effective climate action and sustainable development.

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