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GOVERNANCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN NIGERIA: FROM PROMISES TO PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is an important governance challenge in Nigeria, with serious implications for livelihoods, agriculture, food security, public health, infrastructure, and sustainable development. Although the country has introduced various climate policies and established relevant institutional frameworks, a considerable gap remains between policy commitments and their implementation. This study examines climate governance in Nigeria, with particular attention to how government commitments are translated into practical outcomes. Guided by Governance Theory, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on the analysis of relevant policies, legislation, government reports, institutional documents, and scholarly literature. The findings indicate that while Nigeria has made progress in establishing a framework for climate action, implementation continues to face challenges arising from weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding, poor coordination, limited accountability, political constraints, and uneven stakeholder participation. The study concludes that effective climate governance requires sustained political commitment, capable institutions, adequate and reliable financing, better coordination, transparency, and meaningful stakeholder involvement. It recommends strengthening institutional capacity and monitoring systems, improving climate financing, promoting cooperation among government and non-governmental actors, and ensuring that climate policies address local needs and conditions. These measures are essential for turning Nigeria's climate commitments into meaningful action and promoting a more resilient and sustainable future.

Keywords: Climate Change, Governance, Political Promise, Policy Implementation,

Introduction

Climate change has moved beyond being an environmental issue to become a major development and governance challenge. In Nigeria, its effects are increasingly reflected in rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, flooding, drought, land degradation, food insecurity, health risks, and damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. These impacts are particularly serious because many communities depend on climate-sensitive activities, especially agriculture, while institutional and financial capacity to respond remains limited (IPCC, 2022; World Bank, 2026). Nigeria's exposure to floods, droughts, coastal hazards, and other climate-related risks further increases the pressure on vulnerable communities and productive sectors (World Bank, 2021). Agriculture is especially vulnerable because a large proportion of farming depends on rainfall. Floods can destroy crops, homes, roads, and other infrastructure, while drought and changing rainfall patterns can reduce agricultural productivity and household incomes. These risks can worsen food insecurity and place additional pressure on already vulnerable rural populations.

The World Bank (2021) observes that the impact of climate-related disasters depends not only on the severity of the hazards but also on the ability of governments and communities to prepare for, respond to, and manage them effectively. Nigeria has responded by developing a range of climate policies and institutional arrangements. The country is a party to major international climate agreements and has adopted measures such as the Climate Change Act 2021, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the Energy Transition Plan. These initiatives demonstrate a growing commitment to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. However, the World Bank (2026) notes that achieving Nigeria's climate objectives will require stronger institutions, improved access to climate finance, and greater implementation capacity.

Despite these developments, a significant gap remains between climate-policy commitments and practical outcomes. Weak institutional capacity, inadequate and unpredictable financing, poor coordination, limited accountability, and insufficient climate information can hinder effective implementation. The involvement of federal, state, and local governments, as well as civil society organisations, communities, the private sector, and development partners, also makes coordination essential. Without effective cooperation among these actors, climate policies may remain largely formal commitments rather than producing sustained results (World Bank, 2021; World Bank, 2026).

This paper examines Governance and Climate Change in Nigeria: From Promises to Practice, with particular attention to the factors shaping climate-policy implementation. It focuses on political commitment, institutional capacity, financing, accountability, intergovernmental coordination, and stakeholder participation. The paper argues that Nigeria's climate challenge is no longer primarily about developing policies, but about ensuring that existing commitments are properly financed, coordinated, implemented, monitored, and translated into measurable outcomes. Strengthening these aspects of governance is essential for advancing sustainable and climate-resilient development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Climate Change

Climate change refers to long-term changes in the average conditions and variability of the climate system. Although natural processes have always influenced the Earth's climate, current warming is largely driven by human activities that have increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. The IPCC (2021) confirms that human activities have unequivocally warmed the atmosphere, oceans, and land and have contributed to changes in several climate extremes. Climate change, however, is not limited to rising temperatures; it also

affects rainfall, water resources, agriculture, ecosystems, public health, infrastructure, livelihoods, and economic activities. Its effects vary across communities because vulnerability is shaped by factors such as exposure, poverty, infrastructure, institutional capacity, and access to resources. Climate change is therefore increasingly viewed as both an environmental and governance issue. Acoording to The IPCC (2021), human-induced climate change is already affecting climate and weather extremes, while the ability to manage these risks depends partly on the capacity of societies and institutions. This is particularly important in Nigeria, where many livelihoods depend on climate-sensitive sectors, especially agriculture. For this study, climate change refers to long-term changes in climatic conditions, largely caused by human activities, with consequences for environmental, social, economic, and institutional systems**.**

Governance

Governance extends beyond the formal institutions of government. It refers to the processes through which decisions are made, policies are implemented, resources are managed, and relationships are maintained among government and non-state actors. These actors include public institutions, civil society organisations, communities, businesses, development partners, and citizens. Effective governance therefore involves institutional capacity, accountability, transparency, participation, coordination, and collaboration. The OECD (2020) identifies political commitment and leadership, evidence-based policymaking, whole-of-government coordination, and institutional capacity as important elements of effective public governance. It also emphasises the importance of translating policy decisions into action and using monitoring systems to identify problems and improve implementation. These principles are particularly relevant to climate change because climate action involves several sectors, institutions, and levels of government.

Climate governance can therefore be understood as the rules, institutions, processes, and relationships through which decisions on climate mitigation, adaptation, financing, risk management, and resilience are made and implemented. In Nigeria, this involves federal, state, and local institutions as well as non-state actors. Although the country has established climate policies and institutional arrangements, challenges relating to coordination, capacity, financing, accountability, and monitoring can limit their effectiveness. Accordingly, this study defines governance as the process through which state and non-state actors participate in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of climate policies and programmes**.**

Political Promises

Political promises are commitments made by political leaders or governments regarding policies, programmes, reforms, or development objectives. They may emerge from election campaigns, policy statements, legislative processes, national plans, or international negotiations. Such commitments indicate government priorities and create expectations about intended actions. However, a political commitment is different from implementation. A promise expresses an intention, whereas implementation requires clear responsibilities, adequate financing, institutional arrangements, administrative action, and monitoring. The OECD (2020) notes that sustained political commitment and leadership are important for successful policy implementation but must be supported by effective coordination, adequate resources, capable institutions, and monitoring. Nigeria's climate commitments are reflected in its participation in international climate agreements, Nationally Determined Contributions, the Climate Change Act 2021, and other national initiatives. While these demonstrate formal commitment to addressing climate change, their significance ultimately depends on whether they are followed by concrete action. For this study, political promises refer to formal or publicly expressed commitments by

political authorities to pursue specific climate-related policies, programmes, or outcomes. The focus is therefore not simply on the existence of such commitments but on whether they lead to meaningful action.

Policy Implementation

Policy implementation is the process of translating approved policies, laws, programmes, and government decisions into practical actions and outcomes. It is the stage at which policy objectives are converted into programmes, projects, regulations, services, and other forms of public action. A policy may be formally adopted but achieve little if the institutions responsible for implementation lack adequate funding, technical capacity, political support, coordination, or clearly defined responsibilities. The OECD (2020) similarly observes that even well-designed policies can fail when government systems lack the capacity to translate decisions into effective action. This distinction highlights the difference between policy adoption and policy effectiveness. Adoption means that a policy has been formally approved, while effectiveness concerns what the policy actually achieves.

In climate governance, implementation may include adaptation programmes, renewable-energy initiatives, climate-resilient infrastructure, ecosystem restoration, disaster-risk reduction, environmental regulation, public awareness, and climate-finance management. Successful implementation requires adequate resources, institutional capacity, technical expertise, coordination, reliable information, stakeholder participation, and continuous monitoring. The OECD (2020) emphasises that monitoring enables governments to assess progress, identify barriers, and adjust policies where necessary. Therefore, policy implementation is understood in this study as the process of translating climate policies and political commitments into concrete programmes, institutional actions, resources, and measurable outcomes**.**

Conceptual Linkage: From Promises to Practice

The four concepts are closely connected. Climate change creates environmental and developmental challenges that require collective responses. Governance provides the institutional framework for addressing these challenges, political promises establish priorities and commitments, and policy implementation determines whether those commitments produce tangible results. The relationship can be summarised as:

Climate Change → Governance Response → Political Commitments → Policy Implementation → Practical Outcomes

The critical issue is the gap that may occur between these stages. Governments may recognise climate risks but fail to develop adequate policies; policies may be adopted without sufficient resources or institutional support; or ambitious commitments may be made without effective coordination, monitoring, and accountability. The OECD (2020) therefore stresses that political commitment, coordination, resources, institutional capacity, and monitoring are essential for translating policy decisions into effective action. This relationship provides the conceptual basis for examining whether Nigeria has succeeded in moving from climate promises to practical outcomes.

Background of Climate Change Policy in Nigeria

Nigeria's climate change policy has developed progressively as environmental problems have become more prominent and the country has assumed greater responsibilities under international environmental and climate agreements. In the earlier years after independence, national development priorities were largely focused on economic growth, industrialisation, oil production, and urban development. Environmental concerns were consequently addressed mainly through broader environmental management measures rather than through a dedicated

climate policy framework. Over time, however, growing concerns about environmental degradation, flooding, drought, desertification, and other climate-related risks encouraged Nigeria to strengthen its environmental institutions and develop more specific climate policies. The country's policy trajectory therefore reflects a gradual movement from general environmental protection towards a more comprehensive framework for climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development.

Early Environmental Awareness and International Engagement (1970s–1990s)

Nigeria's involvement in environmental governance developed alongside the emergence of international environmental concerns during the 1970s and 1980s. At this stage, environmental protection was not yet a major component of national development planning, as economic policy was strongly influenced by oil production, industrialisation, and rapid urban growth. Nevertheless, increasing awareness of environmental degradation gradually encouraged Nigeria to participate in international environmental initiatives. Nigeria's participation in international environmental governance became more visible with its accession to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer in 1988. Its involvement in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 further strengthened its engagement with international environmental governance. Nigeria also became a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994, thereby formally becoming part of the emerging international climate regime. These developments were important because they established an international policy context within which Nigeria would subsequently develop its own environmental and climate-related policies. They also marked a gradual recognition that environmental problems were not merely domestic concerns but required cooperation among states and international institutions.

National Environmental Policy Development and Institutional Reforms (1990s–2000s)

Nigeria's domestic environmental policy framework also developed during this period. The country introduced its National Policy on the Environment in 1989, which was subsequently revised in 1999. The policy provided a broad framework for environmental management and sought to integrate environmental considerations into national development activities. The later policy framework emphasised sustainable development and the need to incorporate environmental concerns into economic and development decision-making (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The current National Policy on the Environment also recognises the importance of integrating environmental considerations into major economic decisions and development activities. Another important development was Nigeria's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. Nigeria began developing its biodiversity strategy in the 1990s, with the plan focusing on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the integration of biodiversity concerns into national policy and decision-making (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Although these early environmental policies were not designed exclusively as climate-change instruments, they created an institutional and policy foundation upon which later climate adaptation and mitigation measures could be developed. In this sense, the early environmental framework represents an important stage in the evolution of Nigeria's contemporary climate governance system.

Expansion of Climate Governance and International Commitments (2000s–2010s)

During the 2000s, climate change became increasingly prominent in Nigeria's environmental and development agenda. Attention gradually shifted from general environmental protection towards adaptation, mitigation, vulnerability reduction, and climate-resilient development. This period also saw greater involvement of government institutions, researchers,

civil society organisations, development partners, and other stakeholders in climate-related policy processes. One important development was the preparation of the National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN). The strategy provided a framework for strengthening Nigeria's ability to respond to climate risks and identified sectors and communities requiring adaptation measures. Its emphasis on adaptation reflected the growing recognition that Nigeria's climate policy needed to address not only greenhouse-gas emissions but also the country's vulnerability to climate impacts. Nigeria's international commitments were further strengthened through its participation in the Paris climate regime. The country submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), setting out proposed mitigation and adaptation measures within the broader context of sustainable development. Nigeria subsequently submitted an updated NDC, which remains recorded in the UNFCCC's NDC registry. The development of the NDC framework was significant because it linked Nigeria's domestic climate policies to measurable international commitments. It also shifted attention towards the practical question of how national climate objectives could be financed, coordinated, monitored, and implemented.

Contemporary Climate Governance and Legislative Reforms (2010s–Present)

Nigeria's climate policy framework has become more comprehensive in recent years. A major milestone was the development of the National Climate Change Policy for Nigeria, published in 2021. The policy provides a national framework covering mitigation, adaptation, and cross-cutting climate issues across priority sectors. The enactment of the Climate Change Act 2021 represented an even more significant development because climate governance moved from primarily policy-based commitments towards a statutory framework. The Act provides for the mainstreaming of climate action into national development, coordination of climate-change responses, mobilisation of financial and other resources, and the establishment of the National Council on Climate Change. It also provides for monitoring, public engagement, carbon budgeting, and the development of national climate action plans.

The significance of the Act lies not simply in the creation of another climate institution but in its attempt to establish a legal basis for coordinating climate action across government and integrating climate considerations into national development planning. In principle, this provides a stronger foundation for moving from broad political commitments to more structured implementation. Nevertheless, the existence of a comprehensive legal and policy framework does not automatically guarantee effective results. Recent scholarly and policy discussions continue to identify challenges involving institutional capacity, financing, coordination, enforcement, and political commitment. For example, Olujobi (2024) argues that weaknesses in enforcement and limited political will can constrain the effectiveness of Nigeria's climate legislation. These concerns are particularly relevant to this study because they illustrate the difference between establishing climate policies and achieving their intended outcomes.

Stakeholder Participation and Multi-Level Climate Governance

Climate governance in Nigeria involves more than federal government institutions. State and local governments, civil society organisations, universities and research institutions, private-sector organisations, development partners, and local communities all have roles to play in responding to climate change. The Climate Change Act itself recognises the importance of public engagement and provides for mechanisms through which members of the public can contribute to achieving national climate objectives. The federal structure of Nigeria also makes coordination across different levels of government particularly important. Many climate-related challenges are experienced locally, even though major policies and financial decisions are often

made at the national level. Effective climate governance therefore requires mechanisms through which national commitments can be translated into programmes and interventions at state and local levels. However, differences in institutional capacity, financial resources, technical expertise, and administrative arrangements can affect the ability of subnational governments and local institutions to implement climate policies. The participation of communities and other non-state actors is consequently important not only for policy legitimacy but also for ensuring that interventions reflect local environmental conditions and livelihood needs.

From Policy Promises to Practice

The history of climate policy in Nigeria shows a gradual expansion from broad environmental protection to a more specialised and legally supported climate governance framework. Nigeria has participated in major international environmental and climate agreements, developed environmental and biodiversity policies, adopted adaptation and mitigation strategies, submitted Nationally Determined Contributions, introduced a national climate policy, and enacted the Climate Change Act 2021. These developments demonstrate a considerable degree of formal commitment to addressing climate change. The more difficult issue, however, is whether these commitments have consistently translated into effective implementation. The gap between policy formulation and practical results can arise from inadequate financing, weak institutional capacity, poor coordination, limited technical expertise, weak monitoring, and insufficient enforcement. This distinction is central to understanding Nigeria's climate governance because the existence of policies and laws is only the first step; their effectiveness ultimately depends on how well they are implemented.

Nigeria's climate policy development can therefore be understood as a transition from environmental awareness to policy formulation, from policy formulation to legal commitment, and from legal commitment to the continuing challenge of implementation. Addressing the implementation gap requires sustained political commitment, stronger institutions, predictable climate finance, and effective coordination across levels of government, transparent monitoring, and meaningful participation by communities and other stakeholders. These issues provide the foundation for examining the central concern of this study whether Nigeria is successfully moving from climate-related promises to practical action and measurable outcomes.

Empirical Review

Climate Change Governance Framework in Nigeria: Climate change has increasingly become a governance concern in Nigeria because of its effects on agriculture, food security, livelihoods, public health, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. In response, the Nigerian government has developed a range of policies, strategies, institutional arrangements, and action plans aimed at strengthening climate governance and meeting the country's international commitments (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011, 2012, 2021). However, the available evidence suggests that the main difficulty is not the absence of policy frameworks but the challenge of implementing them effectively. Institutional limitations, inadequate funding, weak coordination, and limited technical capacity continue to affect the delivery of climate-related interventions (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2021; Olujobi, 2024). This suggests that the success of climate governance depends largely on the ability to translate policy intentions into concrete and sustained actions.

National Climate Change Policy: Nigeria's climate policy framework has developed through a number of successive initiatives. The National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy (NCCPRS), issued in 2012, provided an early national framework for addressing climate change, particularly through mitigation and adaptation measures (Federal Ministry of

Environment, 2012). This framework was later strengthened by the National Climate Change Policy: Revised Edition 2021–2030, which provides a broader approach to climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience, low-carbon development, institutional coordination, and stakeholder participation (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2021). Despite these policy developments, the existence of a comprehensive framework has not automatically resulted in effective implementation. The revised policy itself identifies institutional capacity, financing, coordination, monitoring, and accountability as important considerations for achieving its objectives (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2021). Similarly, Olujobi (2024) observes that weaknesses in enforcement and limited political commitment can undermine the effectiveness of Nigeria's climate legislation. These findings indicate that successful climate governance requires more than sound policy formulation; it also depends on institutional capacity and sustained commitment to implementation.

National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP): The National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) was developed to provide practical direction for implementing Nigeria's climate policy objectives. It covers major areas such as agriculture, energy, water resources, forestry, waste management, and disaster-risk reduction and emphasises the integration of climate considerations into sectoral planning and government activities (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2014). The NCCAP experience also highlights the difficulties associated with moving from policy planning to implementation. Financial constraints, limited institutional capacity, inadequate monitoring, and weak coordination can affect the ability of responsible institutions to implement planned programmes effectively (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2014, 2021). Thus, the Action Plan demonstrates that having clearly defined climate objectives is only one part of the policy process. Effective implementation requires adequate resources, capable institutions, clear responsibilities, coordination, and continuous monitoring.

National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change (NASPA-CCN): The National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN) was developed in 2011 to strengthen the country's capacity to respond to climate risks across sectors such as agriculture, water resources, health, forestry, biodiversity, energy, transportation, and livelihoods (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011). Its development involved government institutions, researchers, civil society organisations, private-sector actors, and communities. An assessment of 120 stakeholders found that 52.5% rated the policy-development process as very good, while 90% identified its evidence-based approach as important (Evidence-Based Policy Development, n.d.). However, effective implementation still depends on adequate funding, institutional capacity, coordination, technical expertise, and monitoring (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011, 2021). NASPA-CCN therefore demonstrates both progress in climate-policy development and the continuing challenge of translating policy commitments into practical action.

Empirical Implication for the Present Study

The reviewed evidence indicates that policy development in Nigeria has progressed faster than implementation. Although the country has established climate policies, adaptation strategies, action plans, and legislative frameworks, financing constraints, institutional weaknesses, poor coordination, enforcement difficulties, and limited political commitment continue to affect implementation (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011, 2014, 2021; Olujobi, 2024). Evidence from NASPA-CCN also shows that stakeholder participation and evidence-based policymaking can strengthen policy development, but these must be supported by adequate implementation capacity (Evidence-Based Policy Development, n.d.). This provides the basis for

the present study, "Governance and Climate Change in Nigeria: From Promises to Practice." The study focuses on whether Nigeria's climate commitments are being translated into sustained action and measurable outcomes, particularly through political commitment, institutional capacity, financing, coordination, accountability, monitoring, and stakeholder participation.

Institutional Framework for Climate Governance

Nigeria's climate governance system operates across federal, state, and local levels, reflecting the country's federal political structure. This arrangement provides opportunities for shared responsibility, but coordination among institutions remains a major challenge. Ajayi (2022) found that, before the establishment of the National Council on Climate Change, climate responsibilities were spread across several institutions, resulting in overlapping functions, inter-agency rivalry, and weak coordination.

Federal Ministry of Environment: the Federal Ministry of Environment (FME) has traditionally played a central role in Nigeria's environmental and climate policy. Its responsibilities include environmental policy development, coordination of climate-related programmes, and engagement with international climate processes. However, the effectiveness of this institutional arrangement has been affected by overlapping mandates and difficulties in coordinating climate-related responsibilities across government institutions (Ajayi, 2022).

National Council on Climate Change: The establishment of the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC) under the Climate Change Act 2021 represented an important step towards strengthening institutional coordination. The Council was established as the highest coordinating body for climate change matters and is intended to improve the integration of climate action into national development. Ajayi (2022) argues that the creation of the Council provides an opportunity to address some of the institutional fragmentation that existed under the earlier arrangement. Nevertheless, the establishment of a central coordinating institution does not, by itself, resolve implementation problems. Effective climate governance still requires clear institutional responsibilities, adequate resources, effective coordination, and cooperation among government agencies and other stakeholders.

State-Level Climate Institutions: State governments are particularly important because many climate-sensitive activities, including agriculture, water management, land use, waste management, infrastructure, and disaster response, require action at the subnational level. However, evidence shows considerable differences in climate-policy development and institutional preparedness among Nigeria's states. A nationwide assessment by Okereke et al. (2025), based on a survey of 1,306 respondents, document and budget reviews, and stakeholder consultations, found that only seven states and the Federal Capital Territory had publicly accessible climate-policy documents. The study also found that fewer than 20% of states had climate-related budget lines, while coordination and alignment with national climate frameworks remained weak. These findings provide concrete evidence that limited institutional preparedness and financing remain important barriers to subnational climate action. More recent evidence indicates some improvement. The 2026 Subnational Climate Governance Performance Rating and Ranking reported that 23 states included climate-related projects in their 2025 appropriation laws, compared with fewer states in the previous assessment. However, only Lagos and Katsina had implemented green bonds, indicating that significant differences remain in the capacity and commitment of states to finance climate action (Society for Planet and Prosperity, 2026).

Local Governments and Community-Level Governance: Local governments and communities are important to climate governance because many climate impacts are experienced directly at the grassroots level. Their involvement is particularly relevant to adaptation, disaster

preparedness, environmental awareness, agriculture, and community resilience. However, effective local action depends on adequate resources, technical capacity, and coordination with state and federal institutions. The evidence from Nigeria's subnational climate assessment shows that climate governance remains fragmented and that national commitments have not yet been fully translated into effective state-level action (Okereke et al., 2025). This highlights the importance of strengthening vertical coordination so that national climate policies can be effectively implemented within local communities.

Institutional Implications for Climate Policy Implementation: So, Nigeria has developed a broader institutional framework for climate governance, particularly following the establishment of the NCCC. However, the evidence suggests that institutional development has not always translated into effective implementation. Overlapping responsibilities, weak coordination, limited institutional capacity, inadequate financing, and uneven commitment at the state level continue to affect climate action (Ajayi, 2022; Okereke et al., 2025). The finding that fewer than 20% of states had climate-related budget lines is particularly important because it demonstrates the financial gap between climate commitments and implementation (Okereke et al., 2025). Strengthening Nigeria's climate governance therefore requires clearer institutional mandates, stronger federal–state coordination, predictable financing, improved technical capacity, transparent monitoring, and greater involvement of communities and other non-state actors.

Stakeholder Engagement in Climate Governance

Effective climate governance requires the participation of government institutions, civil society organisations, research institutions, development partners, local communities, and the private sector. In Nigeria, stakeholder engagement has become increasingly important in climate-policy development because it can improve the relevance, legitimacy, and acceptance of climate interventions. The development of the National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change for Nigeria (NASPA-CCN) provides a useful example. The process involved government agencies, researchers, civil society organisations, private-sector representatives, and communities, thereby encouraging the use of evidence and diverse perspectives in adaptation planning (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011; *Evidence-Based Policy Development*, n.d.).

Civil society organisations contribute through public awareness, environmental advocacy, policy monitoring, and community mobilisation. Research institutions and development partners also provide technical expertise, climate information, and financial support that can strengthen policy formulation and implementation. However, participation is more meaningful when stakeholders have opportunities to influence decisions rather than being involved only in occasional consultations. The private sector is equally relevant to Nigeria's climate response through investment in renewable energy, climate-smart technologies, sustainable infrastructure, and other low-carbon activities. The growing attention to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices provides further opportunities for businesses to support national climate objectives. However, effective private-sector participation requires clear regulations, appropriate incentives, access to finance, and consistent government policies.

Hence, stakeholder engagement can strengthen climate governance by combining knowledge, resources, and local experience. Nevertheless, participation alone cannot guarantee successful climate action. It must be supported by transparent decision-making, clear institutional responsibilities, adequate resources, and mechanisms for incorporating stakeholder contributions into implementation. For Nigeria, this is particularly important because the central

challenge is increasingly how to translate climate commitments into coordinated, inclusive, and measurable action.

Analysis of the Gap between Promises and Practices

Despite Nigeria's formal commitment to climate action through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and domestic instruments such as the National Climate Change Policy, NASPA-CCN, and the Climate Change Act 2021, a considerable gap remains between policy commitments and actual implementation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015). The challenge is therefore not primarily the absence of policies, but the capacity of institutions to translate them into sustained programmes and measurable outcomes.

Institutional and Coordination Challenges: Weak institutional capacity remains a major constraint on implementation. Climate responsibilities are distributed among several ministries, departments, and agencies, including the Federal Ministry of Environment, NESREA, the National Council on Climate Change, and state environmental institutions. Overlapping responsibilities, limited coordination, inadequate technical capacity, and shortages of operational resources can create delays and reduce implementation efficiency (Akinyemi et al., 2020; Bamiro & Oduyoye, 2021). This suggests that establishing climate institutions is insufficient unless their mandates are clearly defined and supported by effective coordination mechanisms.

Financing Constraints: Limited and unpredictable funding remains a major challenge to turning Nigeria's climate commitments into effective action. Adaptation and mitigation programmes require sustained investment in infrastructure, technology, research, and community-based interventions. However, limited domestic financing and difficulties in accessing international climate funds can restrict implementation. The Carbon Trust (2021) reported that climate-related expenditure represented less than one per cent of Nigeria's annual budget, illustrating the scale of the financing challenge. Although mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility provide opportunities for external support, institutional and administrative difficulties can limit Nigeria's ability to access and effectively utilise available resources (Ezinwa, 2023).

Governance, Accountability and Policy Continuity: Governance weaknesses also affect the implementation of climate policies. Concerns about corruption, weak accountability, poor monitoring, and discontinuity in government programmes can reduce the effectiveness of public interventions (Transparency International, 2020). Changes in political leadership may also alter policy priorities, resulting in delays or interruptions in ongoing climate programmes (Adelekan et al., 2022). Moreover, climate action often competes with urgent national concerns such as poverty, insecurity, unemployment, and economic instability, which can reduce the political attention and resources devoted to climate-related programmes.

Public Awareness and Stakeholder Participation: Limited public awareness and participation further widen the gap between climate commitments and implementation. This is particularly important for rural and vulnerable communities that experience climate impacts directly. The Nigerian Urban Reproductive Health Initiative reported relatively low levels of public awareness of government climate programmes, suggesting a need for stronger climate communication and community engagement (NURHI, 2022). Civil society organisations, women, youth, traditional institutions, local communities, and private-sector actors can contribute to climate action, but their participation needs to move beyond consultation towards meaningful involvement in planning, implementation, and monitoring.

Implication for Climate Governance in Nigeria: Generally, the evidence indicates that Nigeria's climate governance challenge lies largely in the **implementation gap** between formal commitments and practical outcomes. Institutional weaknesses, inadequate financing, poor coordination, accountability concerns, policy discontinuity, and limited stakeholder participation can prevent well-designed policies from producing their intended results. Bridging this gap requires stronger institutional capacity, predictable climate financing, clearer responsibilities, effective monitoring, greater transparency, and meaningful participation across levels of government and society.

Case Studies Illustrating the Gap between Promises and Practices

Specific examples from Nigeria's environmental and climate programmes demonstrate the difficulties involved in turning policy commitments into tangible results. The Ogoniland clean-up, renewable-energy development, and flood-risk management provides useful examples from different areas of environmental governance.

Ogoniland Clean-up Programme: The **Ogoniland Clean-up Programme** followed the 2011 assessment by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which documented extensive oil pollution and recommended comprehensive environmental remediation. The Nigerian government subsequently established the **Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP)** to coordinate the clean-up. However, implementation has progressed slowly. Amnesty International reported in 2020 that only a small proportion of the identified sites had entered remediation and that concerns remained regarding access to clean water, environmental monitoring, transparency, and community participation (Amnesty International, 2020).

Renewable Energy Development: Renewable energy represents another area where Nigeria has made significant policy commitments but continues to face implementation challenges. Acoording to International Renewable Energy Agency, 2023 identifies substantial potential for expanding renewable energy in Nigeria, particularly solar power, but notes that achieving this potential will require stronger policy coordination, regulatory support, and increased investment (IRENA, 2023). IRENA estimates that renewable energy could meet about 47% of Nigeria's primary energy demand by 2030 and 57% by 2050 under an accelerated transition scenario. These projections demonstrate the potential of renewable energy while also highlighting the scale of investment and policy action required to realise it.

Flood-Risk Management and Climate Adaptation Flooding: Provides a further illustration of the challenges facing climate adaptation in Nigeria. The 2022 floods affected more than 2.4 million people, damaged over 910,000 hectares of farmland, and caused estimated losses of about US$1.84 billion. The scale of these impacts exposed continuing weaknesses in flood-risk management, infrastructure, preparedness, and coordination (World Bank, 2024). At the same time, initiatives such as the Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP) demonstrate that progress is possible. The project promoted watershed management, erosion control, community participation, and climate-resilience measures across several states (World Bank, 2022). Thus, Nigeria's experience suggests that successful climate adaptation requires sustained investment, effective planning, institutional coordination, and strong community involvement.

Taken together, these cases show that Nigeria has made important commitments to environmental restoration, renewable energy, and climate resilience. However**,** policy commitment alone does not guarantee effective implementation Financing constraints, institutional weaknesses, coordination problems, limited infrastructure, and difficulties in

sustaining programmes can reduce the impact of otherwise well-designed policies. The cases however should not be interpreted as evidence that all Nigerian climate programmes have failed. Rather, they illustrate a continuing gap between policy commitments and practical delivery. Closing this gap requires stronger institutions, predictable financing, effective monitoring, policy continuity, improved coordination, and meaningful participation by affected communities.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Governance Theory, which provides a useful basis for examining how government institutions, non-state actors, and institutional processes influence public policy formulation and implementation. The theory goes beyond the traditional understanding of governance as the sole responsibility of the state and emphasises interaction and shared responsibility among government, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders. Kooiman (1993) explains governance in terms of interactions between government and society, particularly where public and private actors work together to address complex social problems. Rosenau (1997) similarly presents governance as extending beyond formal government structures to include different actors and networks involved in addressing complex problems. The theory is relevant to climate change because climate-related problems cannot be effectively addressed by government alone. In Nigeria, climate action requires cooperation among federal, state, and local governments, civil society organisations, research institutions, development partners, private-sector organisations, and local communities.

From this perspective, problems such as weak coordination, inadequate financing, limited technical capacity, and poor accountability can prevent climate policies from producing their intended results. Governance Theory therefore helps explain the difference between the existence of climate policies and their actual implementation**.** The theory also draws attention to institutional capacity, stakeholder participation, coordination, accountability, and shared responsibility. These elements are particularly important in Nigeria, where climate-related responsibilities are distributed among different institutions and levels of government. Effective governance consequently depends on the ability of these actors to coordinate their activities, share information and resources, and remain accountable for agreed policy commitments. Kooiman's emphasis on government–society interaction is particularly useful for understanding this collaborative dimension of climate governance.

Governance Theory provides the analytical framework for examining the gap between Nigeria's climate commitments and their implementation. Institutional coordination refers to the extent to which government agencies and different levels of government work together in implementing climate policies. Institutional capacity concerns the availability of financial resources, technical expertise, administrative structures, and personnel required to implement climate programmes. Stakeholder participation focuses on the involvement of communities, civil society, researchers, development partners, and private organisations in climate-policy processes. Accountability and transparency relate to how government institutions report, monitor, and take responsibility for their climate commitments.

These concepts provide a direct link between the theory and the issues examined in this study. For instance, overlapping responsibilities and weak inter-agency collaboration indicate problems of institutional coordination, while inadequate funding and technical expertise reflect limitations in institutional capacity. Similarly, inadequate involvement of communities and other non-state actors points to weaknesses in participatory governance, whereas poor monitoring and enforcement raise concerns about accountability. Thus, Governance Theory supports the argument that effective climate action depends not only on formulating appropriate policies but

also on the capacity of institutions and stakeholders to work together, mobilise resources, maintain accountability, and sustain implementation. It is therefore appropriate for analysing Nigeria's continuing effort to move from climate-policy commitments to practical and measurable outcomes.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative documentary research design based on secondary sources, including government policies, legislation, institutional reports, international publications, and peer-reviewed studies. Sources were selected according to their relevance, credibility, regency, and verifiability, with particular attention to climate governance, policy implementation, financing, institutional capacity, and stakeholder participation in Nigeria. The selected documents were analysed thematically to identify recurring issues such as institutional coordination, political commitment, financing, accountability, monitoring, and policy implementation (Bowen, 2009). Information from different sources was cross-checked to improve the reliability of the analysis. As the study relied solely on publicly available documents, it did not involve human participants; its findings are therefore limited to the evidence contained in the sources reviewed.

Findings

The review shows that Nigeria has made substantial progress in establishing a formal climate-governance framework through the Climate Change Act 2021, National Climate Change Policy, NASPA-CCN, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). However, the existence of these frameworks has not always translated into effective implementation (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011, 2021; Olujobi, 2024). A major finding is that institutional and coordination weaknesses continue to hinder implementation. Recent evidence from all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory shows limited climate-policy development, weak inter-agency coordination, and low climate awareness among subnational officials. Only seven states and the FCT had publicly accessible climate-policy documents, while fewer than 20% of states had climate-related budget lines (Okereke et al., 2025).

Inadequate financing and limited technical capacity also constrain climate action. Without predictable resources and skilled personnel, states and local institutions may struggle to implement national climate commitments effectively. These challenges are compounded by weaknesses in monitoring, enforcement, and accountability. Olujobi (2024) similarly identifies weak enforcement and limited political will as important obstacles to the effective implementation of Nigeria's Climate Change Act. The findings further indicate that stakeholder participation remains important but uneven. Although Nigeria's climate-policy processes recognise the roles of communities, civil society, researchers, and other stakeholders, meaningful participation must be supported by adequate institutional and financial resources to influence implementation outcomes (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2011).

Therefore, the evidence suggests that Nigeria's principal climate-governance challenge is not the absence of policies, but the difficulty of turning policy commitments into sustained and measurable action. Strengthening institutional capacity, improving coordination, ensuring predictable financing, enhancing accountability, and increasing stakeholder participation are therefore essential to narrowing the gap between climate commitments and implementation (Okereke et al., 2025; Olujobi, 2024).

Conclusion

Climate change governance in Nigeria has advanced through the development of policies, legislation, and institutional frameworks. However, the evidence reviewed shows that

these formal commitments have not always translated into effective action. Persistent challenges involving institutional capacity, financing, coordination, and accountability continue to limit implementation. This study contributes to the understanding of Nigeria's climate-governance challenges by showing that the implementation gap remains more significant than the absence of climate policies. Consistent with Governance Theory, effective climate action depends on strong institutions, cooperation among relevant actors, adequate resources, and accountability. The study therefore recommends stronger institutional coordination, more reliable climate financing, effective monitoring, and meaningful stakeholder participation. Ultimately, Nigeria's climate commitments will be meaningful only when they are translated into consistent actions and measurable improvements in climate resilience and sustainable development.

Recommendations

In line with the findings, the following were recommended:

1. ased on the findings, Nigeria should prioritise closing the gap between climate-policy commitments and implementation. The National Council on Climate Change (NCCC) should be strengthened to improve coordination and clarify the responsibilities of federal, state, and local institutions, particularly given the weak subnational coordination and limited climate-policy development.
2. States should also be supported to develop and publicly disclose climate policies and action plans, with dedicated climate-budget lines to ensure that commitments are matched with resources. This is especially important because only seven states and the FCT had publicly accessible climate-policy documents, while fewer than 20% of states had climate-related budget lines.
3. Government should further strengthen monitoring, enforcement, and accountability mechanisms and provide continuous technical training to subnational officials, as low climate awareness, weak institutional capacity, and inadequate enforcement continue to constrain implementation.
4. Meaningful participation by communities, civil society organisations, researchers, women, and youth should also be encouraged, consistent with the National Climate Change Policy's emphasis on multi-stakeholder engagement and capacity building.
5. Finally, government should provide predictable domestic climate financing and protect climate programmes from political discontinuity.

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