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## **The Role of Non-Governmental Organization in Formulating Policies on Environmental Laws in Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Environmental issues are of a major concern in most developing nations, Nigeria is inclusive. Many Non-governmental Organizations in Nigeria are interested on how the problems created by environmental issues are ameliorated. The NGOs make sure that legislations and policies are directed towards the preservation of the environment, with a view to achieving sustainable development. A sustainable development generates meaningful progress for the unforeseen circumstances on the environment, therefore there are needs for charitable organization to play pivotal roles in protecting national environments. Recent times in Nigeria, there appeared a series of NGOs who are interest in engaging the government on policy formulation and designs for the betterment of the country. Though these organizations plays significant roles in policy formation, they however lack the political and financial strength to actualize many of their potentials especially at grassroot levels. In some quarters, NGOs are seen as rivals to the government of the day in Nigeria, a good example of such organization is the Socio-Economic Rights And Accountability Project SERAP This organization is the major watch dog on government activities in Nigeria. This misconception has greatly hampered the effectiveness of NGOs in the country. It is the recommendation of this paper that NGOs are to be funded and be allowed to function properly so that they can achieve their goals as partners in progress in the wheel of success rather than a clog in the nation's progress.

**Key Words:** Environment, NGOs, Protection, Conservation.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are charitable organizations that helps a society in achieving certain goals and objectives. Every society need the NGOS to assist in policy formation, policy implementation, policy agenda, formulation of policy proposal and policy process, socio- economic impacts of the policy on any targeted assignment and other factors that could affect the policy on a decision The role of NGOs cannot be swept away in any society without caution, they have become dominant actors in developing concepts, at local and international level for the betterment of societies NGOs also encompasses a huge category of civil society groups and organization globally

NGOs also play supporting roles in civil societies in Nigeria and other parts of the world for the purpose of maintaining uniform standards. They organize resistance to social malady, and also provide alternative solutions to economic, social and political problems of any nation. NGOs activities provides yardstick for social movement, political and economic equilibrium, especially for vulnerable nations.

NGOs had always played vital roles in Nigeria environmental conservation and protection by contributing positively in the development of policies towards environmental laws.

This organization which are at all times charitable had adequately agitated for policies on environmental laws which would be compatible with national growth at all levels of government in Nigeria with global best practices.

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### **THE NGOs**

As the name goes, NGOs are organization run on charity. They are private organizations .They are not out for profit making. They are focus on activities to alleviate sufferings, protect marginalized people, protect the environment by providing basic social services or embodying community empowerment.<sup>1</sup>

In 1995, the World Bank defines NGOs as a private organization that focus on voluntarily services and non-profit making ventures, however, it relies on donations and volunteer services. The World Bank further stressed that since the 1970s more than 15% of all foreign development aid has been contributed

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP 'Awakening civil society' in world resources 2002-2004: Decision for the Earth: Balance, voice and power World resources institute, 2003.

by NGOs in favour of many developing nations including Nigeria. The World Bank added that, there are around 6,000 to 30,000 national NGOs in the developing world, while the population of community organizations in the developing world is estimated at hundreds of thousands.<sup>2</sup>

In many developing countries including Nigeria, there exist clashes between the NGOs and the government. NGOs are seen as watch dogs in government policies formulation system and implementation. Government sees environmental NGOs as intruders instead of companions or advocates in the formulations of policies for sustainable development and equity. There exists numerous clashes between governments and SERAP. An NGOs in Nigeria.

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## HISTORY OF NGOS MOVEMENT

Tracing the history of non-governmental organization, emphasis must be laid on the activities of the Red Cross Society and Caritas, a Non-governmental organization that arose at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Red Cross Society was primarily humanitarian in nature e.g. to save the lives of children and other vulnerables affected by the activities and damages occasioned by the World War I and II.

The decolonization programe of African countries also gave rise to the movement of NGOs, who tend to champion the course of liberating Africans from colonial rules

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## NGOS in Nigeria

In a layman definition, NGO is a process by which some members of a society come together inspire themselves and their institutions in ways that enhances their ability to mobilize and manage resources sustainably to produce sustainable and justify distributed improvements on their quality of life, consistent with their aims and aspirations.<sup>3</sup> It is a process involving community participation in critically identifying and analyzing their needs and problems, setting goals and making their own decisions on sustainable use of available resources to improve their quality of lives, this implies that it is a struggle against oppression and all that make life less human. It is also a process of building communities and alternative structures for the good of humanity, NGOs fights against all impediments to which people's destiny are subjected. It involves a movement from unequal relationships to the democratization of all aspect of lives, and true sefl-reliance. Environmental NGOs are designed mainly to improve on the state of the natural environment and other environmental issues by encouraging the observance of human rights, as well as agitation for implementation of sustainable projects on the environment through collaborative efforts of all and sundry. Peter Willets describe NGOs as:

A Non-Governmental Organization is a Non Commercial Organiation that is designed for non-profit making purposes. and it is a non-political organization. It applies tactic and able to raise fund from their members through voluntary contributions.<sup>4</sup>

NGO Maintains its non-governmental status to ensure that the measure towards mitigating the negative impact of natural and man made disasters are sustained. It has been estimated that by 1914 there were over one hundred NGOs across the country which played important roles in the anti-slavery movement and the movement for women's suffrage. Recent decades in Nigeria witnessed the proliferation of NGOs, this might not be unconnected with the protracted military rule, most of the NGOs then agitated for civil rule and good governance, members consists of volunteers. However, as a result of the activities of the multinational companies in the exploration of Oil in Nigeria, environmental NGOs began to move for the formulation of environmental Policies to adequately protect the environments from adverse degradation.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN NIGERIA

1. The Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) a premier non-governmental organization dedicated to nature conservation and sustainable development in Nigeria, established in 1980 by late Chief S.L. Edu.

The foundation has the following vision:

- To see Nigeria where people prosper while living in harmony with nature.<sup>5</sup> This vision drives its mission to preserve the full range of Nigeria's biodiversity which include species, ecosystem and genetic biodiversity.
  - Promotes sustainable use of natural resources for the benefits of the present and future generation; and advocate actions that minimized pollution and wasteful utilization of renewable resources.
2. The Nigerian Environmental Society (NES) established in 1985 with the following objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank, Working with NGOs A Practical guide to operational collaboration between the World Bank an Non-Governmental Organization operation policy Department Washington, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/non-governmental\\_organization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/non-governmental_organization) accessed 20th May 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Willets "The conscience of the World: the Influence of Non Governmental Organization in the United Nation System available at <http://www.lida.org/> accessed on the 14//2023

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nigeriango.com/blog>. Environmental – NGO in Nigeria. (Accessed 20/5/22).

- Non-profit oriented and non-governmental organization.
  - To serve as watch dog of the environment in Nigeria
  - Environmental protection and sustainability
3. Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Studies. This centre is to serve as non-governmental organization with the following vision.
    - 1) To combat climate change and global warming through research projects on environment.
    - 2) To combat deforestation, erosion, drought, emission of greenhouse gasses, CO<sub>2</sub> erosion and toxic chemicals from gas flaring due to oil exploration and oil spillage.
  4. Obudu Conservation Centre

Established by Mrs Onari Duke, Professor John Oates and Mr. Disun Holloway.

This is an NGO dedicated to protecting, educating and restoring the wild life and wild lands and the Obudu region and surrounding Cross River National park.

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## TYPES OF NGOS

There are various types of NGOS designed to achieve vital objectives through the implementation of policies in environmental sector. Some of the NGOs in Nigeria are Environmental Right Action (ERA), African Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), Gani Fawehemi Movement for good Governance, Civil Society, Grass roots Organizations, Transitional Social Movements, Promoted Voluntary Organization, Self Help Organization and Idia Renaissance etc. All working towards one goal: agitation for environmental policies for sustainable development, alleviation of poverty and economic empowerment for humanity. For instance, Aneej as a body of NGO's is primarily based on debt cancellation for poor and developing countries, debt recovery and structural adjustment, Budget monitoring and Tracking, environmental issues including water and sanitation and conducting of seminars for the public for an existing development. This body has on several occasions assisted the Federal Government of Nigeria in debt recovery through the National Assembly on policy making.<sup>6</sup> Aneej in its efforts in enquiry was able to recover some amount of money looted by Abacha (the late and former ruler of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) and with the support of international NGOs the said money were reinvested into the country's several environmental projects and ever since, successive government in Nigeria have taken keen interests on environmental issues and policies affecting the nation.

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## THE ROLE OF NGOS IN FORMULATING ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS) usually play a major role in sustainable developments at local and international levels. These groups engage the governments in negotiation ranging from the regulation of hazardous wastes to a global ban on land mines as well as the elimination of exploitation of the natural resources in the environment. NGOs, are not only focusing their energies on governments and inter-governmental processes but also engages in great enlightenment of the state through public functions, seminars, advocacy, and regulatory activities. NGOs have begun to fix their sights on powerful corporations – many of which had revived an entire nation in terms of resources and influence. Aided by advances in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), NGOs have helped to focused attention on the social and environmental externalities of business activities in Nigeria. Multinational brands have been acutely susceptible to pressure from activists and from NGOs eager to challenge any company's labour, environmental or human rights records for the purpose of correcting any grey areas. Those businesses that do not specialize in highly visible branded goods are also influenced through NGOs pressure. NGO campaigners have their developed techniques to target downstream customers and their shareholders for better content delivery.

Other NGOs are Customers and research – driven policy looking to engage with decision makers. Still, others see themselves as watchdogs, casting critical eyes on current events.<sup>7</sup> It is also worthy to note that Nigeria's efforts towards sustainable development since 1986 are marked by policy formulation and the establishment of agencies for implementation through the help of NGOs. One of such efforts is the establishment of Better Life for Rural Women, a pet programme initiated by the former First lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Her Excellency late Mrs. Maryam Babangida. The BLFW recognizes that one of the most important needs for the survival of any family is the provision of decent and affordable housing, the programme recognized that low-income families in cities do not own houses, because they cannot afford them in a better environment. The BLFW also recognizes that women are most vulnerable in accessing good environment. The effects of poor environment has adverse effects on women role in securing a good place to live and carry out their subsistence farming to generate incomes. Widows and single women were also identified as having denied the rights to better living conditions in the rural areas. In this regards, the BLFW sets out among others, the following objectives to ensure adequate provision for the less privileged in the society. The BLFW procured and distributed seedlings to female farmers among other benefits, during the then first lady's regime

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<sup>6</sup> Nigerian Network on stolen Assets (How Abacha loot was spent) A Civil Society Shadow Report on the World Bank, Government and CSOs Penfar Monitoring exercise at <http://www.aneej.org> accessed on the 15 May 2023.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bsicglobal.com/nyo./roles.asp> accessed on the 14 May 2023

Other facilities provided by the BLFN and other local NGOs at the state levels in Nigeria includes the maintenance of rehabilitation centres like Widowhood centers; Homes for the handicapped/disabled, abandoned and Motherless children; Psychiatric asylums; Resettlement homes for the Aged, Disabled and Destitutes, Leprosy patient homes, Fish farming camps, Youth Amusement and Recreational Centres; and Parks; Medical and Health centres, multipurpose development centres for women and children; Rural Water schemes, and Agro processing and Packaging Centres.

Many NGOs in Nigeria has affiliated themselves with foreign NGOs in formulating environmental policies in their agitation for sustainable achievements that would enhance the effectiveness of the following in the country

- a. Pollution control
- b. Rain harvesting
- c. AIDS Awareness
- d. Zero Waste Management, and
- e. Deforestation
- f. Environmental preservation.

NGOs has equipped themselves adequately in providing services like charity to the vulnerables in the society, helping the government in Mother and Child health care, including Family Planning Programmes etc. The potentials of NGOS and their considerable merit compared to the public/private health sectors in Nigeria is overwhelming.

#### **i. Pollution Control**

The task of pollution control in Nigeria for instance, is complex due to the numbers of large and small-scale oil and gas industries in the country especially in the southern part of Nigeria. Further, the rise in the number of vehicles coupled with poverty and the large population puts tremendous pollution pressure on air, water and land. A comprehensive approach to pollution control is necessary based on the principles which powerful NGOs have adopted as strategies. They are

- Prevent Pollution at source.
- Encourage, develop and apply the best available practicable.
- Technical solution.
- Ensure that polluter pays for pollution and control
- Arrangements.

To focus on protection of heavily polluted areas and river stretches which involve the NGO's in educating the public about pollution control measures to be taken. E.g. Noise pollution which recently has becomes a major problem in the metropolitan cities and in other urban areas.<sup>8</sup> With a view to regulating and controlling noise producing and generating sources, the Ministry of Environment and Forests would notify the appropriate authorities on the extant laws of (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986, for prevention and control of noise pollution in the country for compliance. One of the examples of this noise pollution is that of Ikeja Airport which has been causing series of debates on whether the Airport is to be scrapped out or relocated

The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 has classified the pollutants industries as red, orange and green depending on the degree of pollution caused by them. It further specifies the various pollution control measures to be adopted by these industries

#### **b) Rain and water control**

NGOs have propagated the system of rain harvesting residential areas in some cities with the aim of exploiting one or another Important water sources, i.e, rainwater. Many cities suffer from Perennial water problems every raining season and therefore it is important that ail avenues of water source be tapped. By using simple and Inexpensive techniques the NGO (Exnora) has arrived at a method to conserve a large part of the 110 cms of rain that we receive annually. A Water conservation committee constituted in china by Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board Exnora is a core example, but the developing countries are bereaf of this technology

#### **c) Aids Awareness**

Medical NGOS are working diligently to educate the public about the prevention of AIDS and provide supports and counseling for HIV infected persons. The additional dangers of placing value judgments on how individuals became HIV positive is one of the toughest issues facing NGOs that work with people who have HIV positive. One key in the prevention of AIDS is to eliminate negative images of HIV infected persons as projected by the media. NGOs are also working towards educating the public to respect the dignity of all persons living with HIV, regardless of how they became infected.

<sup>8</sup> <http://arts.monash.edu.au/conference> accessed on the 16/05/23

#### d) Zero Waste Management

NGOs have now started focusing its efforts on the concept of Zero Waste Management, by which practically all wastes can be converted into wealth through recycling. Exnora is also addressing the problem of handling and disposal of bio-medical wastes, and is trying to find a solution beneficial to all concerned.

#### e) Deforestation:

NGOs are also helping in agitating for policy on deforestation to ensure there is a sound forest management principles and techniques. The Agricultural policy for Nigeria 1988 for instance, also seeks to protect the Nation's forest products and wildlife in the environment. The need was a result to keep the environment from ecological disaster which embraces the Agenda 21 as a comprehensive blueprint for action to be taken globally in every area on which human activity impact on the environment.<sup>9</sup>

However, NGOs in Nigeria is also the same with NGOs in other countries, E.g. South Korea. Most NGOs in South Korea conduct extensive grassroots organizing in the regions in which they operate.

They pursue broad democratic participation and seek funding independent from the state, Given these characteristics of NGOs" they need to find ways of strengthening the institutional capacities and contributing more meaningfully to the solution of major problems without losing their popular base and flexible capacity for social reform. NGOs in South Korea have constructive organizational capacities in generic project management, which include Appraisal, Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation. For this, NGOs in Nigeria need to develop technical and processing skills in specific programme sectors and to extend the scope of their activities to more area s of humanity

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#### 4. NGOS OPPORTUNITY AND CONSTRAINTS

We have actually seen the merits of NGOs in agitating for projects formulation and Implementation of numerous policies for humanity through its various laudable Programmes and activities but not without some major setbacks for its smooth running. The lack of sufficient funding in carrying out target ventures is a major barrier against the organization. Successive governments in developing countries are not interested in the organisation. They are either labelled as busybodies in government affairs or Political rivals or enemies to the government. Despite the various activities put in place to ensure that there are sustainable development in the society, government of today sees the body trying to crowd out their secret to the public by propagating the weakness of the government . resulting in the unwillingness of government to support them to deliver adequately of all their promises and legitimacy.

Many NGOS do not have strategic planning, they stay away from initial goals set out. This renders them ineffective in raising sufficient capital for projects.

Other NGOs do not have good networking system with other NGOs with similar area of interest to promote sustainable development, the poor networking system especially with international NGOs rendered them limited in their goals.

Some NGOs in Nigeria have security challenges many volunteers have their lives terminated especially in the core Northern Nigeria where Boko-Haram and other Insurgence dominates. A good number of NGOs have lost their equipments and properties to insurgency in the course of their activities in intervention to provide succour to the vulnerables

A good number of NGOs of developed foreign nations have been scammed by Nigerian fraud stars, thereby leading to abrupt end of series of their Programmes of interest in the Nation.

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#### CONCLUSION

Nigeria Government have been at loggerheads with many NGOs, and some Civil Society Organizations who antagonize them over wrong doings. NGOs are often seen as rival bodies to the government. Many NGOs suffers funding and promotion aswell. As a result of this, some are no longer effective, and some that are seen to be effective are just playing to the gallery If the goals of environmental NGOs in Nigeria must be successful and sustained, the orientation of every government towards their importance in every society is paramount. Government should appreciate the role of NGOs in nation building and for being the 'Think tank' behind good ideas of mutual benefits to humanity at all times. The role of NGOs is to support the society for advancement, not as rivals or competitors but as companions in progress. NGOs must be seen as partners in the wheel of progress of goals setting mechanism, policy formulation, policy analysis and decision making in Nigeria. NGOs need to be encouraged with the necessary enabling environment to actively participate in the development of programmes for humanity and Environmental Policies

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<sup>9</sup> THoedore Okonkwo "The Law of Environmental Liability (Lagos Afrique Environmental Development and Education) 2003 at p.3.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Government, globally should invest on capacity building and training Programmes for NGOs, this will help them in acquiring new skills to achieve their desired goals. NGOs are to also organize the necessary skills acquisitions, workshop and seminars to build up their staffs for challenges ahead of them in the course of carrying out their assignments especially in nations where their activities are not friendly

It is recommended that NGOs should always align with sisters' agencies with similar objectives and Programmes for collaboration in any assignments, especially at this age of globalization.

NGOs are to focus on a project at a time, and to stop involving in multiple projects with limited capacity. One project at a time..