



ISSUE BRIEF

April 2026

Climate Change, Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

*Dr. Ganiyu Ejalonibu,
Chidinma Charity Ezenwajobi & Naptali Amana*

Executive Summary

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing environmental and developmental challenges facing Nigeria. Rising temperatures, increased frequency of extreme weather events, flooding, desertification, and coastal erosion are already affecting livelihoods, agriculture, infrastructure, and public health. As Africa's most populous country and one of its largest economies, Nigeria is particularly vulnerable to climate-related shocks due to its heavy reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and natural resources. Recent climate events highlight the severity of the crisis. In 2022, severe flooding affected over 4.4 million people across Nigeria, displaced about 2.4 million individuals, and caused economic losses estimated at over \$6.8 billion (World Bank, 2023). The floods also destroyed more than 440,000 hectares of farmland, worsening food insecurity (National Emergency Management Agency [NEMA], 2023).

Despite Nigeria's commitments under international frameworks such as the Paris Agreement, the country continues to face governance and institutional challenges in implementing effective climate policies. Weak coordination among government agencies, limited climate financing, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient integration of climate considerations into development planning have hindered progress. To strengthen climate governance and resilience, the National Assembly and the Federal Government may consider the implementation of comprehensive policy reforms. The National Assembly may wish to:

- Mandate the development of a comprehensive national climate adaptation strategy integrated into development planning.
- Strengthen oversight on activities of National Climate Change Council to coordinate climate governance across government institutions.
- Strengthen budgetary allocations to investments in irrigation, drought-resistant crops, and sustainable farming techniques can improve agricultural resilience.
- Urge the Executive to consider mobilising domestic and international funding to support climate adaptation and mitigation projects.
- Mandate stricter enforcement of environmental regulations to combat deforestation and pollution.
- Support and accelerate the development of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower.
- Convene joint hearing where relevant MDAs and other stakeholders will be brought together to review and share opinions on climate resilience initiatives.

1. Introduction

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in global temperatures and weather patterns primarily driven by human activities such as fossil fuel consumption, deforestation, and industrial emissions. Although Africa contributes relatively little to global greenhouse gas emissions, the continent is



among the most vulnerable regions to climate impacts due to limited adaptive capacity and high dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods.

Nigeria faces significant climate risks, including: increasing drought and desertification in the northern regions; frequent flooding in riverine and coastal areas; rising sea levels affecting coastal communities; and declining agricultural productivity. These environmental changes threaten food security, economic stability, and social welfare. Effective governance structures and policy frameworks are therefore critical for addressing climate challenges and ensuring sustainable development.

Consequently, this brief examines the intersection of climate change, governance, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Specifically, it highlights the key environmental risks, governance challenges, and socioeconomic implications, while identifying policy priorities for strengthening climate resilience and promoting sustainable development.

2. Content Analysis

Nigeria's economy relies heavily on sectors that are highly sensitive to climate conditions. Agriculture alone accounts for approximately 31% of Nigeria's GDP and employs over 37% of the labour force (NBS, 2026)¹. Climate disruptions therefore have direct implications for livelihoods, poverty reduction, and national development.

Several environmental challenges illustrate Nigeria's vulnerability:

- i. **Flooding:** Floods are among the most devastating climate-related disasters in Nigeria. The 2022 nationwide floods affected 34 of Nigeria's 36 states, destroying homes, farmlands, and infrastructure (World Bank, 2023)².
- ii. **Desertification:** Northern Nigeria is experiencing severe desert encroachment³. The Nigerian government estimates that about 350,000 hectares of land are lost annually to desertification, particularly in the northern states⁴.
- iii. **Coastal Erosion and Sea-Level Rise:** Coastal states such as Lagos, Bayelsa, and Rivers face increasing risks of coastal flooding and erosion due to rising sea levels. Studies suggest that Lagos could lose significant portions of its coastline if sea levels continue to rise (United Nations Environment Programme, 2022)⁵.

¹ National Bureau of Statistics. (2026). Nigeria Gross Domestic Product Report 2025. NBS. <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>

² World Bank. (2023). Nigeria Country Climate and Development Report. *World Bank Group*. <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/nigeria>

³ United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. (2022). Desert Encroachment Monitoring in North-Eastern Nigeria. UNOOSA. https://www.unoosa.org/documents/pdf/psa/activities/2022/UN-Austria/Mahmoud_Ibrahim_Mahmoud.pdf

⁴ Okeke, C. (2019). Desertification: The most critical environment issue in Northern Nigeria. *Daily Trust NG*. <https://dailytrust.com/desertification-the-most-critical-environment-issue-in-northern-nigeria/>

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. (2022). Climate change impacts on coastal cities in Africa. UNEP. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/cities-and-climate-change>



- iv. Deforestation: Nigeria has one of the highest deforestation rates globally, losing approximately 3.7% of its forest cover annually, which exacerbates climate vulnerability (FAO, 2022)⁶.

These environmental pressures highlight the urgent need for coordinated governance and climate adaptation strategies.

3. Key Issues and Evidence Based Analysis

Climate change poses a significant threat to agricultural productivity in Nigeria. Changing rainfall patterns, droughts, and flooding disrupt crop cycles and reduce yields. Research from the International Food Policy Research Institute 2022⁷, indicates that climate change could reduce Nigeria's agricultural productivity by up to 20% by 2050 if adaptation measures are not implemented. Flooding has already caused significant agricultural losses, particularly in major food-producing regions such as Benue, Kogi, and Niger states.

Extreme weather events are increasingly displacing communities. Floods, droughts, and desertification force rural populations to migrate in search of livelihoods. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that climate-related disasters are a growing driver of internal displacement in Nigeria⁸. Climate-induced migration can exacerbate urban overcrowding, unemployment, and social tensions.

Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer, and the petroleum sector remains central to the national economy. However, global efforts to reduce carbon emissions are accelerating the transition toward renewable energy sources. Climate stress can intensify competition over natural resources such as water and grazing land. In Nigeria, desertification and declining agricultural productivity have contributed to conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in several regions. Environmental degradation therefore has significant implications for national security and social stability.

4. Governance and Policy Gaps

Although Nigeria has adopted several climate policies, implementation challenges remain.

- i. Weak Institutional Coordination: Climate governance responsibilities are distributed across multiple ministries and agencies, often leading to duplication and inefficiencies.
- ii. Limited Climate Financing: Nigeria requires substantial investment to implement climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, but funding remains inadequate.
- iii. Poor Enforcement of Environmental Regulations: Weak enforcement mechanisms allow continued environmental degradation, including illegal logging and pollution.
- iv. Insufficient Integration of Climate Policy into Development Planning: Climate considerations are often not fully integrated into national development strategies, infrastructure planning, or urban policy.

⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization. (2022). Global Forest Resources Assessment. *FAO*. <https://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/en>

⁷ International Food Policy Research Institute. (2022). Climate change and agriculture in Africa. *IFPRI*. <https://www.ifpri.org/event/africa-discussion-ifpris-2022-global-food-policy-report-climate-change-food-systems/>

⁸ International Food Policy Research Institute. (2024). Climate change and agriculture in Africa. *IFPRI*. <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/climate-change-disasters-insecurity-and-displacement-impact-flooding-youth-marginalization-and-human-mobility-nigeria>



5. Socioeconomic Implications

Climate change has far-reaching consequences for Nigeria's economy and society.

- a. Climate-related disasters destroy infrastructure, disrupt agricultural production, and increase economic losses.
- b. Rural communities dependent on agriculture are particularly vulnerable to climate shocks, which can deepen poverty.
- c. Rising temperatures and flooding increase the risk of disease outbreaks such as malaria and cholera.
- d. Climate migration from rural areas to cities contributes to overcrowding, housing shortages, and infrastructure strain.

6. Key Areas for Legislative and Executive Intervention

To strengthen climate governance and resilience, the National Assembly and the Federal Government may consider the implementation of comprehensive policy reforms. The National Assembly may wish to:

- i. Mandate the development of a comprehensive national climate adaptation strategy integrated into development planning.
- ii. Strengthen oversight on activities of National Climate Change Council to coordinate climate governance across government institutions.
- iii. Strengthen budgetary allocations to investments in irrigation, drought-resistant crops, and sustainable farming techniques can improve agricultural resilience.
- iv. Urge the Executive to consider mobilising domestic and international funding to support climate adaptation and mitigation projects.
- v. Mandate stricter enforcement of environmental regulations to combat deforestation and pollution.
- vi. Support and accelerate the development of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower.
- vii. Convene joint hearing where relevant MDAs and other stakeholders will be brought together to review and share opinions on climate resilience initiatives.

7. Conclusion

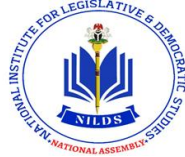
Climate change poses a significant threat to Nigeria's economic development, environmental sustainability, and social stability. Increasing floods, desertification, and environmental degradation demonstrate the urgent need for effective climate governance. Addressing climate challenges requires coordinated policy action, strong institutional frameworks, and sustained investment in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. By strengthening climate governance and integrating environmental sustainability into development planning, Nigeria can build resilience against climate risks while promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Contact

National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies

National Assembly

NILDS Permanent Site, No.2 Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue, Piwoyi District, off Umaru Musa Yar'adua Expressway, Airport Road, Abuja.



E-mail: info@nils.gov.ng

Website: <http://nils.gov.ng>

NILDS Liaison Office

Suite 214 Senate Wing

National Assembly Complex

Mobile: +234 807 364 482.