NIGERIA AND THE QUESTION OF CLIMATE JUSTICE

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Abstract

The world has witnessed series of natural disasters that are driven by climate change, and in most cases, the result of anthropogenic activities. Nigeria, alongside other countries of the world, faces the threatening consequences of climate change and other forms of environmental degradation. This paper, which takes the form of a case study, is a response to the question of the general level context of Nigeria's struggle with the challenges of climate change. It has analyzed Nigeria's Natio nally Determined Contributions (NDC) through the lens of climate justice, considering the wider policy frameworks at the national level. It, therefore, touched on the national effort towards keeping 1.5C alive, transition to green energy, the provision for food sovereignty, the capacity of the government to finance for mitigation, adaptation, losses and damages, and finally, the promotion and protection of the roles and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in the preservation of biodiversity. This paper applied a hybrid methodology, which includes collection of data from national and international sources, and from the empirical research of Nigerian scholars. These were analyzed critically and presented thematically. It submits that, while the Nigerian state is doing her own bit in the direction of climate justice, there is still much to be done, which require more national commitment and international collaboration.

Keywords: Nigeria, Climate Change, Justice, Environment, Biodiversity

I. Introduction

Climate change constitutes one of the greatest threats not only to human existence but to sustainable human development. It is globally agreed to be real and caused by both natural and anthropogenic factors[2]. This report, however, focuses more on anthropogenic activities in Nigeria that are bringing about variable rainfall, episodic flooding, drought, desertification in some parts of the country, abnormal rise in sea levels, land degradation, etc[3], and the broad question of Nigeria's efforts towards adapting to and mitigating climate change. Nigeria is located in West Africa, having a total area of 356,669 sq mi, making it the 32nd largest country in the world. It is bordered in the north by Niger, in the east by Chad and Cameroon, in the South by the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean and the West by the Republic of Benin[4].

As a result of anthropogenic activities, it has been observed that the Green House Gasses (GHG) have been rising since the Industrial Revolution. This comes from Fossil Fuel that produces carbon dioxide (CO2)[5], which constitutes two-third of the greenhouse gasses[6]. The recognition of this threat led to several conferences and bilateral agreements with commitment from states to deal with the causative factors. This report focuses on Nigeria's commitment to this global vision and effort. It will report on Nigeria's effort towards keeping 1.5C alive, transition to clean energy, food sovereignty within the context of climate change, financing for mitigation and the contribution of indigenous approaches to the conservation of biodiversity.

II. Nigeria and the 1.5C Commitment

At the Conference of the Parties (COP26)[7] held in Glasgow on 13th November 2021, the nearly 200 countries in attendance including Nigeria, had a climate pact in which they agreed to limit temperature rises to 1.5C and revisit and strengthen their current emissions targets to 2020 known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)[8]. The progress on this will be determined by a yearly round table report on global progress[9].

The credentials of Nigeria in relation to domesticating international agreements is quite impressive. Apart from being a

party to the UNFCCC in 1994, ratifying the Kyoto Protocol in 2004 and implementing the requirements of the protocols and agreements which includes setting up administrative machinery and implementing associated projects[10], Nigeria, following the agreement at COP26, has signed the Climate Change Bill into law with the hope of developing adaptation and mitigation plans.

However, there are several factors that affect the translation of these plans into action. The first is the absence of an accurate data due to poor technology systems and adequate commitment to reporting current emission level[11]. This is further compounded by a weak legislation that is necessary for ensuring increment of climate-friendly activity[12].

The approval of the Petroleum Industrial Bill by the federal government, which will attract new investments into oil and gas is not in line with the Paris agreement, and thus not a good sign.

Another difficulty is the inability of the Nigerian government to diversify its economy from an entire dependence on non-renewable fossil energy[13]. There is also the factor of lack of community ownership of the project as a result of a poor commitment on the part of the government to work closely with local communities, civil societies, stakeholders and developing partners[14]. This is not unconnected with the poor coordination among federal government's ministries and agencies which shows that climate change is not currently mainstreamed into policy plans and targets[15]. The amount allocated to climate change related matters in the budget is not strong enough for an effective positive action[16].

More so, the plan of the country to expand its domestic, regional and export gas markets, the plan to revive its coal domestic production through the 2018 National Energy Policy, poor reliable electricity grid that makes citizens spend much on generators, shows indices of dilemma that is at odd with Nigeria's resolve to reduce its emissions by 20% by 2030 and 47% conditionally on international support[17].

III. Transition to Clean Energy

There is a global emphasis on the need for transitioning from the present energy system dominated by fossil fuel to green energy. In

this regard, Nigeria has met the requirements for participating in Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects (tasked with the responsibility of reducing GHG emissions)[18]. In 2006, Nigeria established a Designated National Authority (DNA) tasked with the evaluation, endorsement and approval of CDM projects based on national sustainable development criteria, tracking CMD projects and giving UNFCCC an annual report[19]. The Nigeria's Department of Climate Change under the Ministry of Environment has at least eleven CDM and six national/regional projects under the Program of Activities (POA). Through this, she had recorded notable emission reductions, for instance, from 2015 to 2021, Nigeria has recorded annual emission reduction of 6,967 gigagram and 215 gigagram respectively[20]. Nigeria has consistently made submission of reports in this regard in 2003 and 2014 to UNFCCC.

Going by to the 2022 Global Gas Flaring Tracker Report, Nigeria has improved in reducing gas flaring. This is also seen when viewed against the report of gas flaring in 1991 which was at 4% (13% of the world's total volume of flared gas) with Nigeria as second after Russia. It is hoped that if the country works on her inefficient methods of exploiting its non-renewable energy resources and the survival strategies adopted by its teaming population, it will further drop below the first 10 countries.

Table 1: Gas flaring volumes 2016-2020 (billion cubic meters)

No	Countries	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Changes from 2019-2020
1	Russia	22.37	19.92	21.28	23.21	24.88	1.66
2	Iraq	17.73	17.84	17.82	17.91	17.37	-0.54
3	Iran	16.41	17.67	17.28	13.78	13.26	-0.52
4	USA	8.86	9.48	14.07	17.29	11.81	-5.49
5	Algeria	9.10	8.80	9.01	9.34	9.32	-0.02
6	Venezuela	9.35	7.00	8.22	9.54	8.59	-0.95
7	Nigeria	7.31	7.65	7.44	7.83	7.20	-0.63
8	Mexico	4.78	3.79	3.89	4.48	5.77	1.28
9	China	1.96	1.56	1.82	2.02	2.72	0.70
10	Oman	2.82	2.60	2.54	2.63	2.52	-0.11

Source: *NOAA[21], Payne Institute[22] and Colorado School of Mines[23], GGFR[24]*

According to the 2022 Global Gas Flaring Tracker Report, Nigeria ranks 7th among the 10 countries with highest gas flaring who contribute 75 percent of the world's gas flaring. Ahead of Nigeria are Russia, Iraq, Iran, the United States, Venezuela, Algeria. The three countries behind Nigeria include: Mexico, Libya, and China.

Although the country has remained in the top seven flaring countries, it has nonetheless steadily reduced its flaring: flaring has declined from over 25 bcm in 2000 to close to 7 bcm in 2020, while oil production has remained essentially flat at around 2 million barrels a day.

These notwithstanding, the commitment of Nigeria is heavy at the level of policies and agreements without sufficient action towards implementation[25]. A major flaw in the CDM and POA projects, according to Nwozor, is their lack of effort towards developing the green energy potentials of Nigeria[26]. There is also the problem of incapacity of Nigeria to put in place sufficient technologies to ensure the achievement of national targets on green renewable energy[27]. At the moment, there are efforts towards expanding the country's hydorcarbon reserves, the use of inorganic fertilizer is still very high, the improper disposal of industrial wastes are seen in most major cities.

These notwithstanding, the policies of the country emphasizes its commitment towards mainstreaming renewable energy in line with global aspirations[28]. Given the rising population and deficit in development, Nigeria will require international support to translate these policies into action as she is still far from achieving her target of transition to green energy by 2030.

IV. Food Sovereignty and Changing Climate

Nigeria has consistently made efforts towards food sufficiency in the past[29]. These attempts, however, have done very little to address the underlying causes of declining agricultural capacity. In 2018, an estimated 25 million Nigerians were undernourished. This is up by 180% given the records of the previous decade. Out of an annual demand for wheat of 3 million tons, only about 100,000 are produced in the country. This is based on poor financial aid to farmers, extreme temperatures and unpredictable precipitation patterns, recent Jihadist

insurgency and its offshoots in the North Eastern and North Western parts of the country already experiencing decline in agricultural production by almost 55%, poor mechanized system of farming, dependence on rain for agriculture or on the natural weather conditions of localities[30], increased desert encroachment in the northern part of the country, erosion, flood, environmental degradation in the southern part of the country[31], poor storage[32] and huge increase in population growth[33].

From the data reported by the Global Food Security Ranking in 2022, Nigeria ranks the 97th county out of the 113 countries on record.

Table 2: 2021 Global Food Security Ranking

No.	Country	Year	Trends
1	Nigeria	2012	39.0
2	Nigeria	2013	2.1
3	Nigeria	2014	-1.6
4	Nigeria	2015	1.4
5	Nigeria	2016	1.5
6	Nigeria	2017	-0.5
7	Nigeria	2018	-1.4
8	Nigeria	2019	2.1
9	Nigeria	2020	1.4
10	Nigeria	2021	0.1

Source: GFSR 2021[34]

Even though the overall trend is positive at +2.3, it is still not enough to ensure food security. In fact, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture lamented that 65% of the population of Nigeria is food insecure[35]. With Nigeria's population projected to double by 2050 to 400 million[36], the country lives with a catastrophy in view.

V. Climate Finances

The challenges that come with climate change require finances to tackle[37]. Unfortunately, most developing countries like Nigeria do not

have enough finances to tackle the challenges of climate change[38]. More so, the World Bank formerly expects a financial cost of 10-40 billion dollars annually for developing countries, and currently 140-300 billion dollars annually[39]. This posses a serious challenge to countries like Nigeria.

Table 3: Aggregate budget expenditures for adaptation (2013–2020)

NO.	Year	Total Naira	Share of Total adaptation budget	Share of adaptation budget to GDP
1	2013	10,753,404,222	34.05%	0.0168%
2	2014	2,591,421,756	8.20%	0.0038%
3	2015	238,646,377	0.76%	0.0003%
4	2016	1,786,363,620	5.66%	0.0026%
5	2017	6,122,821,038	19.39%	0.0088%
6	2018	1,099,037,404	3.48%	0.0016%
7	2019	4,986,075,679	15.79%	0.0069%
8	2020	4,006,552,629	12.69%	0.0057%
	Total	31,584,322,725		

Source: *Oyimadu and Uche 2021*[40]

From the foregoing budgetary allocation for tackling climate change and the financial allocation expected by the World Bank, it is obvious that many developing economies like Nigeria cannot deal with the issue of climate change without external aid. This explains why a major source of the flow of financial resources for adaptation mostly comes from developed countries. However, most times, the requirements for accessing these international sources of funds require stringent conditions. This notwithstanding, from the dimension of funding, Nigeria cannot fund the adaptation of climate change alone and will, therefore, require external assistance from developed economies and Non-Governmental Organizations.

VI. Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity Conservation

Indigenous knowledge systems are a significant resource which contribute greatly towards increased efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the environment. So far, the major way through which the Nigerian government promotes and accounts for the roles and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities is through representation in governance through the local heads of communities and villages. Through them, the voices of the local people are heard, and through through them the government communicates with them in the language that they understand better.

Regarding the contributions of indigenous knowledge systems to the preservation of the environment, the following are notable:

I. their conceptualization of nature as mother, source of life, nourisher, supporter and teacher, brings a new perspective to the understanding of nature[41].
II. motherhood also introduces the concepts of respect, love, care, empathy, support, patience, etc., which are indispensable for the promotion of the good health of the environment[42].
III. the understanding of nature as manifestations of great spirits, means that they are not just considered as things or properties. They are spiritual personalities deserving of respect and care[43].
IV. traditional rites, rituals and festivals become become opportunities for the renewal of nature, as in the case of planting of trees[44].
V. the environment is understood as a part of the human world. Its destruction would have direct consequences on the health of the human person[45].

In view of the necessary roles of indigenous peoples in the preservation of the environment, there is need for the government to recognize their role in conservation, and thus, include them in discussions about climate change. They need to be given the opportunity to speak for themselves.

VII. Conclusion

Nigeria as a country is currently experiencing the severe

consequences of the mismanagement of the environment, which is posing a serious threat our collective existence[46]. In the face of the foregoing, Chiras avers that: "Together, the problems of overpopulation, depletion, and pollution have created an ecological crisis – a threat to the integrity of natural systems of which humans are part, and, therefore, a threat to the survival of human life"[47]. The present report is a contribution to knowledge in the form of a case study as it focuses on Nigeria's experience and efforts toward dealing with the challenges of climate change. It analyzed Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contributions through the lens of climate justice, considering the wider policy frameworks at the national level

This piece remains a very significant contribution to studies in climate change, and its speciality and focus on the Nigerian state has allowed for a broader study that gives a peculiar picture of the situation of climate justice in Nigeria. It strongly believes that while the Nigerian state has committed in the direction of climate justice, there is still much to be done. Climate justice will be achievable if the government gives it the consideration due to it. This effort, however, will remain insufficient without the interventions of developed economies and Non-governmental Organizations.

ENDNOTES

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