

Making the UNFCCC Work for the Rural Poor in Esan Land

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Climate change and poverty are twin global problems threatening human survival especially among the rural poor in the developing countries including Nigeria. They have also become major concern of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs). The global community, in recognition of these problems, in 1992, negotiated the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to help humanity majority of which are rural poor cope with the adverse effects of climate change through access to climate information, finance, modern technology and capacity building. Most studies on the UNFCCC tend to focus on its operations at the international and national levels whereas its effectiveness is better appreciated against its impact at the grass root level. This paper believes that a focus on the operation and impact of the UNFCCC among the rural poor will help identify the gaps with a view to filling them and making the Convention more beneficial to the target populace. This will also help in realizing the SDGs It is in line with this objective that this paper appraised the specific effects of climate change on the rural dwellers in Esan land. It further investigated how the rural dwellers in Esan land perceive and adapt to climate change, and examined the challenges of climate change adaptation among the rural dwellers in Esan land. These were with a view to throwing light on the rural dwellers' awareness and vulnerability to climate change and the impact of the UNFCCC on their adaptive capacity.

The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through the administration of structured questionnaire on a total of 250 purposively selected respondents aged 40 years and above (old enough to know about changes in their local climate) drawn evenly from 10 purposively selected rural communities with evident climate change manifestations from across the 5 local government areas of Esan land. Data were analysed using the descriptive and content method.

The results found that climate change awareness in the study area was high though inadequate; that the rural dwellers in Esan land have tried to adapt through diversification, changes in farm timing, use of improved farm inputs among others; that inadequate information, lack of finance and training in capacity building, and obsolete technology constituted the challenges of climate change adaptation in the study area

The study concluded that though there was general awareness of climate change among rural dwellers in Esan land, they were however, still very vulnerable to its negative effects mainly because the UNFCCC has not made appreciable impact in the area. This could undermine the realization of the SDGs in the study area.