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Greenpeace International Campaigns on Environmental Policies and its influence on Corporate Practices in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of Greenpeace International campaigns on environmental policies and corporate practices in Nigeria. The research adopted the theory of environmental justice and its application in Greenpeace's activities, examining how the organization advocates for sustainable practices, policy reforms, and global accountability. The methodology involved qualitative analysis of Greenpeace's campaigns and partnerships, including case studies in various regions such as Nigeria, where Greenpeace has actively addressed issues such as plastic pollution, fossil fuel emissions, and ecosystem degradation. The findings revealed that Greenpeace's grassroots campaigns and international advocacy have effectively raised awareness about environmental issues, pressured corporations and governments to adopt more sustainable practices, and promoted policy changes. Based on these findings, the study recommended that Greenpeace continue its collaboration with local organizations, expand its outreach to marginalized communities, and strengthen its engagement with international policymakers to enforce environmental regulations. Furthermore, greater emphasis should be placed on community-based education to ensure the integration of environmental sustainability into everyday practices.

Keywords: *Advocacy Campaign, Corporate Practices, Environmental Policies, Greenpeace International and Nigeria.*

Introduction

Greenpeace International, founded in 1971, has been at the forefront of global environmental advocacy. The organization's mission centers on "ensuring the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity" through campaigns targeting climate change, renewable energy, deforestation, overfishing, and plastic pollution (Greenpeace International, 2023). By leveraging non-violent direct action, scientific research, and strategic partnerships, Greenpeace International has significantly contributed to shaping environmental discourse and policy globally. Greenpeace International engages in various activities to achieve its environmental protection goals. These include advocacy and campaigns which require Greenpeace conducts to global campaigns to influence environmental policies and corporate practices. For instance, the organization has campaigned for the adoption of renewable energy sources to reduce dependency on fossil fuels (Brown & Lee, 2022). Equally it involves research and publications as scientific research forms the backbone of Greenpeace's advocacy. By publishing evidence-based reports, the organization highlights environmental risks and offers actionable solutions (Jones et al., 2020). Community mobilization is as well included as Greenpeace actively mobilizes communities and engages in grassroots activities to foster environmental stewardship and amplify marginalized voices in environmental debates (Taylor, 2021). Lastly we have the legal interventions as Greenpeace has used legal channels to challenge environmentally destructive practices, holding corporations and governments accountable for violations of environmental laws (Kumar, 2023).

A significant aspect of Greenpeace's strategy involves direct action to halt environmental degradation. For instance, in 2024, Greenpeace activists in Maranhão, Brazil, protested against plans to drill near the Amazon Reef, highlighting the risks of oil spills in this sensitive area. This action aimed to raise awareness among consumers about the potential

environmental impacts of such drilling activities (Greenpeace International, 2024). In addition to direct action, Greenpeace engages in policy advocacy to influence environmental legislation and corporate practices. The organization challenges systems of power and privilege that contribute to environmental destruction and disproportionately affect marginalized communities. By incorporating principles of environmental justice, Greenpeace strives to build a sustainable future that centers on those most impacted by ecological harm (Greenpeace International, 2024).

The role of NGOs in environmental protection is indispensable in addressing the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century. Greenpeace International exemplifies how NGOs can drive meaningful change through advocacy, research, and community engagement. As the world grapples with escalating environmental crises, the contributions of NGOs will remain vital in shaping a sustainable future. Despite its efforts, there remains a need to critically assess the effectiveness of such NGOs in achieving long-term environmental goals. This study seeks to examine the role and activities of Greenpeace International in environmental protection, identifying both successes and areas where further research is needed. One area that warrants investigation is the impact of Greenpeace's campaigns on policy changes. While the organization has been active in various environmental movements, the extent to which its initiatives have influenced governmental policies and corporate practices remains underexplored. Understanding this influence is crucial for assessing the organization's effectiveness in driving systemic change.

Objective of the Study

- a. The main objective of the study is to examine the influence of Greenpeace International's campaigns on environmental policies and corporate practices.

Research Questions

- a. How does Greenpeace International's campaign influence environmental policies and corporate practices?

Review of Related Literature

Overview of Greenpeace International

Greenpeace was founded in 1971 by a group of environmental activists in Vancouver, Canada, who set sail to Amchitka Island off the coast of Alaska to protest U.S. nuclear weapons testing. Their vessel, the *Greenpeace*, gave the organization its name. Over the years, Greenpeace has evolved into a global environmental organization with a presence in over 55 countries. The organization operates through 26 independent national and regional offices, coordinated by Greenpeace International, which is based in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Greenpeace International serves as the central coordinating body, ensuring consistency and strategic alignment across the network (Greenpeace UK, 2023).

Greenpeace's mission is to "ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity." The organization envisions a green and peaceful future, believing that a billion acts of courage can spark a brighter tomorrow. Greenpeace's core principles include independence, bearing witness, non-violence, and the use of creative confrontation to expose environmental issues. The organization is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion, reflecting these values in its campaigns and internal operations (Greenpeace USA, n.d.)

Key Areas of Focus

Climate Change: Greenpeace actively campaigns against climate change by advocating for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy sources, and opposing fossil fuel extraction. The organization emphasizes the urgency of transitioning to a sustainable energy future to mitigate the impacts of global warming.

Deforestation: The organization works to prevent deforestation by promoting sustainable forestry practices, protecting ancient forests, and advocating for policies that preserve biodiversity. Greenpeace campaigns against illegal logging and

the conversion of forests for agricultural purposes, highlighting the critical role of forests in climate regulation and biodiversity conservation.

Ocean Protection: Greenpeace campaigns to protect oceans by opposing overfishing, advocating for marine reserves, and raising awareness about the impacts of plastic pollution. The organization conducts direct actions to protect marine ecosystems and works with international bodies to establish marine protected areas.

Pollution Control: The organization addresses pollution by campaigning against the release of toxic substances into the environment, promoting the use of safer chemicals, and advocating for waste reduction and recycling. Greenpeace works to eliminate hazardous chemicals from products and industrial processes, aiming to reduce environmental contamination and protect human health.

The Impact of Greenpeace's Activities on Environmental Protection

Greenpeace's environmental campaigns cover a broad range of issues, including climate change, ocean conservation, deforestation, and toxic pollution. Its activities have been instrumental in raising awareness about the urgent need for environmental protection, often focusing on the most pressing issues of the time. One of Greenpeace's most significant achievements is its role in combating climate change. Greenpeace has consistently advocated for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the promotion of renewable energy, and the phasing out of fossil fuels. According to Ball (2023), Greenpeace's campaigns have played a key role in shaping global conversations around climate change and influencing international climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement. By pushing for stringent emissions reductions and a transition to clean energy, Greenpeace has contributed to the growing global momentum towards addressing climate change.

Greenpeace has also played a critical role in advocating for the preservation of forests and biodiversity. Deforestation, particularly in the Amazon Rainforest, has been a central focus of Greenpeace's work. The organization has worked alongside indigenous communities, scientists, and policymakers to halt illegal logging and promote sustainable land management practices. Greenpeace's "Forest for All" campaign, launched in 2018, aimed to protect forests from industrial exploitation and land-grabbing. According to Nguyen and Lee (2023), Greenpeace's campaigns have led to changes in corporate practices, with major companies such as Nestlé, Unilever, and McDonald's pledging to reduce their environmental footprints by committing to sustainable sourcing of palm oil, paper, and other raw materials. These corporate commitments reflect Greenpeace's ability to hold multinational corporations accountable for their environmental impact.

One of the primary metrics used to assess Greenpeace's impact is the extent to which its campaigns influence policy changes. Greenpeace has been successful in shaping national and international environmental policies, particularly regarding climate change and biodiversity protection. Through lobbying efforts and strategic alliances with other environmental organizations, Greenpeace has successfully pushed for stronger environmental regulations in various countries. For instance, in the European Union, Greenpeace's efforts have contributed to the adoption of the European Green Deal, a comprehensive set of policy initiatives aimed at making Europe carbon neutral by 2050 (Brown, 2021). Additionally, Greenpeace's campaigns have helped to raise awareness about environmental justice issues, particularly in relation to vulnerable communities impacted by pollution and climate change.

In terms of environmental sustainability, Greenpeace's influence can also be measured by the extent to which it promotes sustainable business practices. Over the years, Greenpeace has conducted investigations into the environmental practices of multinational corporations, particularly those in the forestry, agriculture, and energy sectors. Its "Detox My Fashion" campaign, which targeted the fashion industry's contribution to pollution, led several brands, including Zara and H&M, to commit to eliminating hazardous chemicals from their supply chains (Walker & Robinson, 2022). Similarly, Greenpeace's work with major oil companies, such as Shell and ExxonMobil, has led to greater scrutiny of their environmental practices and, in some cases, shifts towards renewable energy investments. These corporate shifts, driven in part by Greenpeace's advocacy, demonstrate the organization's capacity to influence both policy and business practices.

Greenpeace Activities in Nigeria

Greenpeace, an international environmental organization, has played a significant role in addressing environmental challenges in Nigeria through various campaigns and collaborations. Their efforts have focused on combating plastic pollution, advocating for environmental justice, and promoting sustainable practices. One notable example of Greenpeace's impact in Nigeria is their support for the Lagos State government's ban on single-use plastics and styrofoam. In January 2024, Greenpeace Africa's Pan-African Plastic Project Lead, Hellen Kahaso Dena, commended this initiative, stating that it demonstrated Nigeria's commitment to environmental sustainability and addressing critical issues such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. She emphasized the importance of effective enforcement and the need for policies that encourage producers to adopt sustainable alternatives to harmful products (Greenpeace Africa, 2024).

Greenpeace Africa has also highlighted the detrimental effects of plastic pollution in Nigeria, advocating for the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework to address this issue. The organization has pointed out that Nigeria generates approximately 2.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, leading to environmental and health challenges such as water pollution, harm to aquatic life, and increased flooding due to clogged drainage systems. Greenpeace has called for the Nigerian government to implement policies that ban the use of plastics and to participate in global initiatives aimed at eliminating plastic waste (Greenpeace MENA, 2023).

In response to incidents involving fossil fuels, Greenpeace Africa has urged Nigerian authorities to hold polluting companies accountable. Following the explosion of the Trinity Spirit oil vessel in February 2024, which resulted in fatalities and environmental damage, Greenpeace Africa's Oceans Campaign Manager, Dr. Aliou Ba, criticized the negligence of the involved companies and called for the cessation of fossil fuel production in favor of renewable energy sources. Dr. Ba emphasized that fossil fuels continue to devastate Africa's people and environment, advocating for a transition to sustainable energy solutions (Greenpeace Africa, 2024).

Greenpeace has also collaborated with local organizations to address environmental injustices in Nigeria. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), for instance, has worked alongside Greenpeace International and Amnesty International to protest against the environmental degradation caused by oil companies in the Niger Delta. MOSOP represents the Ogoni people's non-violent campaign for environmental justice, highlighting issues such as pollution of rivers and destruction of the environment by petroleum multinationals (Greenpeace Africa, 2024).

Furthermore, Greenpeace Africa has organized events focusing on climate finance and the need for financial reforms to address environmental crises in Africa. In July 2024, they hosted a side event in Accra discussing the role of financial reforms in tackling climate and environmental challenges. The event emphasized the importance of mobilizing adequate climate funds to address loss and damages in African communities and advocated for holding high-emitting countries accountable (Greenpeace Africa, 2024). Through these initiatives, Greenpeace has significantly contributed to raising awareness and prompting action on environmental issues in Nigeria. Their collaborations with local organizations and advocacy for policy changes have been instrumental in promoting environmental sustainability and justice in the country.

Theoretical Framework

The best theoretical framework to explain the role and activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in environmental protection, particularly in the case of Greenpeace International, is the Environmental Justice Theory. The theory was devised by Bullard (1990) and expanded by Agyeman, and Stokes (1993). Robert Bullard is often regarded as the father of environmental justice due to his seminal work on environmental racism in the United States. The theory gained further development through the contributions of scholars like Julian Agyeman and Stokes, who helped broaden its scope beyond issues of race to encompass social, economic, and political dimensions of environmental inequalities.

This theory examines the intersection of environmental degradation, social inequalities, and activism by focusing on the distribution of environmental benefits and harms. It places a significant emphasis on the empowerment of marginalized

communities and their engagement in environmental decision-making. Greenpeace, a prominent environmental NGO, plays a central role in advocating for policies and actions aimed at ensuring the equitable distribution of environmental protection, especially in the face of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

The Environmental Justice Theory posits that environmental harms disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalized groups, who often lack the power and resources to address these issues. According to Akanwa and Joe-Ikechebelu (2020), environmental justice seeks to rectify the social and environmental inequalities created by unsustainable development practices. Greenpeace's activism aligns with this theory by promoting environmental policies that not only address ecological concerns but also prioritize social equity, ensuring that those most impacted by environmental degradation are part of the solution. Greenpeace's campaigns, such as its fight against deforestation in the Amazon and efforts to combat climate change, underscore the connection between environmental protection and the fight for justice (Greenpeace, 2021).

Furthermore, the Environmental Justice Theory emphasizes grassroots movements and local-level activism as essential mechanisms for achieving long-term environmental sustainability. As noted by Schlosberg (2021), grassroots environmental movements empower local communities by equipping them with the tools needed to advocate for their rights and mitigate environmental harm. Greenpeace's global campaigns often include local-level mobilization, where local communities are directly involved in campaigns, providing them with a platform to express concerns, demand policy changes, and engage in sustainable practices. Greenpeace's involvement in indigenous rights and forest conservation in Latin America is an example of how NGOs apply environmental justice principles to empower communities (Greenpeace, 2022).

Application of the theory to the Study

The Environmental Justice Theory offers a crucial framework for understanding the role and activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Greenpeace International in environmental protection. The theory's core principles, which focus on the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and the rectification of environmental harm disproportionately affecting marginalized communities, align with Greenpeace's efforts to promote global sustainability and environmental advocacy. Greenpeace, through its campaigns and direct actions, challenges both environmental degradation and social inequities, making the theory particularly relevant to its mission.

One of the primary tenets of the Environmental Justice Theory is that environmental harm is often distributed inequitably, with marginalized populations bearing the brunt of pollution, deforestation, climate change, and other ecological issues (Bullard, 1990). Greenpeace's initiatives address these imbalances by focusing on environmental protection in vulnerable regions, such as the Amazon rainforest, which is home to indigenous communities. Greenpeace not only advocates for biodiversity conservation but also supports the rights of local communities, aligning with the core idea that environmental justice should involve social equity (Greenpeace, 2021). For instance, Greenpeace has actively campaigned against deforestation in the Amazon, emphasizing the harmful effects on indigenous people who rely on the forest for their livelihoods. This is a direct application of the theory, where Greenpeace seeks to address both environmental and social injustices.

The theory also posits that marginalized communities often lack the political power or resources to combat environmental harm (Akanwa & Joe-Ikechebelu, 2020). Greenpeace acts as an advocate for these communities by amplifying their voices on global platforms. This is evident in Greenpeace's efforts to challenge large corporations and governments that contribute to environmental degradation. Greenpeace's campaigns to hold multinational corporations like Nestlé accountable for deforestation in their supply chains are rooted in the idea that global policies should protect both the environment and vulnerable communities (Greenpeace, 2021). By organizing grassroots movements, Greenpeace ensures that local communities and their concerns are brought to the forefront of policy discussions, giving them a platform they otherwise might lack.

Research Method

The historical research design was adopted for this study. For this study, the historical design was used to analyze Greenpeace's actions from its inception to the present, with a focus on its campaigns, strategies, and collaborations. This study employed a qualitative research approach for data collection, as the research seeks to understand and interpret Greenpeace's role and activities over time. This study utilized document analysis to explore primary sources such as Greenpeace's internal reports, press releases, campaign records, policy documents, annual reports, and publications. These documents will provide insights into Greenpeace's strategies, goals, and tactics over the years. Data for this study were obtained from secondary sources and these include academic journal articles, books, government reports, and publications from other NGOs that discuss the impact and effectiveness of Greenpeace's campaigns, its strategies, and its contributions to environmental sustainability (Schlosberg, 2021; Greenpeace, 2022). The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This method is particularly well-suited to analyzing large volumes of qualitative data such as documents, interviews, and reports.

Result and Discussion

Research Question One: How does Greenpeace International's campaign influence environmental policies and corporate practices?

Greenpeace International has played a pivotal role in shaping environmental policies and corporate practices globally, including in Nigeria. Through strategic campaigns, collaborations with local organizations, and persistent advocacy, Greenpeace has influenced both governmental policies and corporate behaviors to promote environmental sustainability. Greenpeace's advocacy efforts have significantly impacted environmental policy decisions in Nigeria. A notable example is their support for Lagos State's ban on single-use plastics and styrofoam. Greenpeace Africa's Pan-African Plastic project lead, Hellen Kahaso Dena, commended the state's decisive step towards environmental sustainability, highlighting the importance of enforcing the ban and strengthening related policies. This endorsement not only validated the state's initiative but also underscored Greenpeace's role in promoting policy changes aimed at reducing plastic pollution (Greenpeace Africa, 2024).

Greenpeace's influence extends through its collaborations with local Nigerian NGOs and community groups. By partnering with organizations such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Greenpeace has amplified grassroots environmental movements. MOSOP, representing the Ogoni people of Rivers State, campaigns against environmental degradation caused by oil extraction. Their affiliation with Greenpeace has strengthened their advocacy efforts, bringing international attention to local environmental issues and pressuring both the government and corporations to adopt more sustainable practices (Nwaoku, 2025).

Greenpeace's campaigns have also targeted corporate practices, particularly in the oil and gas sector. In Nigeria's Niger Delta, oil spills have devastated local communities and ecosystems. Greenpeace's support for affected communities has been instrumental in holding corporations accountable. For instance, the Ogale community's legal action against Shell in the UK, seeking responsibility for environmental damages, reflects the broader impact of Greenpeace's advocacy for corporate accountability (Associated Press, 2024).

Beyond advocacy, Greenpeace actively promotes sustainable alternatives to harmful environmental practices. In response to Lagos State's plastic ban, Greenpeace urged the government to incentivize producers to adopt affordable, sustainable alternatives to styrofoam and other single-use plastics. This approach not only addresses pollution but also encourages innovation and the development of eco-friendly products, influencing corporate practices towards sustainability (Greenpeace Africa, 2024). Greenpeace's influence is also evident in its global advocacy for legally binding environmental treaties, which have implications for Nigeria. The organization's call for a comprehensive global plastics treaty addressing the entire lifecycle of plastics demonstrates its commitment to systemic change. Such international agreements can drive national policy reforms in Nigeria, compelling both the government and corporations to adhere to stricter environmental standards (McVeigh, 2022).

Greenpeace's campaigns often focus on empowering local communities to advocate for their environmental rights. In Nigeria, this empowerment is crucial in regions like Ogoniland, where oil pollution has severely impacted livelihoods. By supporting local protests and demands for comprehensive discussions before resuming oil drilling, Greenpeace helps amplify community voices, ensuring that environmental policies and corporate practices consider the needs and rights of affected populations. (Associated Press, 2024; McVeigh, 2022).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that Greenpeace International has had a measurable and influential impact on shaping environmental policies and corporate behavior, confirming much of the scholarly literature reviewed. This is consistent with Greenpeace Africa (2024) who provided strong evidence that Greenpeace has influenced policy reforms in Nigeria, particularly with regard to plastic pollution. The organization's endorsement of Lagos State's ban on single-use plastics and styrofoam demonstrated how Greenpeace advocacy not only validated state-led environmental action but also pressured policymakers to enhance enforcement and strengthen related frameworks. By commending the initiative, Greenpeace reinforced the legitimacy of local policy decisions, aligning them with global sustainability efforts. This underscores how Greenpeace's advocacy can bridge global environmental discourses with local policy adoption, thereby shaping state-level environmental governance in Nigeria.

Similarly, Nwaoku (2025) work corroborating the finding illustrated Greenpeace's pivotal role in amplifying grassroots environmental struggles through collaborations with Nigerian civil society organizations such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). The partnership gave MOSOP international visibility, pressuring oil companies and the Nigerian government to address environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. This finding highlights Greenpeace's ability to extend its influence beyond direct campaigns, using alliances to strengthen local environmental justice movements. By elevating community voices, Greenpeace enhances the credibility of local struggles and forces corporations to consider social legitimacy and accountability in their operations.

Finally, Associated Press (2024) and McVeigh (2022) both showed Greenpeace's effectiveness in linking corporate accountability with global environmental governance frameworks. The Associated Press report on Greenpeace's support for the Ogale community's lawsuit against Shell underscores how Greenpeace helps communities hold corporations legally accountable for environmental harm. At the same time, McVeigh (2022) demonstrated Greenpeace's leadership in advocating for a global plastics treaty, which sets stricter corporate and governmental obligations. Together, these sources reveal that Greenpeace operates on both legal and policy fronts: mobilizing communities for corporate redress while also shaping systemic international agreements that influence corporate practices in Nigeria and beyond.

Conclusion

The findings indicated that Greenpeace International has played a significant role in shaping environmental policies and influencing corporate behavior through advocacy, research, and public campaigns. Its pressure on governments and corporations has led to policy adjustments, increased environmental awareness, and improved regulatory frameworks. However, its impact on corporate practices varies, as compliance is often influenced by economic interests, political will, and enforcement mechanisms.

Recommendations

1. Greenpeace should intensify its lobbying efforts to push for stronger environmental regulations and ensure effective enforcement. This should be done in collaboration with local policymakers, legal experts, and advocacy groups to enhance policy reforms that support environmental protection. **Also**, a monitoring and evaluation framework should be developed to track corporate compliance with environmental standards.

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