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Green Movements and Environmental Governance in Nigeria

This study explores the contributions of the green movement to environmental governance in Nigeria. It engages with questions about what prospects, and challenges the movement must contend with, and what political space it maneuvers in. While the state has shown interest in environmental matters, evidence suggests that, notwithstanding, the green movement has made minimal impact on environmental policymaking in Nigeria. There seems to be a disconnect between the movement and the state as there is little political space for the movement to instigate and shape official environmental policy. Nevertheless, the green movement has played commendable roles in awareness creation, education, conflict prevention and resolution, local leadership building and campaign strategy development, enhancement of local environmental consciousness, and so forth. It seems important to document the contributions of the environmental movement to environmental governance, even if its impact has been more in the area of a cultural shift in the society.

The oil-related plundering of the Niger Delta remains a cause of concern among inhabitants of the region, academics, and environmentalists. Environmental devastation is at the core of communal grievances that have since spawned non-violent and violent movements in the region. The depth of the ongoing despoliation was recently underscored by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) scientific study, *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland*. The study found heavy contamination present 40 years after the original oil spill, and that certain communities still drink water from wells contaminated with benzene, a known carcinogen, at levels over 900 times above the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline.

When toxic wastes were dumped by an Italian businessman in Koko in 1987, a seaport in Delta State, the Nigerian government promptly reacted by promulgating the Harmful Wastes Decree that provides for the effective control of the disposal of toxic and hazardous waste in the country. It followed by creating a regulatory body, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in 1988. Similar concern was expressed by civil society as environmental NGOs proliferated. The movement of environmentalists include grassroots communal actors, advocacy NGOs, environmental awareness NGOs and NGOs focused on meditating the interaction between oil companies and local communities, among others. The groups have been active in various ways that is matched only by their diverse orientations.