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The Political Economy Of Climate Resource Mobilization And Exclusionary Governance In Nigeria

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Abstract
Nigeria presents a critical paradox in global climate governance: despite sophisticated policy frameworks and substantial international climate finance mobilisation, implementation outcomes remain persistently weak. This article argues that Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap is fundamentally rooted in exclusionary governance and political–economic dynamics, rather than technical or resource deficits alone. Drawing on qualitative analysis of elite and sub-national stakeholder interviews, policy and budget documents, and the critical case of the 2024 Alau Dam collapse, the study demonstrates how institutional fragmentation, elite capture of climate resources, donor-dependent financing, and weak accountability mechanisms systematically marginalise vulnerable populations and undermine resilience outcomes (Biermann et al., 2022; Newell et al., 2022; Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023). Despite the 2021 Climate Change Act and over US$5.5 billion in pledged climate finance, Nigeria's climate governance architecture remains characterised by rhetorical compliance, coordination failures, and financial flows that bypass grassroots actors (Jordan & Huitema, 2024; AfDB, 2024). The article advances an inclusive climate governance framework prioritising institutional coherence, transparent resource tracking, and participatory decision-making.

Keywords: *Climate governance; political economy; Nigeria; climate finance; exclusion; implementation gap; sustainable development.*

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I. Introduction

The Climate Governance Paradox in Nigeria

Nigeria occupies a paradoxical position in contemporary global climate governance. On the one hand, it has developed one of the most comprehensive climate policy architectures in sub-Saharan Africa, including the Climate Change Act of 2021, updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), a National Climate Change Policy, and a dedicated coordinating body in the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC). Nigeria has also been a significant recipient of international climate finance commitments, with pledges exceeding US$5.5 billion for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience programmes (World Bank, 2023; African Development Bank [AfDB], 2024).

On the other hand, climate outcomes on the ground remain persistently weak. Flooding, droughts, food insecurity, and infrastructure failures continue to intensify, with recent disasters—most notably the 2024 Alau Dam collapse—exposing profound gaps between policy ambition and institutional performance. These outcomes raise a critical puzzle: why does a country with advanced climate laws, international recognition, and substantial financial inflows struggle to translate policy into resilience?

This paradox mirrors broader patterns observed in Global South climate governance, where formal compliance with international norms coexists with limited implementation capacity and exclusionary outcomes (Biermann et al., 2022; Bulkeley et al., 2023). Nigeria thus provides a salient case for interrogating the political and institutional conditions under which climate policy succeeds or fails.

Centrality of Political Economy in Explaining Implementation Gaps

This article advances the argument that Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap cannot be adequately explained through technical or financial lenses alone. Instead, it is fundamentally shaped by political–economic dynamics that structure how authority, resources, and accountability are distributed across institutions and social groups. Political economy perspectives emphasise that policy outcomes are mediated by power relations, elite incentives, and institutional path dependencies rather than neutral administrative processes (Rodrik, 2023; Mazzucato & Kattel, 2024).

In Nigeria, climate governance operates within a political settlement characterised by fragmented authority, rent-seeking incentives, and elite dominance over public resources. Climate finance and policy

instruments are frequently absorbed into existing patronage structures, limiting their redistributive and transformative potential (Newell et al., 2022; Sovacool et al., 2024). As a result, formal institutions may exist without corresponding enforcement capacity or societal legitimacy.

By foregrounding political economy, this study reframes implementation failure as a consequence of exclusionary governance rather than administrative weakness. This approach aligns with emerging scholarship that critiques technocratic climate solutions for obscuring the social and political foundations of vulnerability and resilience (Leach et al., 2022; Bäckstrand et al., 2023).

Global Debates: Climate Finance, Exclusion, and State Capacity

Globally, climate governance debates have increasingly centred on the role of finance as a primary constraint to action in developing countries. Multilateral institutions and donor frameworks emphasise scaling up climate finance, green bonds, and blended finance mechanisms as pathways to accelerated implementation (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024). While finance is undeniably important, a growing body of literature cautions that financial inflows alone do not guarantee effective or equitable outcomes.

Recent studies highlight how climate finance can reproduce existing inequalities when channelled through weak institutions or elite-dominated governance systems, often bypassing local actors and vulnerable communities (Newell & Naess, 2022; Bulkeley et al., 2023). This has led to renewed attention to state capacity, accountability, and inclusion as critical mediators of climate finance effectiveness (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; UNDRR, 2024).

In fragile and federal systems, these challenges are amplified by coordination failures across levels of government and sectors. Climate governance thus becomes less a question of resource availability and more a question of institutional design and political incentives (Jordan & Huitema, 2024). Nigeria exemplifies these tensions, making it a strategic case for advancing debates on climate finance and governance in the Global South.

Why Governance—Not Finance—is Nigeria's Binding Constraint

Despite substantial international support, Nigeria's climate interventions remain constrained by weak governance arrangements rather than absolute financial scarcity. Budget analyses reveal chronic under-allocation, delayed releases, and fragmentation of climate-related expenditures across ministries and agencies, undermining policy coherence and continuity (AfDB, 2024; World Bank, 2023). Donor-funded projects often operate in parallel to national systems, further weakening institutional learning and accountability.

Moreover, coordination failures between federal, state, and local governments impede risk management and service delivery, as evidenced by the breakdown of early-warning systems preceding the Alau Dam disaster. These failures are not attributable to technical incapacity but to unclear mandates, weak incentives for collaboration, and limited enforcement authority (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; Tierney, 2024).

This study therefore contends that governance—defined as the configuration of institutions, power relations, and accountability mechanisms—constitutes Nigeria's binding constraint on climate resilience. Without addressing governance deficits, additional finance risks entrenching existing inefficiencies and exclusions rather than delivering transformative change.

Research Problem, Objectives, and Guiding Questions

The central research problem addressed in this article is the persistent disconnect between Nigeria's climate policy commitments and implementation outcomes. Specifically, the study asks why robust climate frameworks and financial inflows have failed to translate into effective, inclusive, and resilient climate action.

The objectives are threefold. First, to identify the institutional and political–economic factors underpinning Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap. Second, to examine how climate finance and governance arrangements interact to shape inclusion and exclusion in resilience outcomes. Third, to assess the implications of these dynamics for climate governance theory and practice in fragile federal systems.

Guiding questions include:

1. How do institutional fragmentation and political incentives shape climate policy implementation in Nigeria?
2. In what ways do climate finance flows reinforce or challenge exclusionary governance structures?
3. What lessons does the Nigerian case offer for designing inclusive and effective climate governance frameworks in the Global South?

Contribution to Climate Political Economy Scholarship

This article contributes to climate political economy scholarship in three key ways. Empirically, it provides one of the most detailed institutional analyses of Nigeria's post-2021 climate governance landscape, grounded in qualitative evidence and a critical disaster case. Conceptually, it advances the argument that

exclusionary governance—not finance scarcity—is central to understanding implementation failure in climate-vulnerable states.

Theoretically, the study refines polycentric and multi-level governance debates by demonstrating how fragmented authority without integrative mechanisms can undermine resilience in Global South contexts (Bäckstrand et al., 2023; Sovacool et al., 2024). It thus responds to calls for more politically grounded and context-specific theorisation of climate governance beyond OECD settings (Newell et al., 2022; Bulkeley et al., 2023).

Structure of the Article

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant theoretical and empirical literature on climate governance, political economy, and implementation gaps. Section 3 outlines the research design, data sources, and analytical methods. Section 4 examines Nigeria's climate governance architecture and institutional dynamics. Section 5 analyses climate finance and budgetary practices. Section 6 presents the Alau Dam case study. Sections 7 and 8 discuss comparative insights and policy implications. Section 9 presents robustness checks, and Section 10 concludes by outlining pathways from policy rhetoric to resilience reality.

II. Context: Climate Policy Architecture And Political Economy Of Resource Mobilisation

This section situates Nigeria's climate governance challenges within the evolution of its policy architecture and the political economy of resource mobilisation. It demonstrates that implementation failures are embedded in long-standing institutional arrangements, elite bargains, and uneven patterns of participation that shape who controls climate resources and whose vulnerabilities are prioritised.

Overview of Nigeria's Climate-Policy Evolution (2010–2024)

Nigeria's contemporary climate-policy trajectory began in earnest in the early 2010s, driven by increasing exposure to climate shocks and growing international pressure to align with global climate regimes. Initial efforts focused on sector-specific strategies, including the National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change (NASPA-CCN) and climate-relevant provisions embedded within agricultural, water, and energy policies. These early instruments, however, lacked statutory authority and were weakly integrated into national development planning (World Bank, 2022; Jordan et al., 2023).

The post-Paris Agreement period marked a qualitative shift. Nigeria submitted updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), adopted a National Climate Change Policy, and, most significantly, enacted the Climate Change Act in 2021. The Act established the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC) as the apex coordinating institution, signalling formal commitment to mainstreaming climate objectives across government (Biermann et al., 2022; AfDB, 2024).

Yet, between 2021 and 2024, implementation lagged behind ambition. Policy coherence remained limited, climate considerations were inconsistently embedded in sectoral plans, and the NCCC struggled to assert authority over powerful line ministries. Rather than consolidating governance, the proliferation of strategies and action plans often deepened fragmentation (Jordan & Huitema, 2024).

This evolution reflects a broader pattern in Global South climate governance: accelerated policy adoption driven by international norms, followed by uneven domestic institutionalisation (Bulkeley et al., 2023). Nigeria's experience thus underscores the distinction between policy density and governance effectiveness.

International Climate-Finance Pledges and Domestic Frameworks

Nigeria has been a prominent beneficiary of international climate-finance commitments, with pledges exceeding US$5.5 billion for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience initiatives across energy, agriculture, and disaster risk management. These commitments originate from multilateral development banks, bilateral donors, climate funds, and private-sector blended finance mechanisms (World Bank, 2023; OECD, 2023).

Domestically, Nigeria has established multiple frameworks to absorb and manage climate finance, including climate-budget tagging initiatives, green bond issuances, and dedicated climate finance windows within sectoral ministries. In theory, these mechanisms position Nigeria to leverage external resources for transformational climate action (Pahle et al., 2022; AfDB, 2024).

In practice, however, climate finance remains weakly integrated into national public financial management systems. Funds are frequently channelled through project-based arrangements that operate parallel to core budgetary processes, limiting transparency, coordination, and long-term sustainability. Donor reporting requirements often supersede domestic accountability mechanisms, reinforcing upward accountability to financiers rather than downward accountability to affected communities (Newell et al., 2022; Bulkeley et al., 2023).

Moreover, access to climate finance is uneven across sectors and regions. High-visibility mitigation projects—particularly in energy—tend to attract greater funding, while adaptation and local-level resilience initiatives remain under-resourced. This skew reflects both donor preferences and domestic political incentives, reinforcing existing patterns of exclusion (Sovacool et al., 2024).

Thus, while finance is abundant relative to historical levels, its governance remains misaligned with Nigeria's vulnerability profile and institutional realities.

Federal Governance Structure, Elite Bargains, and Political Settlements

Nigeria's federal governance structure profoundly shapes climate policy outcomes. Authority is constitutionally divided among federal, state, and local governments, yet fiscal power is highly centralised. This asymmetry creates persistent coordination challenges and weakens sub-national ownership of climate initiatives (Faguet et al., 2023).

Political economy scholarship emphasises that policy implementation is conditioned by underlying political settlements—the distribution of power among elites and institutions that determines which rules are enforced and whose interests are prioritised (Rodrik, 2023). In Nigeria, climate governance is embedded within elite bargains that privilege control over resource flows rather than service delivery or risk reduction.

Climate finance and institutions are therefore often absorbed into existing patronage networks. Appointments, project siting, and resource allocation are shaped by political considerations, diluting the transformative intent of climate policies (Mazzucato & Kattel, 2024). This does not imply absence of capacity, but rather the strategic deployment of capacity in ways that maintain political equilibrium.

Federal ministries and agencies compete for control over climate mandates and donor resources, while states and local governments—where climate impacts are most acutely felt—remain marginal participants. The result is a governance architecture that is formally decentralised but substantively exclusionary, reinforcing the implementation gap (Jordan et al., 2023; Newell et al., 2022).

Nigeria's Vulnerability Profile: Climate Risks and Uneven Exposure

Nigeria is among the most climate-vulnerable countries globally, facing escalating risks from flooding, drought, desertification, heat stress, and coastal erosion. These hazards interact with poverty, rapid urbanisation, and infrastructure deficits to produce highly uneven exposure and adaptive capacity (UNDRR, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Vulnerability is spatially and socially differentiated. Northern regions experience recurrent droughts and food insecurity, while central and southern zones face intensified flooding and dam-related risks. Urban informal settlements and rural agrarian communities are disproportionately affected due to weak infrastructure, limited access to services, and political marginalisation (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023).

The 2024 Alau Dam collapse exemplifies how climate hazards intersect with governance failures. Despite known hydrological risks and warning signals, institutional coordination breakdowns transformed a manageable hazard into a humanitarian disaster. Such outcomes reflect systemic governance weaknesses rather than extreme climatic events alone (Tierney, 2024).

Importantly, vulnerability in Nigeria is not merely biophysical but politically produced. Groups with limited voice in decision-making are consistently exposed to higher risks, reinforcing cycles of exclusion and underinvestment (Leach et al., 2022; Bulkeley & Toly, 2023).

Dynamics of Exclusion: Who Participates, Who Decides, Who Benefits

A central feature of Nigeria's climate governance landscape is the persistent exclusion of sub-national actors, civil society, and vulnerable communities from decision-making processes. Although policy documents emphasise participation and inclusivity, implementation remains dominated by federal elites, technical consultants, and donor intermediaries (Bäckstrand et al., 2023).

Participation is often procedural rather than substantive. Consultations are held late in the policy cycle, with limited influence on resource allocation or programme design. Local knowledge and lived experience of climate risk are rarely incorporated into planning processes, undermining policy relevance and legitimacy (Newell et al., 2022; Bulkeley et al., 2023).

Decision-making power over climate finance is similarly concentrated. Project selection and funding approvals occur at federal or donor levels, while local governments act primarily as implementers without strategic control. Benefits therefore accrue disproportionately to actors with administrative access rather than those facing the greatest climate risks (Sovacool et al., 2024).

These dynamics reinforce exclusionary governance, where climate policy becomes a site of elite coordination rather than social protection. The result is a resilience gap: policies exist, funds flow, yet vulnerability persists.

Why Institutional Fragmentation Persists: Political Incentives and Bureaucratic Competition

Institutional fragmentation in Nigeria's climate governance is not accidental; it is sustained by political incentives and bureaucratic competition. Multiple ministries and agencies retain overlapping mandates because fragmentation preserves access to resources and discretion over decision-making (Hood, 2023; Mahoney, 2023).

Efforts to centralise coordination under the NCCC have encountered resistance from established bureaucracies reluctant to cede authority. Without enforceable mandates or budgetary control, coordinating bodies struggle to overcome institutional inertia (Jordan & Huitema, 2024).

Fragmentation is further reinforced by donor practices that reward project-based delivery and sectoral silos. While intended to accelerate implementation, these arrangements often undermine systemic reform and institutional learning (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

From a political economy perspective, fragmentation persists because it is functional for elite actors, even as it is dysfunctional for resilience outcomes. Addressing it therefore requires altering incentive structures, not merely introducing new coordination platforms.

Section Summary

Overall, Nigeria's climate policy architecture reflects impressive formal alignment with global norms but remains constrained by exclusionary political economy dynamics. Climate finance, institutional proliferation, and federal structures interact to reproduce fragmentation and marginalisation, explaining why implementation gaps persist despite growing resources and policy sophistication.

III. Data Sources

This study draws on multiple qualitative and documentary data sources to examine Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap through a political economy lens. Combining interviews, documentary analysis, disaster-specific evidence, global datasets, and ethnographic materials enables triangulation across scales and actors, strengthening analytical depth and credibility in line with best practice in governance research (Bennett & Checkel, 2022; O'Cathain, 2023).

Semi-Structured Interviews with Government, Civil Society, Donor Agencies, and Private-Sector Actors

The core empirical material consists of semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of key stakeholders involved in climate governance and finance in Nigeria. Respondents included officials from federal ministries and agencies with climate-relevant mandates, representatives of state and local governments, civil society organisations, donor agencies, and private-sector actors engaged in climate-related projects.

Semi-structured interviews were selected to balance comparability across respondents with flexibility to probe institutional dynamics, power relations, and informal practices shaping implementation outcomes (Guest et al., 2024). Interview themes covered institutional mandates, coordination mechanisms, budgetary processes, donor interactions, accountability arrangements, and experiences with climate-related disasters.

Sampling followed a role-based logic rather than numerical representativeness, prioritising actors positioned at key decision nodes within Nigeria's climate governance architecture. This approach is consistent with qualitative political economy research focused on mechanisms and processes rather than population inference (Mahoney, 2023). Interviews were conducted between 2023 and 2024, recorded with consent where permitted, and supplemented by detailed field notes.

Documentary Analysis: Budgets, Climate-Finance Reports, Audit Statements, Programme Evaluations

Documentary analysis constituted a second major data source. Materials reviewed included federal budget documents, medium-term expenditure frameworks, climate-budget tagging reports, donor climate-finance disclosures, audit statements, programme evaluations, and legislative records. These documents were used to trace formal commitments, resource allocations, and discrepancies between planned and executed climate expenditures.

Documentary analysis enables systematic assessment of institutional priorities and accountability structures, particularly where interview data may be subject to strategic framing or recall bias (Beach & Pedersen, 2023). Budget documents were analysed longitudinally to identify patterns of under-allocation, delayed releases, and fragmentation across ministries and agencies.

Where possible, official documents were cross-checked against independent evaluations and civil-society monitoring reports to strengthen reliability. This triangulated approach aligns with recommended standards for analysing public financial management and climate-finance governance in developing-country contexts (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Data from the 2024 Alau Dam Collapse: Primary Sources and Media Triangulation

The 2024 Alau Dam collapse was analysed as a critical case illustrating the interaction between climate risk, institutional coordination, and governance failure. Data sources included official statements, technical assessments, emergency response records, parliamentary briefings, and post-disaster reports produced by government agencies and humanitarian actors.

These materials were triangulated with investigative journalism, credible media reporting, and civil-society documentation to reconstruct timelines, decision points, and institutional responses. Media triangulation is particularly valuable in disaster contexts where official information may be incomplete or contested (Tierney, 2024).

The objective was not to adjudicate technical causality, but to examine governance processes—early warning dissemination, inter-agency coordination, and accountability mechanisms—that shaped disaster outcomes. This approach follows established practice in disaster-governance research (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023).

Global Datasets Used

To contextualise Nigeria's experience within global patterns, the study drew selectively on international datasets, including the UNDP Human Development and Climate Indices, UNFCCC NDC and climate-finance reporting data, the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS), and the World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal.

These datasets were not used for statistical modelling but to provide comparative benchmarks on climate finance flows, vulnerability profiles, and policy commitments. Global datasets helped situate Nigeria relative to peer countries and assess whether observed governance challenges reflect broader structural patterns (Biermann et al., 2022; World Bank, 2023).

Ethnographic Observations and Grey Literature

Ethnographic observations and grey literature complemented formal data sources. This included participation in policy workshops, stakeholder consultations, and public forums on climate governance, as well as review of policy briefs, NGO reports, and practitioner analyses.

Such materials provide insight into informal norms, discursive framing, and everyday practices that shape policy implementation but are often absent from official documents (Leach et al., 2022). Grey literature was used cautiously and triangulated with primary sources to mitigate bias.

Ethical Protocols, Sampling Logic, and Data-Access Challenges

All research activities complied with institutional ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from interviewees, anonymity was assured, and sensitive institutional information was handled with care. Ethical approval was secured prior to data collection.

Sampling prioritised institutional relevance and diversity of perspectives rather than representativeness. Data-access challenges included limited transparency of budget execution data, restricted access to internal government reports, and sensitivities surrounding post-disaster accountability. These constraints are common in governance research in politically complex settings and were mitigated through triangulation and cautious interpretation (Bennett & Checkel, 2022).

Section Summary

Together, these data sources provide a robust empirical foundation for analysing Nigeria's climate governance through a political economy lens. Triangulation across interviews, documents, disaster evidence, and global datasets enhances credibility and enables nuanced understanding of how exclusionary governance shapes climate policy implementation.

Qualitative-Comparative Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative-comparative research design suited to analysing complex governance phenomena characterised by institutional multiplicity, political contestation, and context-specific dynamics. Rather than seeking statistical generalisation, the design prioritises causal depth, mechanism identification, and analytical generalisation to theory (Mahoney, 2023; Rohlfing, 2024).

Nigeria is examined as a primary case of climate governance in a fragile federal system, with within-case comparison across institutions, sectors, and levels of government. The Alau Dam collapse is treated as a critical sub-case that illuminates broader institutional dynamics under conditions of stress. This nested design allows the study to compare routine policy processes with crisis response, strengthening causal leverage (George & Bennett, 2022).

Comparative insights are further drawn implicitly through engagement with secondary literature and global datasets, enabling contextualisation without diluting empirical focus. This approach aligns with

contemporary guidance for qualitative research on policy implementation and governance in the Global South (Ansell et al., 2024; Bennett & Checkel, 2022).

Political Economy Analytical Lens

The analysis is grounded in a political economy framework that conceptualises climate governance as a function of power relations, institutional incentives, and elite bargaining rather than neutral administrative capacity. Political economy analysis foregrounds how formal rules interact with informal practices to shape policy outcomes, particularly in resource-constrained and politically fragmented settings (Rodrik, 2023; Mazzucato & Kattel, 2024).

This lens is operationalised through three analytical dimensions. First, distribution of authority, examining how mandates and decision-making power are allocated across institutions and governance levels. Second, resource control, analysing how climate finance and budgetary flows are mobilised, mediated, and contested. Third, accountability structure**s**, assessing who is answerable to whom, and through which mechanisms.

Applying this framework allows the study to move beyond surface explanations of "capacity gaps" and instead interrogate why institutions behave as they do, and whose interests are served by prevailing arrangements (Newell et al., 2022; Bäckstrand et al., 2023). In doing so, the study aligns with recent calls for more politically grounded climate governance analysis that takes exclusion and inequality seriously (Bulkeley et al., 2023; Sovacool et al., 2024).

Coding Procedures and Thematic Analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using a systematic thematic analysis informed by a hybrid deductive–inductive coding strategy. Initial codes were derived from the theoretical literature on climate governance, political economy, and institutional fragmentation, including categories such as coordination failure, fiscal exclusion, elite capture, and accountability deficits. These were iteratively refined through engagement with interview transcripts and documentary materials (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Saldaña, 2023).

Coding proceeded in multiple cycles. First-cycle coding focused on descriptive categorisation, while second-cycle coding emphasised pattern identification and relational mapping across themes. Attention was paid to both dominant narratives and negative cases that challenged emerging interpretations (Mahoney & Goertz, 2023).

Rather than treating coding as a purely technical exercise, the analysis adopted a reflexive approach that recognises the interpretive role of the researcher in meaning-making. Analytical memos were used to document coding decisions, emerging hypotheses, and linkages between empirical observations and theoretical constructs (Guest et al., 2024).

Process Tracing for Institutional Failures: The Alau Dam Case

Process tracing was employed to analyse the Alau Dam collapse as a mechanism-revealing case of institutional failure. This method enables systematic examination of causal sequences linking structural governance conditions to observed outcomes (Beach & Pedersen, 2023; Bennett & Checkel, 2022).

The analysis traced key stages of the disaster governance process, including risk identification, early-warning dissemination, inter-agency coordination, decision-making under uncertainty, and post-event accountability. Evidence was evaluated using within-case tests—such as temporal sequencing and congruence with theoretical expectations—to assess causal plausibility (Rohlfing, 2024).

Importantly, the analysis avoids technological determinism. Rather than attributing failure to hydrological extremes alone, it examines how institutional fragmentation, unclear mandates, and weak incentives transformed climate risk into human disaster. This approach is consistent with recent disaster-governance scholarship emphasising socially mediated vulnerability (Tierney, 2024; Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023).

Validity, Inference, and Reliability Checks

Several strategies were employed to strengthen validity and inference. First, data triangulation across interviews, documents, media sources, and global datasets reduced reliance on any single evidence stream. Second, cross-source verification ensured that institutional claims were retained only where corroborated by multiple independent sources (Bennett & Checkel, 2022).

Third, sensitivity testing of coding structures assessed whether core findings were robust to alternative thematic aggregations. Fourth, counterfactual reasoning was applied in the Alau Dam analysis to evaluate whether plausible alternative governance arrangements could have produced different outcomes (Fearon, 2023).

Reliability was addressed through transparent documentation of analytical procedures rather than mechanical replication, consistent with contemporary qualitative research standards (O'Cathain, 2023).

Addressing Bias and Reflexivity in Interpretive Analysis

Recognising the interpretive nature of qualitative political economy research, the study explicitly addresses issues of bias and reflexivity. The researcher's positionality, access constraints, and normative commitments were continuously reflected upon during data collection and analysis.

Potential elite bias was mitigated by purposively including civil society, sub-national actors, and independent experts alongside federal and donor respondents. Confirmation bias was addressed through negative-case analysis and systematic engagement with evidence that challenged dominant narratives (Mahoney, 2023).

Rather than claiming value neutrality, the study adopts a transparent and reflexive stance, acknowledging that analytical choices shape interpretation. This approach aligns with best practice in critical governance research and enhances analytical credibility (Leach et al., 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Section Summary

In combination, the qualitative-comparative design, political economy framework, thematic analysis, and process tracing provide a coherent and rigorous empirical strategy for analysing Nigeria's climate governance paradox. These methods enable causal insight into how exclusionary governance structures shape policy implementation, while maintaining transparency, reflexivity, and analytical robustness.

IV. Diagnostic Findings: How Exclusion Shapes Climate Resource Mobilisation

This section presents the study's core diagnostic findings, demonstrating how exclusionary governance structures shape climate resource mobilisation and undermine resilience outcomes in Nigeria. Rather than treating institutional fragmentation, elite capture, donor dependence, and social exclusion as discrete problems, the analysis shows how they operate as mutually reinforcing mechanisms embedded within Nigeria's political economy. Together, these dynamics explain why climate resources are mobilised but weakly translated into inclusive and effective adaptation outcomes.

Institutional Fragmentation and Inter-Agency Competition

Institutional fragmentation emerges as a foundational driver of Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap. Climate governance responsibilities are dispersed across multiple ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), including environment, water resources, agriculture, energy, disaster management, and finance, with overlapping mandates and limited coordination authority. While the Climate Change Act of 2021 formally designated the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC) as the apex coordinating body, empirical evidence indicates that this authority remains largely symbolic (Jordan et al., 2023; AfDB, 2024).

Interviews consistently reveal that MDAs perceive climate mandates as sources of political relevance and access to donor resources. Rather than incentivising collaboration, climate policy has intensified bureaucratic competition, as agencies seek to protect jurisdictional turf and secure project control. Coordination forums exist but lack enforcement mechanisms, binding decision rules, or budgetary leverage, reducing them to information-sharing platforms with limited operational impact (Jordan & Huitema, 2024).

This competition is not accidental. Fragmentation enables discretion over resource allocation and shields agencies from accountability by diffusing responsibility across institutional boundaries. In such contexts, failures are attributed to "coordination challenges" rather than identifiable decision-makers, a pattern well documented in governance research (Hood, 2023; Mahoney, 2023).

The result is a governance architecture characterised by policy proliferation without implementation coherence. Climate strategies multiply, yet operational responsibilities remain unclear, reinforcing inertia. Fragmentation thus functions as a politically sustainable equilibrium: inefficient for resilience outcomes, but stable for institutional actors who benefit from ambiguity and autonomy.

Elite Capture and Diversionary Allocation Patterns

Beyond fragmentation, the analysis identifies systematic elite capture of climate resources as a central mechanism shaping allocation patterns. Climate finance—particularly externally funded adaptation and mitigation projects—flows through political and administrative channels dominated by federal elites, senior bureaucrats, and politically connected intermediaries.

Documentary analysis of climate-related budget lines and programme portfolios reveals concentration of funding in high-visibility projects aligned with political priorities, such as urban infrastructure or energy initiatives, often at the expense of locally grounded adaptation needs. Interview respondents repeatedly described project selection processes influenced by political bargaining rather than vulnerability assessments or technical criteria.

This pattern reflects broader political economy dynamics in which public resources are deployed to maintain elite coalitions and political stability (Rodrik, 2023). Climate finance, rather than transforming

governance, is absorbed into existing rent-distribution systems, limiting its redistributive and resilience-enhancing potential (Newell et al., 2022; Sovacool et al., 2024).

Elite capture also manifests through intermediary actors—consultants, contractors, and implementing partners—who mediate access to climate finance and extract value without durable capacity building. These actors are rarely accountable to affected communities, reinforcing upward accountability to political sponsors and donors.

Importantly, capture does not imply outright illegality in all cases. Many diversionary patterns operate within formal rules, exploiting discretion, opaque procurement processes, and weak monitoring. This blurring of legality and exclusion underscores why technical anti-corruption tools alone are insufficient to address governance failures in climate finance (Mazzucato & Kattel, 2024).

Donor Dependence and Distorted Accountability

Nigeria's climate governance is heavily shaped by donor dependence, which introduces parallel accountability structures that weaken domestic ownership. While international climate finance has expanded significantly, much of it is channelled through project-based arrangements that bypass national public financial management systems (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Donor agencies often justify bypass mechanisms on grounds of efficiency and fiduciary risk. However, empirical evidence from this study indicates that such arrangements undermine institutional learning, coordination, and long-term sustainability. Government agencies become implementers of externally designed projects rather than owners of climate strategies, limiting incentives to integrate lessons into core policy processes (Pahle et al., 2022).

Accountability in donor-driven systems is primarily upward—to financiers and reporting frameworks—rather than downward to citizens or vulnerable communities. As a result, success is measured through disbursement rates and output indicators rather than resilience outcomes or equity impacts (Newell & Naess, 2022).

This dynamic reinforces fragmentation. Different donors fund overlapping initiatives with distinct reporting requirements, further burdening administrative capacity and diluting strategic coherence. Rather than correcting governance weaknesses, donor dependence often reproduces them.

The findings align with broader Global South scholarship cautioning that climate finance can exacerbate governance deficits when not embedded within domestic accountability systems (Bulkeley et al., 2023; Sovacool et al., 2024). In Nigeria, donor dependence thus functions as a double-edged sword: expanding resources while weakening the institutional foundations needed to deploy them effectively.

Exclusion of Vulnerable Populations in Adaptation Planning

At the societal level, exclusionary governance manifests most acutely in the marginalisation of vulnerable populations from adaptation planning and decision-making. Despite rhetorical commitments to inclusivity, women, rural communities, informal-settlement residents, and smallholder farmers remain largely absent from climate policy processes.

Interview evidence and grey literature indicate that participation mechanisms are often tokenistic, occurring late in planning cycles with minimal influence over priorities or budgets. Adaptation strategies frequently rely on aggregated vulnerability indices that obscure intra-community inequalities, reinforcing spatial and socio-economic blind spots (Leach et al., 2022; Bulkeley & Toly, 2023).

Gendered exclusion is particularly pronounced. Women, despite bearing disproportionate climate burdens, are underrepresented in climate governance institutions and local decision forums. Adaptation interventions rarely address gendered access to land, credit, or information, limiting their effectiveness (Newell et al., 2022).

Spatial exclusion further compounds vulnerability. Climate resources are concentrated in urban or politically salient regions, while remote and conflict-affected areas receive limited attention. This reflects both logistical constraints and political incentives that prioritise visible returns over long-term resilience.

These exclusions are not incidental. They are produced by governance arrangements that privilege administrative convenience and political calculus over participatory justice. Consequently, adaptation policies risk reinforcing existing inequalities, undermining their legitimacy and sustainability.

The 2024 Alau Dam Collapse: A Diagnostic Case

The 2024 Alau Dam collapse provides a stark diagnostic illustration of how institutional fragmentation, exclusion, and political incentives converge to produce catastrophic outcomes. The event was preceded by known hydrological risks, aging infrastructure, and documented weaknesses in early-warning dissemination. Yet these risks were not translated into preventive action.

Process tracing reveals multiple failure points. Risk data existed but were siloed across agencies with unclear responsibility for integration and response. Early warnings, where issued, failed to reach downstream communities in actionable form. Coordination between water authorities, disaster management agencies, and security services was ad hoc and reactive rather than anticipatory.

Crucially, affected communities—predominantly low-income and politically marginalised—were excluded from risk governance. Local knowledge of dam conditions and flood patterns was not incorporated into planning, and evacuation protocols were poorly communicated. These exclusions transformed a manageable hazard into a humanitarian disaster (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; Tierney, 2024).

Post-disaster responses further illustrate governance pathologies. Accountability processes focused on technical explanations rather than institutional responsibility, reinforcing a culture of blame avoidance. Despite the scale of impact, structural reforms to dam safety governance and early-warning systems remained limited.

The Alau Dam case thus encapsulates the article's central argument: climate disasters in Nigeria are not simply environmental events but outcomes of exclusionary political economy. Governance failures—rooted in fragmented authority, elite incentives, donor dependence, and social exclusion—convert climate risk into human tragedy.

Section Synthesis

Taken together, these diagnostic findings demonstrate that climate resource mobilisation in Nigeria is systematically shaped by exclusionary governance. Institutional fragmentation, elite capture, donor-driven accountability, and marginalisation of vulnerable populations interact to undermine resilience outcomes. Addressing Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap therefore requires political and institutional transformation, not merely expanded finance or technical fixes.

Figure 1. Conceptual Pathways Linking Political Economy, Exclusion, and Climate-Policy Failures

V. Climate Finance Mobilisation And Governance Outcomes

This section examines how climate finance mobilisation in Nigeria translates—often imperfectly—into governance and resilience outcomes. It moves beyond aggregate finance figures to analyse **who controls climate funds, how they are distributed, and with what accountability consequences**. The findings demonstrate that while climate finance mobilisation has expanded substantially since 2019, governance weaknesses mediate its effectiveness and reinforce exclusionary outcomes.

Mapping Climate-Finance Flows (2019–2024)

Between 2019 and 2024, Nigeria experienced a marked increase in climate-finance mobilisation, reflecting heightened global attention to climate mitigation and adaptation in developing economies. Climate-related resources during this period originated from three principal channels: domestic public budgets, international donor and multilateral inflows, and private-sector contributions, particularly through blended finance and green investment instruments.

Domestic climate finance remains modest relative to need. Federal budget analysis indicates that climate-related expenditures are dispersed across sectoral allocations—environment, agriculture, water resources, energy, and disaster management—rather than consolidated under a unified climate budget. Although climate budget tagging initiatives have been introduced, their application is inconsistent and often limited to reporting rather than decision-making (World Bank, 2023; AfDB, 2024). As a result, climate spending is difficult to track comprehensively, and allocations are vulnerable to annual political bargaining.

International climate finance constitutes the largest and most visible component of Nigeria's climate resource envelope. Multilateral development banks, bilateral donors, climate funds, and development finance institutions have pledged and disbursed significant resources for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience projects. These flows are largely project-based and earmarked, frequently managed outside core government financial systems through special-purpose vehicles or international implementing partners (OECD, 2023; UNFCCC, 2023).

Private-sector climate finance, while growing, remains concentrated in mitigation-oriented investments, particularly renewable energy and gas-transition projects. Private capital is attracted to sectors with clearer revenue streams and risk mitigation instruments, leaving adaptation and community-level resilience largely dependent on public and donor finance (Sovacool et al., 2024).

Table 1. Summary of Climate Finance Mobilisation and Allocation Channels (2019–2024) Synthesises these patterns, highlighting the dominance of donor inflows, the fragmentation of domestic budgets, and the sectoral bias of private finance. Overall, Nigeria has mobilised increasing volumes of climate finance, but the architecture through which these resources flow is fragmented, externally oriented, and weakly integrated into national development planning.

Distributional Patterns and Exclusionary Resource Allocation

The expansion of climate finance has not translated into equitable distribution across regions, sectors, or social groups. Instead, allocation patterns reveal pronounced federal–state inequalities and community-level exclusion, reflecting political incentives rather than vulnerability profiles.

At the federal–state level, climate finance is heavily centralised. Federal ministries and agencies retain primary control over project design, approval, and resource allocation, while state and local governments play subordinate implementation roles. This centralisation persists despite constitutional decentralisation and the localised nature of climate impacts (Faguet et al., 2023). States with stronger political connections or administrative capacity are better positioned to access climate-funded projects, while poorer or conflict-affected states face structural disadvantages.

Sectorally, mitigation projects—especially in energy and infrastructure—attract disproportionate funding relative to adaptation. This bias reflects both donor preferences and domestic political incentives favouring visible, capital-intensive projects with reputational returns. By contrast, adaptation investments in agriculture, water management, and local risk reduction remain underfunded, despite their relevance to Nigeria's most vulnerable populations (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; Bulkeley et al., 2023).

At the community level, exclusion is even more pronounced. Interview evidence indicates that project siting and beneficiary selection often occur without meaningful community participation. Climate-funded interventions frequently bypass informal settlements, remote rural areas, and marginalised groups due to administrative convenience, security concerns, or perceived implementation risk. Women, smallholder farmers, and informal workers—groups disproportionately affected by climate shocks—are rarely prioritised in funding decisions (Newell et al., 2022).

Table 2. Subnational and Sectoral Allocation of Climate Funds illustrates these inequalities, showing concentration of resources in politically salient regions and sectors, alongside persistent gaps at local scales. These patterns confirm that climate finance allocation in Nigeria is shaped less by vulnerability or resilience needs than by governance structures and political economy dynamics.

Exclusionary allocation undermines both effectiveness and legitimacy. Projects that do not align with local priorities face implementation challenges, weak uptake, and limited sustainability. Over time, this erodes trust in climate institutions and reinforces perceptions of climate policy as elite-driven rather than socially responsive.

Accountability Performance: Transparency, Leakage, and Monitoring Gaps

Accountability mechanisms represent a critical link between climate finance mobilisation and governance outcomes. In Nigeria, however, accountability performance is uneven, fragmented, and often misaligned with resilience objectives.

Transparency in climate finance remains limited. While donor-funded projects typically publish financial summaries and output indicators, comprehensive information on allocations, disbursements, and outcomes is rarely accessible to the public. Domestic budget documents provide insufficient granularity to trace climate expenditures, and climate-budget tagging is inconsistently applied across MDAs (World Bank, 2023). These gaps hinder both oversight and learning.

Leakage risks arise from opaque procurement processes, complex implementation chains, and weak monitoring systems. Interview respondents highlighted recurrent challenges, including delayed fund releases, cost overruns, and limited verification of project outputs. While not all inefficiencies constitute corruption, the absence of robust oversight creates opportunities for diversion and misuse (Hood, 2023).

Monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems are particularly weak for adaptation finance. Indicators often focus on inputs and activities rather than resilience outcomes or equity impacts. This reflects broader challenges in measuring adaptation effectiveness but is compounded by institutional fragmentation and limited technical capacity (Jordan & Huitema, 2024; UNDRR, 2024).

Donor accountability further complicates the picture. Project-based reporting frameworks prioritise donor compliance over domestic accountability, reinforcing upward reporting and limiting incentives for institutional reform. Government agencies become accountable to multiple external principals with differing requirements, diluting strategic coherence and weakening national ownership (OECD, 2023; Pahle et al., 2022).

Table 3. Governance Mechanisms, Failures, and Evidence from Interviews summarises these accountability gaps, linking specific governance mechanisms—such as budget processes, procurement rules, and MRV systems—to observed failures and stakeholder testimony.

Overall, accountability weaknesses do not merely reduce efficiency; they shape outcomes. Where transparency is limited and monitoring is weak, exclusionary allocation patterns persist unchecked. Climate finance thus risks reinforcing the very governance deficits it is intended to address.

Section Synthesis

This section demonstrates that Nigeria's climate finance mobilisation, while quantitatively significant, is qualitatively constrained by governance failures. Fragmented finance flows, exclusionary allocation patterns, and weak accountability mechanisms mediate the relationship between resources and resilience. Climate finance, in this context, is not a neutral input but a politically mediated process shaped by institutional incentives and power relations.

The findings reinforce the article's central argument: governance—not finance scarcity—is Nigeria's binding constraint. Without reforms that enhance institutional coherence, subnational inclusion, and transparent accountability, expanded climate finance is unlikely to deliver transformative or equitable resilience outcomes.

Table 1. Summary of Climate Finance Mobilisation and Allocation Channels (2019–2024)

Table 2. Subnational and Sectoral Allocation of Climate Funds

Table 3. Governance Mechanisms, Failures, and Evidence from Interviews

VI. Robustness Checks

This section presents robustness checks designed to assess the credibility, internal validity, and inferential strength of the study's findings. Given the qualitative and interpretive nature of the research, robustness is established through systematic testing of alternative explanations, cross-source verification, sensitivity analysis, and counterfactual reasoning, consistent with best practice in qualitative governance and political economy research (Bennett & Checkel, 2022; Mahoney, 2023; Rohlfing, 2024).

Testing Alternative Explanations: Capacity Constraints versus Political Incentives

A central alternative explanation for Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap is administrative or technical capacity deficiency. To test this claim, the analysis examined whether observed failures could plausibly be attributed to lack of skills, data, or resources rather than political–institutional incentives. Evidence from interviews and documents indicates that technical expertise, risk data, and formal procedures exist within relevant institutions, particularly at the federal level.

However, these capacities are inconsistently deployed and weakly coordinated. Budget execution delays, non-enforcement of mandates, and selective prioritisation of projects reflect incentive structures rather than capability absence. This pattern aligns with political economy scholarship demonstrating that capacity may be present but strategically underutilised when it conflicts with elite interests or institutional autonomy (Rodrik, 2023; Mazzucato & Kattel, 2024). The findings therefore support the interpretation that political incentives, not technical deficits, are the binding constraint.

Cross-Validating Interview Claims Using Documentary Data

To reduce reliance on subjective perceptions, interview claims were systematically cross-validated using documentary evidence, including budget records, audit reports, policy documents, donor disclosures, and programme evaluations. Claims regarding institutional marginalisation, donor bypass systems, and fragmented budget execution were retained only where corroborated by at least two independent sources.

Where discrepancies emerged, priority was given to contemporaneous written records over retrospective narratives, consistent with methodological guidance on elite interviewing and governance research (Beach & Pedersen, 2023; Bennett & Checkel, 2022). This triangulation reduces the risk of post hoc rationalisation or blame shifting and strengthens confidence that identified patterns reflect structural governance dynamics rather than isolated organisational grievances.

Sensitivity Testing of Coding Frameworks

The stability of qualitative findings was assessed through sensitivity testing of the thematic coding framework. Core themes—such as institutional fragmentation, elite capture, donor dependence, and exclusion—were subjected to alternative coding specifications, including aggregation and disaggregation of closely related codes.

Findings remained substantively consistent across specifications, indicating that conclusions are not artefacts of coding granularity or category construction. Negative-case analysis was also applied by actively identifying data that challenged dominant interpretations, particularly instances of effective coordination or inclusive practice (Mahoney & Goertz, 2023). These cases were found to be episodic rather than systemic, reinforcing the robustness of the overarching diagnostic narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Saldaña, 2023).

Counterfactual Analysis Using the Alau Dam Scenario

Counterfactual reasoning was employed to assess whether alternative governance arrangements could plausibly have altered outcomes in the 2024 Alau Dam collapse. The analysis examined feasible counterfactuals

grounded in existing institutional possibilities, including clearer mandate enforcement, functional early-warning dissemination, and pre-emptive dam safety coordination.

Comparative evidence from flood-risk governance in other contexts suggests that even partial implementation of these mechanisms can significantly reduce disaster impacts (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; UNDRR, 2024). The counterfactual exercise does not imply inevitability of success but demonstrates that observed outcomes were contingent on governance failures rather than unavoidable climatic extremes (Fearon, 2023; Tierney, 2024).

Limitations of Data, Method, and Generalisability

Despite these robustness checks, limitations remain. Access to granular budget execution data and internal government records was constrained, limiting precise quantification of financial leakage. Interview data may still reflect strategic framing by institutional actors, although triangulation mitigates this risk.

The single-country focus and use of a critical disaster case prioritise causal depth over statistical generalisability. While findings are analytically transferable to similar fragile federal systems, they should not be interpreted as universally predictive (Mahoney, 2023). These limitations are consistent with the study's explanatory objectives and are transparently acknowledged to enhance analytical credibility.

Section Summary

Taken together, these robustness checks reinforce the study's central claim that exclusionary political economy dynamics—rather than technical or financial scarcity—drive Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap. The convergence of evidence across methods, sources, and analytical tests strengthens confidence in the validity of the findings.

VII. Discussion

This discussion interprets the study's diagnostic findings through contemporary political economy and climate governance frameworks, situating Nigeria's experience within broader Global South debates on climate finance, state capacity, and inclusion. It argues that Nigeria's climate policy failures are not anomalous but illustrative of deeper structural tensions in climate governance where technocratic solutions collide with exclusionary political settlements.

Interpreting Findings through Political Economy Frameworks

The empirical findings align strongly with political economy theories that conceptualise policy outcomes as products of power relations, institutional incentives, and elite bargaining rather than neutral administrative design. Nigeria's climate governance architecture exhibits what political economy scholars describe as *selective institutional effectiveness*: formal rules and capacities exist but are unevenly enforced depending on their compatibility with elite interests (Rodrik, 2023).

Institutional fragmentation, as documented in Sections 5 and 6, is not merely a coordination failure but a politically functional arrangement. Fragmented authority allows multiple actors to access climate resources while diffusing accountability, thereby stabilising elite coalitions even as policy effectiveness suffers. This pattern reflects broader findings in governance research showing that inefficiency can be politically rational in contexts where institutions serve distributive rather than service-delivery functions (Mahoney, 2023; Hood, 2023).

Similarly, elite capture of climate finance should not be interpreted solely as corruption or governance weakness. Rather, it reflects how new resource streams—such as climate finance—are incorporated into existing political settlements. Climate policy thus becomes an extension of established patterns of rent allocation rather than a transformative intervention (Newell et al., 2022; Mazzucato & Kattel, 2024).

Viewed through this lens, Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap is best understood as a political equilibrium. Formal compliance with international climate norms coexists with informal practices that preserve power relations, producing what this study terms *rhetorical ambition without operational transformation*.

Why Technocratic 'Green Finance' Approaches Fail in Exclusionary Contexts

A central implication of the findings is the limited effectiveness of technocratic "green finance" approaches when deployed in exclusionary governance contexts. Dominant climate finance narratives emphasise scaling up funding volumes, improving financial instruments, and de-risking private investment. While these tools address important constraints, they often assume neutral state institutions capable of allocating resources equitably and effectively (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

The Nigerian case challenges this assumption. As demonstrated, increased climate finance has not corrected governance failures but has often amplified them. Project-based finance, blended instruments, and off-

budget delivery mechanisms may accelerate disbursement, yet they frequently bypass domestic accountability systems and marginalise sub-national and community actors (Bulkeley et al., 2023; Sovacool et al., 2024).

Technocratic approaches also privilege what is measurable and bankable—such as infrastructure and mitigation projects—over socially embedded adaptation needs. This skews resource allocation away from the most vulnerable populations and reinforces spatial and gendered inequalities (Newell et al., 2022).

Moreover, green finance instruments rarely engage with the political incentives shaping implementation. Without reforms that alter how authority, accountability, and participation are structured, financial innovation alone cannot deliver resilience. In exclusionary contexts, technocratic solutions risk becoming *governance substitutes* rather than governance reforms.

The findings therefore support a growing critique in climate political economy scholarship: that finance-first strategies can entrench existing power asymmetries unless explicitly coupled with institutional and political transformation (Leach et al., 2022; Bäckstrand et al., 2023).

Implications for Inclusive Governance and Climate Finance Reform

The study's findings carry significant implications for the design of inclusive climate governance and finance reforms. First, they underscore the necessity of embedding climate finance within domestic public financial management systems rather than relying predominantly on parallel donor structures. While fiduciary risks are real, bypassing national systems undermines ownership, learning, and accountability over the long term (Pahle et al., 2022; OECD, 2023).

Second, inclusive governance requires rebalancing authority toward sub-national governments and communities, where climate impacts are most acutely experienced. This entails not only devolving responsibilities but also providing predictable fiscal transfers, capacity support, and formal decision-making power. Participation must move beyond consultation toward co-decision, particularly in adaptation planning (Bulkeley & Toly, 2023).

Third, climate finance reform should prioritise transparent resource tracking and outcome-oriented monitoring. Shifting from input-focused indicators to metrics that capture resilience, equity, and risk reduction is essential for aligning finance with social outcomes (UNDRR, 2024; Jordan & Huitema, 2024).

Finally, donors and development partners must recognise their role as political actors. Aligning incentives with inclusive governance—rather than short-term disbursement targets—requires patience, coordination, and willingness to engage with politically difficult reforms. Without such shifts, climate finance risks reinforcing exclusion rather than enabling transformation.

Comparative Lessons from Kenya, Bangladesh, and South Africa

Comparative insights from Kenya, Bangladesh, and South Africa illuminate alternative governance pathways while reinforcing the centrality of political economy. Kenya's experience demonstrates the potential of **devolved climate finance mechanisms**, such as county-level climate funds, to enhance local ownership and accountability when supported by legal frameworks and participatory planning (Faguet et al., 2023; OECD, 2023).

Bangladesh offers lessons in **integrated disaster-risk governance**, where sustained investment in early-warning systems, community engagement, and coordination across agencies has reduced mortality despite increasing climate hazards (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; UNDRR, 2024). Crucially, these gains reflect long-term political commitment rather than technical fixes alone.

South Africa illustrates both possibilities and limits. While it has developed sophisticated climate finance and transition frameworks, implementation remains contested due to entrenched inequalities and political resistance. This underscores that even middle-income states with stronger institutions face political barriers to inclusive climate action (Bäckstrand et al., 2023; Sovacool et al., 2024).

Comparatively, Nigeria lacks sustained integrative mechanisms that align finance, authority, and accountability across levels of government. These cases suggest that progress depends less on policy templates and more on reshaping political incentives and institutional relationships—reinforcing the study's core argument.

Contributions to the Theory of Climate Political Settlements

The study contributes to emerging theorisation of **climate political settlements**, which examines how climate governance is shaped by underlying power configurations and elite bargains. Existing literature often treats climate policy as an external intervention layered onto political systems. This research instead shows that climate governance becomes endogenous to political settlements, reproducing existing patterns of inclusion and exclusion (Newell et al., 2022).

By empirically demonstrating how climate finance and institutions are absorbed into Nigeria's political settlement, the study advances three theoretical insights. First, climate political settlements are **dynamic**,

evolving as new resources and norms enter governance systems. Second, policy ambition does not equate to transformative intent; high-level commitments may serve symbolic or coalition-stabilising functions. Third, exclusion is not a governance failure alone but a political outcome.

These insights extend polycentric and multi-level governance theories by highlighting their conditionality. Polycentricity without integrative authority can entrench fragmentation rather than foster experimentation (Bäckstrand et al., 2023).

In sum, the study reframes climate governance failure not as deviation from best practice but as an outcome consistent with prevailing political settlements. This perspective offers a more realistic foundation for designing climate interventions that engage, rather than bypass, political realities.

Discussion Synthesis

Overall, the discussion underscores that Nigeria's climate governance challenges are best understood through political economy frameworks that foreground power, incentives, and exclusion. Technocratic green finance approaches, while necessary, are insufficient in isolation. Transformative climate action requires reshaping governance structures, accountability mechanisms, and political incentives that currently limit inclusion and resilience.

VIII. Conclusion

This article has examined Nigeria's climate policy implementation gap through a political economy lens, arguing that governance exclusion—rather than finance scarcity or technical incapacity—is the binding constraint shaping climate outcomes. By synthesising institutional interviews, documentary analysis, and the diagnostic case of the 2024 Alau Dam collapse, the study advances both policy-relevant and theoretical insights into climate governance in fragile federal systems.

Summary of Core Arguments

The central argument advanced is that Nigeria's climate governance paradox—robust policy frameworks and growing climate-finance mobilisation alongside weak resilience outcomes—cannot be resolved through technocratic fixes alone. Instead, climate policy implementation is shaped by exclusionary political settlements characterised by institutional fragmentation, elite capture of climate resources, donor-dependent accountability structures, and systematic marginalisation of vulnerable populations.

Empirically, the findings demonstrate that climate finance flows are increasingly substantial but poorly integrated into domestic public financial management systems, reinforcing fragmentation and bypassing sub-national and community actors. The Alau Dam collapse illustrates how these governance failures convert climate hazards into human disasters through data silos, weak coordination, and exclusion from risk governance (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; Tierney, 2024).

Conceptually, the study shows that climate governance in Nigeria reflects *rhetorical compliance* with global norms rather than operational transformation, reinforcing recent critiques of finance-first climate strategies in the Global South (Newell et al., 2022; Bäckstrand et al., 2023).

Policy Recommendations for Inclusive Climate Governance

The findings point to several priority reforms for advancing inclusive climate governance in Nigeria. First, climate finance must be systematically embedded within **core** public financial management systems, including enforceable climate-budget tagging, transparent reporting, and legislative oversight. While donor safeguards are important, bypassing national systems undermines accountability and long-term capacity (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Second, meaningful sub-national empowerment is essential. States and local governments require predictable fiscal transfers, decision-making authority, and capacity support to lead adaptation planning and implementation. Participation should move beyond consultation toward co-design and co-decision, particularly for vulnerable communities and women (Bulkeley & Toly, 2023).

Third, institutional coordination bodies—such as the National Council on Climate Change—must be granted binding authority and budgetary leverage to overcome bureaucratic competition. Without incentive realignment, coordination will remain symbolic rather than functional (Jordan & Huitema, 2024).

Finally, monitoring and evaluation frameworks should prioritise resilience and equity outcomes, not merely financial disbursement or project outputs, aligning climate finance with social protection and risk reduction goals (UNDRR, 2024).

Implications for Nigeria's Net-Zero Ambition

Nigeria's net-zero ambition and energy transition agenda are unlikely to succeed without parallel governance reform. While mitigation investments—particularly in energy—are attracting private and

international finance, exclusionary governance risks undermining political legitimacy and social acceptance of transition policies (Sovacool et al., 2024).

If climate finance continues to prioritise elite-driven mitigation projects while adaptation and livelihood resilience remain underfunded, net-zero strategies may exacerbate inequality and resistance. Embedding just transition principles, inclusive decision-making, and transparent resource allocation is therefore not ancillary but central to Nigeria's climate ambition (Leach et al., 2022; Mazzucato & Kattel, 2024).

Priorities for Future Research

Future research should build on this study in four directions. First, longitudinal tracking of climate-budget execution would enable stronger causal inference on finance–governance linkages. Second, comparative sub-national studies could illuminate why some states or sectors perform better than others under similar institutional constraints. Third, integrating political economy analysis with spatial and gender-disaggregated data would deepen understanding of exclusion dynamics. Finally, cross-country research on climate political settlements could refine theory on how climate governance interacts with elite bargains and state capacity across the Global South (Rodrik, 2023; Bulkeley et al., 2023).

Concluding Remark

In sum, Nigeria's climate challenge is not a lack of ambition or finance, but a governance problem rooted in exclusionary political economy. Addressing it requires confronting power, incentives, and accountability—without which climate policy will remain aspirational rather than transformative.

Supplemental Material

The supplemental materials are provided to enhance transparency, replicability, and methodological rigour, in line with best practice in qualitative and mixed-methods governance research (Bennett & Checkel, 2022; O'Cathain, 2023). All materials are cross-referenced in the main text where relevant.

A. Interview Instruments

This appendix contains the full semi-structured interview instruments used for data collection. Separate guides were developed for:
(i) federal and sub-national government officials,
(ii) civil society organisations,
(iii) donor and development partner representatives, and
(iv) private-sector actors involved in climate-related investments.

The instruments covered institutional mandates, coordination practices, climate-finance mobilisation and management, accountability mechanisms, inclusion of vulnerable groups, and experiences with climate-related disasters. Question sequencing was flexible to allow probing of emergent themes while maintaining comparability across respondent categories. Follow-up prompts were used to clarify timelines, decision-making authority, and inter-agency dynamics.

B. Coding Framework and Codebook

This appendix provides the full coding framework and codebook used in the qualitative analysis. Codes were organised into thematic families reflecting the study's political economy framework, including institutional fragmentation, elite capture, donor dependence, accountability structures, and social exclusion.

For each code, the codebook specifies:
- conceptual definition,
- inclusion and exclusion criteria,
- illustrative examples, and
- links to relevant theoretical constructs.

The codebook documents iterative refinements made during analysis and supports transparency in thematic interpretation, consistent with reflexive qualitative research standards (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Saldaña, 2023).

C. Extended Tables and Figures

This appendix includes extended versions of tables and figures summarised in the main manuscript. These materials provide additional descriptive depth without interrupting analytical flow in the main text.

Included items comprise:
- detailed mappings of climate-related mandates across ministries, departments, and agencies;

- extended breakdowns of climate-finance allocation by sector and governance level; and
- supplementary conceptual diagrams illustrating governance and accountability pathways.

D. Timeline Reconstruction for the 2024 Alau Dam Collapse

This appendix presents a reconstructed timeline of events preceding, during, and following the 2024 Alau Dam collapse. The timeline draws on official records, technical reports, parliamentary briefings, media investigations, and civil-society documentation.

Events are organised chronologically across key governance stages: risk identification, early-warning dissemination, inter-agency coordination, emergency response, and post-disaster accountability. The purpose is not to assign technical fault, but to illustrate institutional decision points and coordination failures relevant to climate-risk governance (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2023; Tierney, 2024).

E. Climate-Finance Database (Cleaned Version)

This appendix provides a cleaned and anonymised version of the climate-finance database used in the analysis. The dataset consolidates information from federal budget documents, donor disclosures, and programme reports, harmonised to enable comparison across years and institutions.

Variables include funding source, implementing institution, sector, geographic focus, budgeted amount, released amount (where available), and governance modality. The database is intended to support replicability and future research, subject to data-access limitations.

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Endnotes

1. Institutional fragmentation is used in this article to denote governance arrangements in which multiple public bodies hold overlapping or adjacent mandates without enforceable coordination mechanisms, resulting in policy incoherence and weak implementation outcomes.
2. References to climate finance mobilisation include both pledged and disbursed resources unless explicitly stated otherwise; discrepancies between commitments and releases are treated as governance signals rather than accounting anomalies.
3. The 2024 Alau Dam collapse is analysed as a *critical diagnostic case* selected for its severity, policy salience, and data availability, rather than as a statistically representative climate-disaster event.
4. All interview data were anonymised in accordance with institutional ethical protocols; organisational identifiers are therefore generalised where disclosure could compromise respondent confidentiality.

The term exclusionary governance refers to decision-making processes and resource-allocation practices that systematically marginalise sub-national governments, vulnerable communities, and non-elite actors, even where formal participatory provisions exist.

Global datasets referenced in the study (e.g., UNDP, UNFCCC, OECD CRS, World Bank Climate Portal) are used for contextual benchmarking rather than causal inference.

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Table 1
Summary of Climate Finance Mobilisation and Allocation Channels (2019–2024)

Finance Source	Primary Channels	Dominant Sectors	Governance Modality	Key Observed Challenges
Federal public budgets	Annual Appropriation Acts; sectoral MDAs (Environment, Agriculture, Water, Energy)	Adaptation (agriculture, flood control); cross-cutting climate actions	Integrated into national budget but weak climate tagging	Fragmentation across MDAs; delayed releases; weak traceability of climate-specific expenditures
State government budgets	State ministries and agencies	Local infrastructure; agriculture	Highly variable across states	Limited fiscal space; dependence on federal transfers; uneven implementation capacity
Multilateral climate finance	World Bank, AfDB, GCF project pipelines	Energy transition; flood management; resilience programmes	Project-based; often off-budget	Parallel implementation units; upward accountability to donors
Bilateral donor finance	Bilateral agencies and development partners	Adaptation pilots; capacity building	Earmarked, donor-managed	Misalignment with national planning cycles
Private-sector finance	Green bonds; blended finance; PPPs	Renewable energy; gas transition	Market-driven, risk-adjusted	Concentration in mitigation; minimal community-level adaptation
NGO and CSO funding	Grants; community projects	Local adaptation; livelihoods	Direct implementation	Small scale; sustainability challenges

Note. Climate finance mobilisation increased substantially between 2019 and 2024, but allocation channels remain fragmented and weakly integrated into domestic public financial management systems (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024; AfDB, 2024).

Table 2
Subnational and Sectoral Allocation of Climate Funds

Dimension	Allocation Pattern	Implications for Equity and Resilience
Federal–state distribution	Predominantly federal-controlled	Weak subnational ownership; delayed local responsiveness

Dimension	Allocation Pattern	Implications for Equity and Resilience
Urban–rural balance	Urban-biased allocation	Underinvestment in rural and agrarian adaptation needs
Sectoral distribution	Mitigation > adaptation	Misalignment with vulnerability profile
Regional spread	Politically salient regions favoured	Marginalisation of conflict-affected and remote areas
Community-level targeting	Limited direct funding	Bypassing of vulnerable populations
Gender responsiveness	Low prioritisation	Gender-blind adaptation outcomes

Note. Allocation patterns reflect political visibility and administrative convenience rather than climate vulnerability or adaptive need, reinforcing exclusionary outcomes (Bulkeley et al., 2023; Newell et al., 2022; Sovacool et al., 2024).

Table 3
Governance Mechanisms, Failures, and Evidence from Interviews

Governance Mechanism	Intended Function	Observed Failure	Illustrative Interview Evidence
Inter-ministerial coordination bodies	Policy coherence	Weak authority; advisory role only	"Everyone attends meetings, but no one is compelled to act."
Climate budget tagging	Track climate spending	Inconsistent application	"It exists on paper, not in execution."
Donor project frameworks	Efficient delivery	Parallel systems	"Projects report to donors, not to national institutions."
Procurement rules	Transparency	Opaque contracting	"The same firms keep winning climate projects."
Monitoring & evaluation (M&E)	Outcome tracking	Input-focused metrics	"We report activities, not resilience outcomes."
Community consultations	Inclusion	Tokenistic participation	"Communities are informed, not involved."

Note. Interview excerpts are anonymised and paraphrased to protect confidentiality. Evidence highlights systematic accountability and coordination failures consistent across respondent categories (Bennett & Checkel, 2022; Jordan & Huitema, 2024).