

Bridging The Gap: Assessing The Impact of International Environmental Laws on Water Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract- *Nigeria faces major water management issues despite abundant resources, including scarcity, pollution, and infrastructure gaps. This study explores how international environmental laws impact Nigeria's water governance, focusing on policy integration, enforcement challenges, and stakeholder views. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys of 95 stakeholders (government officials, NGOs, communities) with qualitative analysis. Results reveal high awareness of international treaties (mean = 3.91/5), but limited public dissemination (mean = 3.15). While treaties influence national policies, cooperation between states remains weak, and enforcement is hampered by corruption (mean = 4.16) and infrastructure shortages (mean = 4.28). The regulatory framework is unclear (mean = 3.40), and community involvement is limited (mean = 3.43). Recommendations include enhancing public education, emphasizing treaty commitments, improving anti-corruption efforts, and promoting regional collaboration. The findings underscore the urgent need for reforms to align Nigeria's water governance with global sustainability standards.*

Index Terms- *Water Governance, International Environmental Law, Nigeria, Policy Implementation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Water is essential for life, economic development, and environmental health. However, water resources face increasing pressure from population growth, industrialization, climate change, and mismanagement. In Nigeria, water management remains a critical issue, with challenges such as water scarcity, pollution, inefficient distribution, and disputes over access (Ngene et al., 2021). These problems have led to the depletion of surface and

groundwater sources, affecting agriculture, health, and overall well-being. Despite Nigeria's abundant water resources, the country struggles to provide enough water for its people. According to the United Nations World Water Development Report, only 30% of Nigeria's population has access to safe drinking water, while the remaining 70% lack access despite the available resources. Many rely on unsafe, unregulated sources (UN-Water, 2021). Poor infrastructure, weak regulations, and ineffective enforcement worsen these issues. These challenges are part of a global effort to manage freshwater sustainably amid increasing environmental pressures. International laws, treaties, and conventions offer frameworks to address these concerns by promoting sustainable water use and protection. Nigeria has signed several international agreements influencing its water policies. For example, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, ratified in 2001, aims to conserve and sustainably use wetlands, which are crucial for maintaining water quality and quantity (Ramsar Handbook, 2016). Another significant treaty is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, which establishes principles for the fair and sustainable management of transboundary water resources (UN, 1997). However, enforcement and integration of these laws into Nigeria's domestic policies remain limited, perpetuating water management challenges (Yusuf, 2019). Domestically, the Nigerian Water Resources Act governs water use and management at the national level, but it is often criticized for unclear provisions, weak enforcement, and failure to incorporate international legal standards (Adeoti, 2014). Nigeria's decentralized government structure further complicates water management, as responsibilities are shared among federal, state, and local authorities, leading to inefficiencies and conflicts (Pillah, 2024). International environmental laws significantly influence Nigeria's water management, encouraging

sustainable practices and cross-border cooperation. Yet, limited enforcement, weak legal frameworks, and inadequate capacity prevent Nigeria from fully benefiting from these agreements.

This research explores how international laws impact water management in Nigeria, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for improved water governance. This study investigates the impact of international laws on Nigeria's water policies, examines its enforcement challenges, and offers pathways to effective governance.

II. METHOD

2.1 Sources of Data

The data sources for this research are divided into primary and secondary sources, both of which are essential for gaining comprehensive insights into the subject.

- i. Primary Sources of Data: The main data for this study will be gathered directly from respondents using a structured questionnaire. The respondents will include key stakeholders involved in water resource management, such as:
 - Government officials from agencies responsible for water management and environmental protection.
 - Environmental professionals and experts who are familiar with international environmental laws.
 - Community leaders and members of local communities who are directly impacted by water resource management policies.
 - Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in environmental advocacy and resource management.
- ii. Secondary Sources of Data: Secondary data will be obtained from existing literature, reports, and official documents that provide contextual and theoretical insights into the research. These sources include:
 - International treaties and conventions related to environmental and water resource management, such as the United Nations Watercourses Convention, Agenda 21, and

the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

- Government publications and reports detailing Nigeria's water resource management policies and how international environmental laws are incorporated into national strategies.
- Academic journals and books that analyze international environmental law, water resource management frameworks, and the challenges of implementing these laws in developing countries like Nigeria.
- Reports from international organizations, such as the United Nations, World Bank, and World Health Organization (WHO), which provide statistics, case studies, and analyses on water resource management in Nigeria and other regions.

2.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire for this research is carefully designed to collect relevant data on the effects of international environmental laws on water resource management in Nigeria. Its structure aligns with the research objectives and questions, ensuring it effectively captures the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of stakeholders involved in or impacted by water resource management.

The questionnaire is divided into three main sections: demographic information, Likert scale questions, and an open-ended section for additional comments. It aims to gather both quantitative data via a structured Likert scale and qualitative insights through open-ended responses.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Impact of International Treaties on Water Resource Management in Nigeria

International treaties are formal agreements between countries that set out specific commitments, such as protecting water resources. The impact of these treaties refers to how they affect the actions and policies of countries, influencing how they manage their water and environmental resources. Table 1 shows the Responses obtained for the impact of

international treaties on water resource management in Nigeria.

Table 1. Impact of international treaties on water resource management in Nigeria

QUESTIONS	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation	Perception
International treaties significantly influence Nigeria's national policies on water resource management.	1	3	22	47	19	3.87	0.815	High
The implementation of these treaties has led to observable changes in water management practices in Nigeria.	5	7	25	36	18	3.60	1.063	Low
Treaties enhance cooperation among states sharing water resources.	6	4	19	47	16	3.68	1.026	Low
I believe that international treaties are essential for sustainable water resource management.	0	2	16	55	18	3.98	0.683	High
The Nigerian government prioritizes international treaty obligations in its water management agenda.	4	11	34	30	11	3.37	0.999	Low
Total Mean						18.50		
Weighted Average						3.70		

The results show that international treaties significantly influence Nigeria's national water resource management policies. However, while these treaties have resulted in noticeable improvements in water management practices, they have not promoted better cooperation among states sharing water resources. Additionally, the Nigerian government does not prioritize international treaty obligations in its water management strategy. Nevertheless, most respondents believe that international treaties are essential for ensuring sustainable water resource management.

3.2 Government Commitment to Water Resource Management in Nigeria

Government commitment refers to the dedication and effort demonstrated by a country's leaders to enforce and follow laws and agreements related to environmental protection and water management. It shows how serious the government is about making positive changes and complying with international standards. The responses from the questionnaire regarding government commitment to water resource management in Nigeria are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Government commitment to water resource management in Nigeria

Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation	Perception
The Nigerian government shows a strong commitment to fulfilling its international obligations regarding water management.	9	19	16	29	18	3.31	1.280	Low
Policies and strategies are developed in alignment with international environmental laws.	4	8	24	33	21	3.66	1.072	High

There is adequate funding allocated for implementing international water management agreements.	10	19	15	28	17	3.26	1.301	Low
I believe that the government engages stakeholders in discussions about international obligations.	7	13	17	34	18	3.48	1.198	High
The commitment of the government positively impacts local water resource management practices.	4	15	17	36	17	3.53	1.119	Low
Total Mean						17.23		
Weighted Average						3.446582		

The findings reveal that while policies and strategies are developed in accordance with international environmental laws, the Nigerian government demonstrates limited commitment to fulfilling its international obligations related to water management. Insufficient funding is allocated for the implementation of global water management agreements. Although respondents believe the government engages stakeholders in discussions about these obligations, the overall commitment remains low, which has a minimal positive impact on local water resource management practices.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research highlight the significant influence of international environmental laws on Nigeria's water resource management policies. While these treaties have led to notable improvements, challenges remain in promoting inter-state cooperation, prioritizing treaty obligations, and ensuring effective enforcement of regulations. The following key findings are observed from this study:

- Limited awareness and information dissemination: While respondents are aware of international environmental laws, they lack detailed information and understanding.
- Impact of international treaties: International treaties have influenced national policies, but have not fostered enhanced inter-state cooperation.
- Government commitment: The Nigerian government does not prioritize international treaty obligations in its water management agenda.

- Regulatory framework: The current regulatory framework is inadequate, lacking clarity and effective enforcement.
- Public awareness and participation: There is a lack of public awareness and limited community involvement in decision-making.
- Implementation challenges: Corruption, infrastructure limitations, and political instability hinder the effective implementation of international laws.
- Climate change adaptation: While international treaties support climate adaptation, Nigeria's water management policies do not fully address climate change impacts.

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