

Weaving Narratives for Climate Consciousness: Unleashing the Power of Communication and Storytelling to Foster Climate Literacy in Nigeria

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Abstract- This article explores the use of communication and storytelling to foster climate literacy in Nigeria. Climate literacy encompasses understanding climate science, its impacts, and mitigation and adaptation solutions, which is crucial for informed decision-making and policy development. Communication and storytelling serve as powerful tools to convey complex scientific information in relatable ways to a broader audience. Tailoring content to the audience's values, beliefs, and attitudes is essential for effective engagement. Nigeria faces challenges due to limited formal education and a lack of political will, contributing to low climate literacy rates. However, positive trends include increased government funding and the growth of climate-related industries. The article suggests incorporating storytelling in education, raising awareness through campaigns, promoting political competence, and leveraging international events to improve climate literacy. Addressing limitations in climate change predictions and scaling issues is crucial. Challenges specific to Nigeria and examples of art festivals and radio programs targeting youth and rural communities are discussed. The article emphasizes the need for localized communication strategies and increased research to enhance climate literacy in Nigeria. By embracing effective communication and storytelling, Nigeria can foster climate consciousness and empower individuals to take action..

Index Terms- Communication and Storytelling, Climate Literacy and Consciousness

I. INTRODUCTION

Definition of Communication and Storytelling on Climate Change. Climate literacy may be purely defined as the holistic understanding of climate science, the impacts of climate change, and the mitigation and adaptation solutions to the challenge of climate change (GSU, 2022). To achieve this literacy, the foundations of communication and storytelling are essential tools in educating society about climate change (Arnold, 2018). Climate

literacy enables individuals to make informed decisions about their behavior and enables policymakers to develop effective policies efficiently.

Communication is, however, not merely about words, since humans are not machines. In communication and storytelling, the conceptual framework emphasizes the power of narratives in conveying complex scientific information and relating it to a broader audience (Bloomfield & Manktelow, 2021). Using stories in communication eases the explanation of concepts because it grants the audience an emotional connection with which they transverse the political and socioeconomic terminologies. In this light, it is safe to say storytelling transcends this knowledge into relatable and more accessible forms, thereby increasing understanding and engaging more individuals.

Understanding the audience's values, beliefs, and attitudes toward newfound knowledge is needed before a storyline is created for engagement. This is because tailored contents evoke a better response to situations than packaged information. For instance, the harsh effects of climate change in totality could be a pressing issue for one community, while for another, it could be the effects of flooding and erosion. Another skill worth developing is overcoming language barriers and instilling various learning strategies. The learning models of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading must be presented in simple and clear forms to avoid misinterpretation by the audience. Climate Communication and Storytelling are created to enlighten individuals living in society on the need for safe climate practices and to veer them away from political and ideological beliefs that position climate issues as a hoax.

Effective communication and storytelling must therefore address these fundamental issues by providing, in clear, concise, and compelling language, the solution to the impacts of climate change and, in turn, harnessing the available audiences as powerful tools for the widespread development of climate literacy (Roser-Renouf *et al.*, 2022).

II. COMMUNICATION AND STORYTELLING ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFRICA

Simpson *et al.* (2021) show that the average national climate change literacy rate in Africa is 37%, which is significantly lower than in Europe and North America where rates are over 80%. They find that the biggest predictor of climate literacy on the continent is the level of formal education. This is a problem, since Africa has the lowest general literacy and school enrolment rates in the world (UNESCO, 2023).

Although formal education is limited, for a long time, various forms of communication and storytelling have been used in Africa to inform its inhabitants on the advent of safe climate practices. Some of the means by which this knowledge was propagated to reach a large audience are:

III. THE STATE OF CLIMATE LITERACY IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's lack of climate literacy can be attributed to two major factors: political will and a background of poor education (Oduwole N. & Ogunnaike J., 2023). The Nigerian government has made limited efforts to educate citizens on climate change, preferring to hold customary consultation meetings with climate-literate stakeholders on specific policy proposals while industry outsiders are often left uninformed. The educational system, with public schools heavily underfunded and private schools streamlined for market-determined career prospects, does not

Radio Programs: A Tanzanian program called "Sauti ya Pwani" (Voice of the Coast) was aired to the inhabitants of the coastal areas to educate the people on the effects of unsafe climate practices and raise awareness of their impacts. Mkwambisi *et al.* (2016), in a study, stated the advantages of this program for climate literacy and reported its positive impact on the increase of knowledge and resource management among its listeners.

Storytelling and Drama: A group of actors in a movie industry named Kuenda Production used acting scenes to depict how much harm unsafe agricultural practices are to the economy and in turn provide solutions to them. Mugabe *et al.* (2014) reported increased knowledge among the viewers and increased awareness of climate change.

Social Media Campaigns: The use of social media in raising awareness among youths to cover a wide range of audiences has been practiced among various groups. A profound campaign called "Climate Wednesday" was reported by Adenle *et al.* (2018) to have allegedly increased the knowledge of electricity usage and the disposition of waste in the communities to over 1000 listeners.

These methods are also applicable to the most populous country on the African continent, and a country with one of the most vulnerable populations to climate change, Nigeria.

prioritize access to materials on climate action and political policies for students and the general public.

There are some promising trends, nonetheless. In Nigeria, the government's allocation of resources to combat climate change repercussions in 2023 is a 141.6% increase over the 2022 budget of 43.7 billion naira (ICIR, 2023). The formation of the National Climate Change Council in 2021 and the growth in climate-related industries such as solar energy and circular economy further show the opportunities emerging for more extensive and intensive climate education.

The need to combat climate illiteracy through storytelling is through the inclusion of the educational sector, campaigns to raise awareness, political competence by all levels of the private, local, and federal government offices, and on days when the earth is celebrated internationally.

To improve climate literacy in Nigeria, several elements are required. An in-depth understanding of the urgent need for effective solutions to combat the climate crisis, a scientific basis to lay claim to these changes, and a knowledge of its social and economic impact on the psychological lifestyle of affected communities are needed in the creation of advocacy for programs to raise awareness and mobilize individuals to take action.

In addition to evidence-based knowledge, connecting climate action and individual and social wellbeing to climate literacy, makes it easier to deploy storytelling and to grab the attention of listeners. This linkage is achieved by ensuring that policymakers are proactive in developing policies that would promote climate resilience, reduce emissions, and help the economy transition to low carbon footprints for essential sectors that affect the growth of any economy, such as agriculture, energy, and water. Entrepreneurs also have a strong role to play here. Adaptations to the impact of climate crises by entrepreneurs would help create innovative solutions and the inventiveness of opportunities, thereby creating jobs and promoting better communication avenues for climate change.

IV. LIMITATIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Certain limitations affecting the accuracy and precision of climate model decisions regarding climate change are related to the spatial and temporal visibility of climate scale predictions. One limitation of this scalar data is the resolution of climate models due to their computing power, integrity, and data availability. According to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (2022), the world is teetering on a 50% increase in global temperatures, reaching damaging levels of climate change due to unsafe climate practices. As mentioned earlier, the limitation can affect climate predictions and preplanned projections, especially for the mountainous and coastal regions.

Another limitation of scale is the scalability of temporal solutions to pressing climate challenges. These solutions can affect the precision of climate predictions, affecting long-term decisions' feasibility, making it difficult to propose feasible solutions for changes over many centuries.

This limitation also affects the predictability of local-scale climate changes such as the downtrend of urbanization or land use change about the local climate. Local climate changes are also affected by microclimatic factors such as the change in soil structure, vegetation, and an advancement in urban design (Guzman & Hoyos, 2019). This creates a diversion in the accurate predictability of the implications of wrong socially diminishing designs on infrastructure and the planning of cities. The destructibility of these limitations is bothered by the lack of diversity, ineffective communication, a clamp on outreach, and insufficient impact.

Nigeria's Impact on Communication and Storytelling for Climate Change: The Challenges and Solutions

To get the attention of Nigerians to the pressing issues of climate change, a group of actors curated a festival called "Life in My City Art Festival" to educate society on the despondence of climate change by conducting competitions and exhibitions, and also to sensitize its audience, which is mostly Nigerian youth, on eco-friendly activities that would help the climate recover. (LIFE in My City Art Festival, 2019).

Another program was aired over radio waves on the topic "Climate Change Voices" to tutor and educate the citizens in rural and suburban areas on the best climatic adaptation and mitigation strategies to ensure healthy climate activities (Climate Wednesday, 2020).

Gaps to Fill

This section covers the challenges the involved bodies face and then delves into possible solutions to the presented problems.

- The need for more targeted and localized communication strategies that are tailored to specific regions and communities in Nigeria
- The need for increased investment in research to understand the best approaches for communicating climate change to different audiences in Nigeria
- Popularizing these practices and televised programs has ensured that the information is continually propagated across Nigeria without bias.

The willpower to overcome the challenges mentioned above is possible through an enhanced form of communication using storytelling measures which are tailored to meet the needs of audiences in a participatory approach at the local level unbiased.

V. CONCLUSION

A wholesome understanding of the needed communication strategies and the positiveness of agenda creation using storytelling should be imbibed to inform Nigerians on the need for having good governing policies and the impact of climate literacy, starting from positive self-practices to sharing the same knowledge with all of society. Also, the power of social media should be duly harvested and utilized to spread the tentacles of information to a wider audience, especially the farmers dwelling in coastal and urban areas, whereas the finances gotten from other sources are directed towards improving the knowledge among dwellers in rural and sub-urban areas to achieve the same goals.

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