

SUSTAINING NIGERIA'S FUTURE: YOUTHS ENGAGING IN CLIMATE CHANGE EFFORTS

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Abstract

There is no doubt that developing countries are most porous to the effects of climate change. Furthermore, the ever changing climate change can (and has) slowed down the process and advances made for development in these countries. Nigeria, one of such developing countries has recorded numerous effects of climate change over the years. With the floods of 2011, it became evident that there should be increased attention for climate change ensuring that the challenges of climate change are properly mitigated. However, since climate change and its attendant effect of global warming significantly threatens Nigeria's future generation –i.e. youth, they have taken it upon themselves to advocate, create awareness and ensure proper mobilization of their peers using contemporary information communication technology tools. This paper therefore, highlights some of those efforts expended by numerous Nigerian youths to tackle the climate change quagmire, thus ensuring the sustenance of Nigeria's future. By adopting a methodology of qualitative review of secondary source materials, this research attempts to clearly document these efforts to drive

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the process of climate change advocacy and possibly inform public policy change.

Key Words: Climate Change, Nigeria, Policy Change, Social Media, Youth

INTRODUCTION

We live in an ever changing environment. Changes are seen every day around us. Our environment has been changing from the first time that man set foot on it till he started developing tools and other machineries to make living in the same environment more comfortable. Using contemporary analysis, changes in earth system, atmosphere, land, water, and biodiversity threatens the ability of future generations to eke out a living; therefore it has been advocated that such changes should continue within the confines of international standards of sustainable development.

The Brundtland Commission identified sustainable development as the “ability to make development sustainable –to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”¹. Succinctly put, sustainable development is positive socio-economic change that does not undermine the ecological and social systems upon which communities and social systems are dependent on.² It is therefore imperative to understand that environmental changes affects climate conditions directly which in turn affects people living in such environment and undermines their development.

The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* defines climate change as a significant and lasting change in

the statistical distribution of weather patterns over periods ranging from decades to millions of years.³ This change is caused by several factors which include oceanic processes (such as ocean circulation), biotic processes, and variations in solar radiation received by the Earth via volcanic eruptions and human-induced alterations to the natural world. The constant interdependence between man and his environment has resulted to unmitigated climatic changes, thus maintained a renewed commitment to address such changes on different levels to ensure sustainable development.

When considering global and national policies for development, climate change issues are becoming indispensable. This becomes imperative as a result of man's activity which maintains persistent growth since the Industrial Revolution and how such activities portend a grave threat to the same environment which ironically sustains humanity. Feelers from most part of the world agree that loss of ecosystems; increase in atmospheric carbon (CO₂) and biodiversity loss all due to man's activities has made it possible for climate change to alter the whole pattern for global development and economic growth. To fecund this, the *UN End Poverty Campaign Report 2010* aptly captures that, "Climate change presents significant threats to the achievement of the international development efforts like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); especially those related to eliminating poverty and hunger and promoting environmental sustainability." Increasing evidence points to the disproportionate negative impact that climate change will have on the developing and poorest countries that ironically contributed 'least' to the problem.⁴ For example, because ecosystem services typically account for a substantial portion of the incomes of the rural poor, current trends in ecosystem

decline threaten the very basis of their household economies. Climate change will place additional stresses on ecosystems and further intensify the challenges facing the rural poor, undermining both national and international efforts to accelerate and sustain progress toward development.⁵

Compounding this precarious situation, developing countries like Nigeria, have not fully integrated climate change concerns into its sustainable development policies and programmes. For instance, Nigeria's Climate Change Bill initiated during the Fourth Republic appears to be a noble dream, without any hope of its fruition. The Bill seeks to establish a National Climate Change Commission with technical capacities responsible for the strategic planning and co-ordination of national polices in the field of climate change and energy; and to advice the Federal Government on policies and priorities on the international climate change regime and its effect on Nigeria.⁶ Furthermore, it has been recorded that developing countries lack the necessary infrastructure (e.g. appropriate early warning signals, storm walls and improved water storage) to respond adequately to severe changes in the weather. As such, diseases such like malaria is likely to expand in range, impacting more people in the poorest regions of Nigeria. Obviously such effects are more pronounced on women and the young who are most vulnerable to these changes. On one hand, rural women contribute significantly to the survival and income of most households and depend heavily on agriculture for survival. As such, environmental and climate changes affect their ability to meet these needs. On the other hand, such climatic changes will undermine the ability for future generations to meet their own needs for economic survival.

Against this background on protecting the environment for future generations, International policies for development centers on sustainable development. Understanding this background has therefore increased calls for every section of societies to be included in attempts to secure our ever changing environment for the future. Such calls have been championed by international institutions like the United Nations and others agencies within the framework of sustainable development with the intent of engaging everyone on how best to mitigate the effects of climate change. Recently, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) which promotes international environmental best practices introduced *TUNZA* Report, as a sequel for Geo-5 document on strategies for youths ensuring a better world by engaging in Climate Change advocacy and issues. What role then can the Nigerian youth play to ensure the environment is secured amidst the challenges of climate change? What efforts have some Nigerian youths put in already to mitigate these effects? This shall be our focus herein.

**INTERNATIONAL POLICIES OF SUSTAINING THE FUTURE:
“*KYOTO PROTOCOL*”**

Globally, increases in greenhouse gas emissions are unprecedented as experiment shows an uncertain outcome for the future of the planet. The Kyoto Protocol serves as an initial step through 2012 to mitigate the threats posed by global climate change. A second step is needed and policy-makers, scholars, business people, and environmentalists have begun debating the structure of the successor to the Kyoto agreement (Ecopapers).

The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international treaty that sets binding obligations on industrialized countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The UNFCCC is an environmental treaty with the goal of preventing "dangerous" anthropogenic (i.e., human-induced) interference of the climate system. There are 192 parties to the convention, including 191 states (all UN members, except Andorra, Canada, South Sudan and the United States) and the European Union. The United States signed but did not ratify the Protocol and Canada withdrew from it in 2011. The Protocol was adopted by Parties to the UNFCCC in 1997, and entered into force in 2005.⁷

The official meeting of all states party to the Kyoto Protocol is the Conference of the Parties (COP). It is held every year as part of the United Nations Climate Change conference, which also serves as the formal meeting of UNFCCC. The first Meetings of Parties of the Kyoto Protocol (MOP) was held in 2005 in conjunction with the eleventh Conferences of parties to UNFCCC. Parties to the Convention that were not part of the Protocol can participate in Protocol-related meetings as observers. The first conference was held in 1995 in Berlin. The agreement is a protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which did not set any legally binding limitations on emissions or enforcement mechanisms. Only Parties to the UNFCCC can become Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted at the third session of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 3) in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan.

National emission targets specified in the Kyoto Protocol exclude international aviation and shipping. Kyoto Parties can use land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF) in meeting their targets. LULUCF activities are also called "sink" activities. Changes in sinks and land use can have an effect on the climate. Particular criteria apply to the definition of forestry under the Kyoto Protocol.

Forest management, cropland management, grazing land management and re-vegetation, are all eligible LULUCF activities under the Protocol. Annex I Parties use of forest management in meeting their targets is capped.

As part of the Kyoto Protocol, many developed countries have agreed to legally binding limitations/reductions in their emissions of greenhouse gases in two commitments periods. The first commitment period applies to emissions from 2008-2012, and the second commitment period applies to emissions from 2013-2020. The protocol was amended in 2012 to accommodate the second commitment period, but this amendment has (as of January 2013) not entered into legal force.

The 37 countries with binding targets in the second commitment period are Australia, all members of the European Union, Belarus, Croatia, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Norway, Switzerland, and Ukraine. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, have stated that they may withdraw from the Protocol or not put into legal force the Amendment with second round targets. Japan, New Zealand, and Russia have participated in Kyoto's first-round but have not taken on new targets in the second commitment period. Other developed countries without second-round targets are Canada (which withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2012) and the United States (which has not ratified the Protocol).

International emissions trading allow developed countries to trade their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. They can trade emissions quotas among themselves, and can also receive credit for financing emissions reductions in developing countries. Developed countries may use emissions trading until late 2014 or 2015 to meet their first-round targets. Developing countries do not have binding targets under the Kyoto Protocol, but are still committed under the treaty to reduce their emissions. Actions taken by developed and developing countries to reduce emissions include support for renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, and reducing deforestation. Under the Protocol, emissions of developing countries are allowed to grow in accordance with their development needs.

The treaty recognizes that developed countries have contributed the most to the anthropogenic build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (around 77% of emissions between 1750 and 2004), and also carbon dioxide emissions per person in developing countries (2.9 tonnes in 2010) are on average, lower than emissions per person in developed countries (10.4 tonnes in 2010).⁸ A number of developed countries have commented that the Kyoto targets only apply to a small share of annual global emissions. Countries with second-round Kyoto targets made up 13.4% of annual global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions in 2010. Many developing countries have emphasized the need for developed countries to have strong, binding emissions targets. At the global scale, existing policies appear to be too weak to prevent global warming exceeding 2 or 1.5 degrees Celsius, relative to the pre-industrial level.⁹ The Protocol was adopted by COP 3 of UNFCCC on 11 December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. It was opened on 16 March 1998 for signature during one year by parties to UNFCCC, where it was signed

by Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Maldives, Samoa, St. Lucia and Switzerland. At the end of the signature period, a total of 82 countries and the European Community had signed. Ratification (which is required to become a party to the Protocol) started on 17 September with the first ratification by Fiji. Countries that did not sign acceded to the convention, which has the same legal effect.

Article 25 of the Protocol specifies that the Protocol enters into force

"...on the ninetieth day after the date on which not less than 55 Parties to the Convention, incorporating Parties included in Annex I which accounted in total for at least 55% of the total carbon dioxide emissions for 1990 of the Annex I countries, have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession."¹⁰

The EU and its Member States ratified the Protocol in May 2002. Of the two conditions, the "55 parties" clause was reached on 23 May 2002 when Iceland ratified the Protocol. The ratification by Russia on 18 November 2004 satisfied the "55%" clause and brought the treaty into force, effective 16 February 2005, after the required lapse of 90 days. On 3 December 2007, Australia ratified the protocol during the first day of the COP13 in Bali, Indonesia. As of May 2013, 191 countries and one regional economic organization (the EC) have ratified the agreement, representing over 61.6% of the 1990 emissions from Annex I countries. One of the 191 ratifying states—Canada—has denounced the protocol.

The Protocol also reaffirms the principle that developed countries have to pay billions of dollars, and supply technology to other countries for climate-related studies and projects.¹¹ The principle was originally agreed in UNFCCC. One such project is *The Adaptation Fund*, which has been established by the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. In December 2004, Nigeria joined the over 120 parties that have so far ratified the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.¹² With the recent approval of the instrument of ratification of the protocol by the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo, the instrument is now expected to be deposited with the United Nations Office in New York hopefully before the 10th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change coming up next month in Buenos Aires, Argentina.¹³

TRENDS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN NIGERIA

Ironically, in this twenty-first century, most people still believe that climate change is a myth. Such opinion is held because to them there are no actual evidence that carbon dioxide emissions are causing global warming and changes in the climate; they believe that computer modeled projections are just concatenations of calculations anyone could do on a hand held calculator. Therefore they are not theoretical and cannot be part of any evidence.¹⁴ Despite this position international organizations like the Inter-Government Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) still contend that “warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increased global

average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level.”¹⁵ In addition to this, Bernstein observed that with the help of age-long thermometers which have been recording change in global temperature since 1700, drilled ice core analysis from the Arctic and observed environmental physical changes which have forced the migration of species, trends in climate change could be account for.¹⁶

Vulnerability to climate change is considered high in developing countries due to social, economic and environmental conditions that amplify susceptibility to negative impacts and contribute to low capacity to cope with and adapt to climate hazards. Africa itself produces negligible greenhouse gases as climate change is primarily caused by developed countries. However, the bitter irony is that Africa will probably suffer most from climate change consequences. According to an economist, it is a typical case of negative external effects or better still “an externalization of cost.”¹⁷ Owing to the high level of vulnerability in developing countries, there is an urgent need to understand the threats from climate change that they face, formulate policies that mitigate these risks and take necessary action. What remains a problem in developing countries (like Nigeria), is the lack of political will to prioritize the issue of climate change in policy formulation and implementation. In Nigeria for instance, changes in the climate could be observed in several ways with numerous effects. Major areas which this seems to be pronounced are the agriculture, physical environment and human health.

For agriculture, the geometric population* increase which places significant pressure on available natural resources needed for food production, alongside raising temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns and increasing extreme weather events; these trends militates

against Nigeria's food security. The agriculture sector engages over 70% of Nigeria's labour force both directly and indirectly (mostly women in some parts of Nigeria) and by 2001 contributed about 32% of her GDP¹⁸, but with current changes in climate she is experiencing mounting food deficits and decline in both gross domestic products (GDP) and export earnings, while retail food prices and import bills have increased. Furthermore, climate change threatens Nigeria's land resources via drought, desert encroachment, soil erosion and floods. It has been advocated that policies concerning agriculture and climate change should aim to address the development or refinement of early warning systems to enable timely remedial measures and research into agricultural strategies.¹⁹ The desire of farmers in major agricultural centers in Nigeria like the mosaic croplands of the north central zone and the southeast to southwestern zones is for policies to center on strengthening and coordination of the nation's meteorological services and the integration of indigenous knowledge of climate and early warning signals.²⁰ To get policy makers into formulating policies patterned towards this angle appears to be a challenge. According to projections from the United Nations, by 2050, Nigeria will have a population of about 310 million and will be faced with the challenge of an increasing population's desire for food, shelter and social amenities; while per capita land available for agriculture will likely be reduced along with crop yield as a result of temperature changes and extreme weather conditions for crops all caused by climate change.²¹

Looking at Nigeria's physical environment provides further evidence on climate change trends. Since Nigeria's aridity could be broadly divided into three viz: Arid, Moist sub-humid and Humid, climate change patterns are therefore pronounced visible across different geographic zones. With desertification, sahelization and

decrease of natural resources in the North which is accompanied with rise in sea level at her tropical coast of the South, she is fast losing her ecosystem and biodiversity cover. Evidently, the Lake Chad which is the water supplier for more than 10 million people of the riparian states has already shrunk to one-tenth of its original size. It is even argued that soon Nigeria might lose its status of been an abutting owner of the Lake Chad Basin Commission.²² It is estimated that the rise in sea level of only 20cm, would imply a displacement of 740,000 people in Nigeria while a rise of 1m, would lead to 3.7 million and 2m to 10 million homeless people in the country.²³ Raising sea level also puts significant pressure on major dams in and around Nigeria. Some of them over flooded last year affecting over 2million people with the loss of over 300 lives and unquantifiable economic loss for both the people and government.²⁴ Apart from this, Nigeria still contributes significantly to global warming than all other emissions of whole Sub-Saharan Africa together. Nigeria operates a mono-cultural oil economy which also produces gas as one of its end result. This gas contains methane and CO₂; with continuous gas flaring of more than 2.5 million cubic feet per day, according to the World Bank, Nigeria accounts for roughly one-sixth of the world-wide gas flaring which in turn, spews some 400 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This gas which is often burned directly on the ground is filled with dioxins and carcinogens which harm the inhabitants and the environment.²⁵

Despite these trends as well as many others, policy makers in Nigeria still do not considered climate change as a threat to her economic sustainability. Possibly to them, Nigeria is faced with other pressing matters of which climate change is not one of them. Apart from effort from environmentalists and NGOs, various ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) concerned with changes in the

environment have not been at the front line for driving policy implementation towards sustainable development. The Nigerian youth has therefore a decisive role to play in driving policies for environmental sustainability and mitigating the effects of climate change in Nigeria.

NIGERIAN YOUTHS' EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

"The best way to predict the future... is to create it." - Alan Kay

The phrase 'sustainable development' has become part and parcel of our daily vocabulary and today this expression is utilized by people coming from all walks of life and by politicians belonging to the whole spectrum of the political arena. The problem, however, is that different people tend to interpret this expression in different ways. Youths are definitively more sensitive to the positive connotations of 'sustainable development' because they are amongst the first victims of unsustainable practices as they suffer the direct consequences of these malpractices. It is young people who die; when an uncontrolled market economy is left to supposedly regulate itself, and then collapses, it is young people looking for a first job who are mostly hit by the recession.

Rio +20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in June 20-22, 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, seeks for a new consensus on global actions to safeguard the future of the planet and the right of future generations everywhere to live healthy and fulfilling lives. This is the great development challenge of the 21st century.

Thousands of leaders in government, business, and non-government organizations have attempted to create policies geared towards “reducing poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection.”

Prior to RIO+20, **SustainNIGERIA**, a global alliance of Nigerian Youth Organizations advocating and mobilizing around issues of sustainable development and the green economy in Nigeria mobilized over one thousand five hundred children and youth who participated in the mycity+20 campaign tagged ‘**Abuja+20.**’ This youth-led, community based development group, has as its aim to research on how best to solve the challenges of climate change. In addition to this, the group researches on the attendant effects of climate change trends in terms of unemployment (mostly for women in rural areas); they also attempt to change public policy to foster development in Nigeria. In light of this thinking, the Abuja+20 concept successfully identify pathways for people, local communities, corporate, NGOs and Government organizations and the international community to promote environmental sustainability and equity in mutually reinforcing ways. The campaign had the support of the then Honorable Minister of Environment (Hajiya Zaniab Mailafiya).²⁶

The Abuja+20 offered important new contributions and solutions to the national dialogue on climate change challenges, showing how sustainability is inextricably linked to basic questions of equity— that is, of fairness and social justice and of greater access to a better quality of life. Sustainability is not exclusively or even primarily an environmental issue. It is fundamentally about how we choose to live our lives, with an awareness that everything we do has consequences

for the about 145million of us, as well as for the billions all around the world who will follow, for centuries to come. Providing opportunities and choices for all was the central goal of Abuja+20. Abuja+20 helped to synergize on solutions to quality education, Oceans, Disaster, Energy, Food, Creating resilient cities and communities.²⁷

Also, the initiative mobilized children and youth, educating them on the urgency of Sustainable Development issues and encouraging them to involve themselves and voice their opinions in the negotiation and solution process, albeit from a distance. In this manner, children and youth were actively engaged locally without sending thousands of people to the Rio conference. Abuja+20 was held on May 27, 2012 at the Millennium Park in Abuja between 3-6pm, it was lauded as a Nigerian youth organizations effort working towards sustainable development.

Earth Hour is another veritable way youths in Nigeria demonstrated their commitment towards sustainable development. The Earth hour is a gathering of the global community involving 152 countries and over 7,000 cities around the world on March 23rd, 2013 to show what one simple idea can achieve, and what one person's actions can inspire.²⁸ It is the largest crowd sourced advocacy and awareness campaign on the environment. Inspired by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Earth Hour encouraged household and businesses to turn off their non-essential lights for one hour to raise awareness about the need to take action on climate change. Earth Hour is much, much more than a symbolic action of switching off lights for an hour; it's a continuous movement driving real actions, big and small, that are changing the

world we live in, with the hope that, together we must find the energy to turn the inspiration of one hour into the actions of every hour.

What is most important is the ever increasing extent to which Earth Hour's supporters are participating in or taking actions themselves. Now in its 4th year, Earth Hour Nigeria is maturing from its origins as a consciousness raising event in cities, to a movement that is not just calling for change but is engaging in it. With the support of millions of Earth Hour Supporters around the world, the Team in Nigeria has launched a new petition calling for the passage of the Climate Change Bill; while her partners – First City Monument Bank Plc gave out about 300 Solar Lamps during Earth Hour; Also, WONDERBAG NIGERIA has pledged and supported the Earth Hour Nigeria with the '*I WILL IF YOU WILL*' campaign to give out 5,000 'Wonderbags' –a heat retention mechanisms to cook food, reduce carbon and minimize water usage –to the Red Cross of Nigeria.²⁹ These commitments have passed significant savings on to families while reducing charcoal-producing and wood-gathering impacts on forests.

Furthermore, over the years, the team in Nigeria has used Earth Hour as a tool to engage children and youths on environmental issues. In 2013, over 200 children of Vicsum Private School, Omole Phase 2, Ikeja, Lagos; Vivian Fowler Girls College, Oregun, Ikeja; Reagent Secondary School, Abuja; Olumawu Basic School, Abuja and youths were engaged as a build up to Earth Hour. Also, the campaign promoted the use of Wonderbag in Nigeria. With a call to action to become the generation to change our planet for good, the 1013th event was marked by First City Plaza with over 100 participants; Transcorp Hilton, Abuja with over 300 participants; Le Meridien, Ogeyi Place in Port-Harcourt

with about 70 participants.³⁰ The campaign have been able to get the movement spread to include more government organizations such as the Nigeria Emergency Management Agency, Rivers State Environmental Protection Agency, international and national development partners such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Human & Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA) among others.

Earth Hour Nigeria has learnt how important the traditional media is as a tool for creating awareness amongst citizens. The team was featured on various media houses and was able to reach over 65 million Nigerians on environmental sustainability and energy conservation, it has been considered as a Nigerian youth-led environmental sustainability effort.

Nigeria Youth Climate Action Network (NYCAN) is a coalition of groups and individuals working to promote youths and climate change activities in Nigeria. The Network aims to build synergy and share experience among groups working on Youth and Climate Change in Nigeria. It also, works to promote youth mainstreaming into Climate Change and other programmes geared towards environmental sustainability. The Youth Coalition was initiated by the Nigeria Climate Action Network (NCAN) and the International Centre for Energy, Environment & Development (ICEED). As part of its activities to mainstream Nigerian Youth into Climate Talks, the Network in 2010 organized a One-Day Capacity Building Workshop on REDD+ (a social media platform) on Adaptation, Renewable Energy and Communicating Climate change, for individuals and organizations working on Youth and Climate Change issues in Nigeria. The

workshop drew over 1500 participants across the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria while the Resources Persons were Climate Experts from United Kingdom, Kenya and Nigeria.³¹

In 2010, the network supported the drafting and legislative process of the Nigeria Climate Change Commission Bill by helping to identify influential partners and individuals to help advocate for a clear policy framework on environmental policy in Nigeria. The Commission seeks to provide leadership, coordination, resources and information to fully respond to climate change and achieving the Nigeria's Vision 2020. Also, the coalition successfully used the social media as a tool to reach out to policy makers and senior government officials, which led some members of parliament to close their Facebook accounts due to pressure from the youths regarding this bill. More so, to raise awareness on oil spillage in the Niger Delta, the network organized a tweet meeting on Twitter³² (another social media platform - #OilSpillNG) on growing environmental concerns while exploring roles of policy makers, local communities, CSOs, NGO's, international communities, private sector as well as youth could play in addressing the issue.

The Niger Delta, one of the 10 most important wetland and coastal marine ecosystems in the world and, is home to over 31 million people seem, to be the most affected region of oil spillage in Nigeria. The Niger Delta ironically is also, the location of massive oil deposits, which have been extracted for decades by the government of Nigeria and by multinational oil companies. This Oil has generated an estimated \$600 billion since the 1960s. Despite this, the majority of the Niger Delta's population lives in poverty. The United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) describes the region as suffering from “administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict.”³³ The majority of *Niger-Deltans* do not have adequate access to clean water or health-care. Their poverty a vast contrast to the wealth generated by oil in the region, has become one of the world’s starkest and most disturbing examples of the “resource curse”.

These discussions focused on various dimensions of this crisis: the impact of pollution and environmental damage caused by the oil industry on the human life of the people living in the oil producing areas of Niger Delta. This discussion as well as other efforts led to the introduction of the Oil Spill Bill by the National Assembly to put an end to oil spillage and fine for Corporation polluting the environment.

The flooding, which was caused by the overflowing of the River Niger, greatly affected many states of the federation. To alleviate the sufferings of people displaced by the floods, billions of Naira was allocated by the Federal Government, international communities and well-meaning groups and individuals; and a committee was setup to look into the issues and come up with recommendation to militate against future reoccurrence.

Using social media, Nigerian youth mobilized to help by volunteering their time and expertise to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA); other Eco-Activist launch a campaign using local NGOs and the media to get relief materials from the general public which were distributed at the relief camps and to displaced families.

Others engage in using social media (mostly twitter - #NGFloods) to debate, raise awareness, coordinate management of the disaster and kept citizens informed on the solution and providing plausible solutions to the crisis while calling for a greater ambition by the government to find effective solution within climate change policies.³⁴

During the UNFCCC conference of parties (COP), Nigerian youths were represented and actively involved through **YOUNGO**, the official youth constituency at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Children and young people have been participating in the UNFCCC intergovernmental process dating back to COP 5 in Bonn, Germany. Starting in COP 11/CMP 1, youth have also organized preparatory meetings called "Conferences of Youth," which help build their capacity to participate in the UNFCCC negotiation process. Prior to COP 15/CMP 5, the secretariat granted a provisional constituency status to admitted youth non-governmental organizations (YOUNGO). The constituency status provided a conduit for the exchange of official information between young people and the secretariat; assisted the secretariat in ensuring an effective participation by youth appropriate to an intergovernmental meeting; coordinated young people's interaction at sessions including convening constituency meetings, organizing meetings with officials, providing names for the speakers list and representation at official functions; and provided logistical support to youth during sessions.

On practical terms, YOUNGO was given the opportunity to address the plenary, High Level Segment of a COP/CMP, make submissions (also as individual youth organizations), attend workshops, meet with officials of the Convention -such as Chairs of the subsidiary bodies and

the COP Presidency. They also organized Young and Future Generation's Day during the COP/CMP organizing a series of side events, exhibits, interviews, media stunts, etc. Nigerian youth who participated under YOUNGO chaired panels during workshop and side events in COP 18 and shared their experiences from the African perspective. Delegates have always stressed the need for young people to have a bigger role in UNFCCC decision making and on plans to protect the environment and YOUNGO provided that platform for Nigerian youths.³⁵

For research and inventions, students from the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State successfully developed a weather application for disseminating first hand weather forecast for the city of Minna, Niger state and its environs. This software has no restriction in the sense that it is compatible with all mobile phones of various operating systems such as Java; Symbian; Blackberry and Android operating systems. The weather forecast application data usage is very cheap and affordable on all mobile network service providers, and the application is free for usage by commuters. The application addresses issue of informing the general masses of what they should expect for the day or probably for the week so that they can plan ahead of the weather condition and effectively plan for the week.

This has help community members, most especially the settlers who are farmers, the importance of weather forecasting cannot be over emphasized in agriculture because the success of a profitable farming practice to some extent depends on how favourable the weather condition is and that is why this innovation set to offer them firsthand information to plan ahead of time.³⁶

The Africa Adaptation Programme trained and empowered Climate Change Ambassadors, armed with new skills and knowledge, serving as advocates to their communities, influencing community and state leadership through **Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction (CCADRR) clubs**, students tend to the gardens and have been able to enjoy the harvest, sharing with their families and the community at large. Funds raised from the sale of the harvest are invested back into expansion of the school CCADRR programmes. Learners has become capacitated through knowledge and skills, including leadership, peace building, conflict resolution and life skills, acquisition and orientation in participatory approaches to effect social and behavioral change in their various communities. Also, the learners imbued with new skills have developed new communication materials, including songs; poems; puzzles; games and drama. This has put in place strategies on wellbeing of the children in a changing Nigeria.

In the year 2011, 21.1% Nigerian youths were unemployed while the figure rose to 23.9% in 2012 and still expected to continue rising. In response to this alarming trend in the country, **Trailblazer Initiatives Nigeria** lunched a programme designed to tackle the problems of unemployment and poverty, while contributing to combatting climate change by empowering youths and women to create green jobs through vocational skills acquisition and encouraging the growth of small and large-scale businesses. Over 1,132 young people have been trained and empowered to acquire green jobs in Nigeria.³⁷

It has been stressed over time that, the real experts on “future change” are youths themselves: they are old enough to have experienced the negative aspects of an uncontrolled free market but they are also, young enough to be able to plan a better future for all humankind, with a great dose of enthusiasm that might be lacking in the older generations.

According to United Nation Environmental Programme (UNEP), Youth comprise nearly 30 per cent of the world's population. ‘Africa is the world's second largest and second most populous continent with over 1.33 Billion populations with over 60% being youth, whose energy if channeled appropriately will increase the standard of living of the citizen and also encourage economic boom in terms of investment.’³⁸ The involvement of today's youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of process is critical to the long-term success of Agenda 21 (UN policy document on sustainable development).

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of the Nigeria youth in promoting the idea of sustainable development can never be overemphasized. More so, without a shift in contemporary thinking and policy formulation, the economy for further generations in Nigeria continues to be threatened. Nigerian policy makers should make clear legal, official roles for youths to address climate change challenges then they would witness a catapulting of participation by diverse youth sources.

On the part of Nigerian youths, they should get involved in climate change policy process because only a collective action can bring about the much needed attitudinal change in Nigeria. They have the capacity

to drive and sustain major national transformations, and the future is theirs.

The Nigerian youth, in exercising his/her constitutional rights should continue to engage government on the need to ensure the speedy passage of the Climate Change Bill, which has been introduced to the National Assembly since the Fourth Republic. The immediate passage of this bill will help articulate, channel appropriate resources and coordinate climate change efforts in Nigeria under international best practices systems. Furthermore, its passage and subsequent creation of an office, could better inform government and policy-makers on the necessary policies to implement in line with contemporary challenges of climate change in Nigeria. For instance, the adopting and integration into our National Policy documents the provisions of National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action for Climate Change in Nigeria - NASPA –CCN by government would a giant stride towards climate change policy if the Federal Executive Council adopts it in Nigeria.

Based on the contemporary challenges of climate change, some governments all over the world have begun to involve youths more actively and directly in policy advocacy as it concerns climate change. The Nigerian Youth should demand for a ‘Youth Desk Office’ within the Ministry of Environment as well as other sensitive offices concerned with sustainable development. This would further enhance the voice of Nigeria’s future generation and act as the voice of reason towards the cessation of present practices which endanger our environment.

Although the responsibility should not rest solely on the Nigeria government, the Nigerian youth has an enormous part to play in the continual advocacy and awareness of climate change issues. It is recommended that every youth should in no little way, join the struggle

to preserve our environment for our generation and that of other generations to come. For instance, learning from the experiences of the youths mentioned above (specifically the Abuja +20 campaign), Nigerian youths could form or join smaller groups in their current locations to continue the advocacy for climate change in Nigeria. It is expected that with such, groups like Awka+20, Lagos+20, Port Harcourt+20 and Dutse+20, mass mobilizations of Nigerian youths to spur policy action for climate change could be achieved. Apart from creating these groups, such mobilization would conform to the United Nations idea of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) which advocates for the domestication and involvement of local population at country level in plans for sustainable development. The concept can thus be championed by youths in Nigeria. Under this purview, Nigeria youths can engage policy makers and other stakeholders at whatever level viz: local governments, community based organizations etc. in climate change issues and force an attitudinal change. Although, such efforts might be cumbersome as a result of funding and financial constraints, the Nigerian youth could engage private companies to support her efforts as part of their corporate social responsibility.

On the final note, social media has been instrumental in the advocacy of climate change issues in Nigeria. With the advent of smart phones to enhance globalization, the Nigerian youth should understand that there is more to social media than just connecting with friends and loved ones; that in this age of mass mobilization across geographic boundaries, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, Whatsapp, 2go could be used effectively to engage in climate change issues. Presently, over 150,000 youths in Nigeria meet every Wednesday on Twitter (#ClimateWednesday & #BailiffIssues) to discuss on Environmental (climate change) issues and seek further

ways to continue to engage government and other stakeholders on climate change.

CONCLUSION

The World Bank published in 2013 climate change report which identified contemporary trends and vulnerable places of Africa and Asia to these effects. The report projected that 40% of land used today to grow maize in Africa would be lost by 2030. During discussions which culminated into the presentation of this report, the World Bank President in answering questions from youths on climate change contended that today's attempt to eradicate poverty in the world by 2030 could be hindered by climate change trends if necessary action is not taken. Furthermore, he blamed some protests besetting certain countries, which involved young people, on the challenge of climate change induced poverty. Such calls and events further goes to prove the link which exists between climate change and increased poverty in most parts for the world. Consequently, the roles of the youth towards mobilizing and working with policy makers become imperative in order to preserve their future. Nigerian youths are not lagging behind in their efforts to create much awareness on climate change and other environmental issues. This paper calls for more of these efforts as well documents those already carried out.

Nigeria's future depends on the ability of government to address the twin issues of sustainable development and poverty. Adding to this challenge is the number of teeming Nigerian population (of which are mostly young). Youths have to start acting today if they want to protect

tomorrow. Since climate change militates against tomorrow, address it today will be 'smart economics.

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