



Policy Challenges of Climate Change and Adaptation in Northern Nigeria

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Introduction

Northern Nigeria is a region particularly prone to climate change because of its proximity to the desert and increasing industrial and agricultural activities. The presences of sand dunes, massive loss of vegetative ecosystems among other factors are indicators of a changing climate in the region.

The agricultural sector and the economy of the region are highly threatened if the trend continues unabated without the introduction and continuous use of adaptive measures. To promote innovative climate change adaptation strategies, it is important to seek answers to the following questions that have policy implications:

- a) Are there policies that promote climate change adaptation in northern Nigeria?
- b) What problems emanate from the changing climate in the area under study?
- c) How much knowledge do farmers in northern Nigeria possess on climate change?
- d) Are there emerging adaptation measures available to farmers in northern Nigeria?
- e) Where do farmers in northern Nigeria source information on climate change?

The fact that there is an urgent need to formulate, promote and implement policies on climate change adaptation cannot be under estimated. Formulation and implementation of policies on climate change is likely to minimise the negative impacts of the changing climate on farmers. This will also strengthen farmers' awareness on climate change adaptation measures and enhance availability and accessibility of information in the region.

Main Findings

1. Are there policies that promote climate change adaptation in northern Nigeria?

- a) Nigeria has many policies, strategies and plans that can help address general adaptation measures in some climate change vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, water resources, forests and ecosystems, and coastal marine

environment. However, the policy framework is largely undeveloped in the country when we consider its alignment to human development and climate change response efforts through adaptation.

b) The closest to having an acceptable adaptation response framework in Nigeria is a working document on Adaptation Strategies of Action prepared by Henrich Böll Foundation (HBS) for the Special Climate Change Unit (SCCU) of the Federal Ministry of Environment, the Nationally Designated Authority for climate change in Nigeria. But there is no clear indication that the document has been adopted as a national plan of action. There are many climate actors in the country, but there is no platform or framework within which all the actors can operate in a coordinated manner for meaningful impact. A number of ongoing initiatives by different actors remain largely un-coordinated by the nationally designated climate change authority¹.

2. What problems emanate from the changing climate in the area under study?

Diverse problems are associated with the changing climate situation. Findings have shown that increased cost of farm inputs, poor crop yields, increase in pest attack and weed infestation are some of the problems arising due to climate change. Combating these problems will require governments' interest in strengthening the existing research institutions. Research should be ongoing and efforts emanating from these activities should be made available and accessible to farmers.

3. How much knowledge do farmers in northern Nigeria possess on climate change?

As revealed from the research findings, there is a high level of climate change awareness in northern Nigeria. A great proportion, comprising up to 84 per cent of farmers attested to the fact that they were aware of the changing climate. What needs to be addressed is to what extent these farmers really possess knowledge of the effects of climate change.

¹ Refer to the report:
http://www.boellnigeria.org/downloads/Nigeria_Prof_Oladipo_final_CGA_study.pdf.

4. Are there emerging adaptation measures available to farmers in northern Nigeria?

A number of emerging adaptation measures are available to farmers. These include planting of early maturing crops, use of resistant varieties, processing to minimize post harvest losses and use of chemicals such as pesticides and fertilizers. In other words, farmers have a huge capacity for adaptation. However, what they need in terms of adding to their capacity to adapt is infrastructure, funding, and proper planning and also not to completely rely on the predictions that have been made in the past. In line with this, efforts should be geared towards ensuring that new measures for climate change adaptation are generated. This will help to strengthen the indigenous measures.

5. Where do farmers in northern Nigeria source information on climate change?

Information is sourced majorly from the mass media. It is true that the mass media have an advantage of reaching a large audience at a time, but these channels have not been at the fore front of agricultural information dissemination. A reason for this is the commercialization of the mass media channels of information delivery. To overcome this limitation, there is need for partnership between government and NGOs to spear head access to information on climate change.

What Is The Way Forward?

Having identified these areas of policy needs as regards climate change, it is paramount to suggest possible answers to these needs. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) strengthens the international response to climate change, and promotes the Convention's ultimate objective of preventing "dangerous anthropogenic [human-made] interference with the climate system". Hence, it is important that the national body which has the mandate on climate change issues realize the need to enact policies addressing climate change and adaptation and support research institutions towards generation of more innovative ways of adaptation. Also, government and civil society organizations should collaborate on dissemination of appropriate information on climate change (as it regards both problems associated with climate change and promotion of new adaptation measures).

Policy Advocacy Recommendations

- 1) There is need for Nigeria to partner with international agencies that can help build capacities in relevant government agencies at all levels (national, state, local) to strengthen the country's capacity to develop and implement adaptation response strategies and plans that would reduce her vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.
- 2) There is need for government to make concrete efforts to ensure that appropriate policy on climate change adaptations and mitigations are enacted.
- 3) Building adaptive responses to climate change is a gradual process. Efforts should be placed on grounds to ensure that the indigenous people are carried along in the design and formulation of policies on climate change.
- 4) There is need for Nigeria to address a number of policy limitations that have been pointed out in this report. Significant effort needs to be made to develop further policies designed to strengthen Nigeria's climate change adaptation governance.



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