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The Role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Influencing Climate Change Policy: The Case of PACJA at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan

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Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, Climate Finance, Developing Nations, Climate Actions, COP 29, Baku, Azerbaijan.

Over 40,000 delegates from all over the world gathered in the city of Baku, Azerbaijan, the transcontinental country bordering Eastern Europe and West Asia for the 29th edition of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP29). Adopted in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Dawson & Spannagle 2008), the Conference of Parties set the limits on the emission of greenhouse gas (GHG) to prevent the dangers of climate change. 195 countries adopted the Paris Agreement in 2015 at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21), committing to undertake more efforts to keep a global temperature rise in this century below 2°C. Over the years, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have recorded tremendous impact and influence over policy decisions in key areas of the economy within nations and transnational structures. The paper examines the realities of the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) within the global climate change corridor, and their contributions towards influencing climate change policies at COP29 held in Baku, Azerbaijan, particularly advocacy efforts, high-level intergovernmental and civic engagement activities to drive policy changes.

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INTRODUCTION

CSOs play an important role in lobbying, influencing and negotiating policy and governance reforms in various spheres, locally, nationally and internationally (Ghaus-Pasha, 2005; Munene, & Thakhathi, 2017; Colli, 2019). Meanwhile, this is notwithstanding the various challenges CSOs also go through in ensuring that these core objectives are achieved (Chaplowe et al., 2007; Natil, 2020)

On the contrary, many African Governments have gone into wars with CSOs for pressing them on issues pertaining to corruption, human rights abuses, environmental abuse by some of the state actors and they are the type of non-state actors; Kansiime (2019) calls civil society organisations on policy, human rights advocacy according to her; those in service delivery are the ones the state sees as partners because they concentrate in providing services to the populace than criticising or auditing the political or governance environment in a country (Child, 2009).

This paper argues that any negative action towards CSOs is glaring shortsightedness towards international interest and gains by developing democracies on strategic meetings and conferences like COP because CSOs are very important at the international stage while rooting for advocacy where the delegation of state parties that include the Members of Parliament, Ambassadors, Ministers and Technocrats like Permanent Secretaries (PS), as well as Executive Directors (Eds) or Managing Directors (MDs) of government parastatal, shall have complete limitation. These categories from state parties are absolutely limited in carrying bare knuckle protests also termed as climate actions at the corridors of negotiations which is a core of the politics of negotiation based on the press projection and the direct appealing approaches to the delegates at side events. In most cases is a

preserved of the CSOs and such international stage include COP meetings since the state actors at such conferences also lobby their interests through CSOs to help drum them for emphasis by the corridors of negotiation to enhance diplomatic table talk that they, (state officials), are normally involved in (Tilton, 2016; Lammertink, 2017).

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to document the number of activities done by the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, evaluate its impact on the outcome of the final paper of COP29 and highlight clearly the frustration CSOs get when their advocacy is not met. This paper also dived to find out if these activities by CSOs are noticed by negotiators.

Scope of the Paper

The paper majorly focused on the side events at the Blue Zone of the conferences carried out by the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance in pursuit of drumming support to influence climate change policy, especially on the continental demand of Africa on the increment of Climate Finance from USD 100 Billion Commitment by the developed Nation to USD 1.3 trillion at COP 29. This paper focused on their press releases, the number of press conferences held including their protest or climate action within the corridors of negotiations, number of appearances at other people's events as key speakers.

Statement of the Problem

Devastated by floods, extreme heat waves, droughts and other climate issues, Africa suffers the brunt of the effect of climate change caused by global carbon emissions, despite its insignificant contribution of 4 percent (UNEP, 2023). At the negotiating table, the developed nations have better bargaining power than developing nations, especially Africa and yet the African governments

might not have the esteem to put on a show CSOs could put in drumming the key position of financial increment, developing nations feel they are obligated to since the world powers are the industrialists and responsible historically for gross climate crisis affecting the developing nations (Gaines, 1991; Khan, 2015; Tilton, 2016)

Yet many scholars writing about Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in relation to their roles at COPs and roles in policy influence have largely focussed in-depth on defining the categories of CSOs and picking a particular action the CSOs do at COP corridors or during policy influence (Harrebye, 2011; Pianta, 2001; Curran, 2005). However, there is limited literature that focuses on a particular CSO, documenting the work they do in an attempt to influence policy decisions at COP from the beginning to the end.

We examined PACJA activities aimed at adding voices to the uniform demand of the Global South on climate financing from November, 11-22, 2024 From Baku, Azerbaijan. Therefore, this paper does not focus on groups of CSOs doing activism or focus on the category of a CSO but rather focuses on the activities of one Civil Society Organisation to present exactly what they go through in terms of action-oriented activities in the struggle to influence decisions at COP 29 and in this case was on climate finance increment.

It is important to note that this article benefitted from Interviews with African Members of parliament and African negotiators in an attempt to find out if CSOs' struggles get to them who face the hot seat of negotiations directly with the developed nations.

Justification for this Paper

We have largely focused on following the activities of the African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya in East Africa; it has over 1000 member organisations from 48 African Countries. PACJA's work illustration is prominent in very many literature we reviewed as part of pre-planning this journal paper and we noticed it as one of the biggest coalitions of climate justice

actors in Africa during the Cop 29 from Baku with beehives of activities worth following to give an inside audit of what CSOs activities are like during COP (Bond, 2014; Mwenda et al 2020)

Secondly, the researchers were interested in African CSOs hence the choice of PACJA at COP was inevitable because many CSOs from African countries at COP 29 are members of PACJA and their delegates were speaking the language or whatever PACJA would release during the period under audit.

Hence as keen followers and writers of COPs and its implication on developing nations, this paper was inevitable to present a perspective on another angling of the story built on the philosophy of 'telling all sides of the stories' (Adichie, 2009; Ojok et al., 2024; Schulz et al., 2024). This is the story of the struggle of PACJA in amplifying African nations' demand that governmental bodies in Africa who are parties to the conference might be limited to doing so.

METHODS

This paper used a qualitative approach majorly deploying in-depth interviews and participatory observations with analysis of documents like press releases, written material like placards and art pieces, and conference appearances used by the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance as a mechanism of putting their messages across. Three leaders of PACJA were purposively sampled including the Executive Director, the Head of programmes, and the Communications Team. In the use of participatory observations, the authors carefully followed all the activities of PACJA at side events. The paper also used secondary data like available literature to present the case of PACJA in this paper.

Thirdly, this paper's writers by design are all communicators. The researchers have decided to present some of the pictures they took as part of this paper to shade light and bring in the readers of this paper who might have not attended COP the visual scene of what it is like in the CSO approach to influencing Policy on Climate Change at the global stage like COP. We did 5 in-depth

interviews with negotiators including members of parliament for state parties, and permanent secretaries, and 3 interviews with staff of Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA).

Limitation of the Paper

This paper only focused on the activities carried out by the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance in their attempt to influence Climate Policy on the global Stage from the prism of the above authors from 11-22 November 2024 at Baku, COP29. Therefore, this paper doesn’t assume authority or generalisation of the work of all the Civil Society Organisations and their various activities at COP 29 but Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance on request granted the researchers access to their

activities and data from Baku from 11-22 November 2024. However academically, it is a build-up of literature on the work of Civil Society Organisations at COP mirroring the work of PACJA at COP 29.

KEY FINDINGS

The Major Activities carried out in pursuit of influencing Climate Change Decisions at COP 29 in Baku was one of the objectives of this study and below in Table 1.0, the researchers try to illustrate the scope of the activities carried out by PACJA at COP 29 for this paper to help draw the debate on the role of civil society organisations in push for more climate change funding.

Table 1.0: Showing Summary of Major Activities Carried Out by the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance at COP 29 in Attempt to Influence Climate Change Policy from 11-22 November 2024.

Number of Delegates at COP 29	Press Releases and position papers issued at COP 29	Number of Press Conferences held at COP 29	Number of Protests/demonstrations at COP 29	Number of appearances for invitational side events
70	4	3	2	52

The Second objective of this paper was to figure out if the negotiators or state actors who are parties to the conference do get this message in CSOs' attempt to pass through various strategies as documented above and in particular to fish out if they were able to get the messages of Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA).

In-depth interviews with three members of parliaments and a Minister of Environment from Africa confirmed that the CSOs are very important in negotiations at COP and normally they meet them regularly during COP meetings including COP 29, they had more than three sessions with CSOs to examine their position papers that PACJA were part and partial of some of those meetings. One of them had this to say;

Their Climate action strategies is appealing and they have energetic young population, let me tell you, what CSOs do including PACJA is majorly the news focus, locally and internationally because the diplomatic table talk at times is boring and you can’t rule out the media role in pilling pressure.

The researchers also observed that PACJA had joined other CSOs in demanding USD.1.3 trillion collective quantified goals towards climate justice financing for developing countries but, COP 29 by 22nd, November 2024 had only made progress to USD 250 billion.

COP was also extended up to the 24th of November 2024 when most of the African leaders and CSOs had left by the 23rd of November 2024. The final collective quantified goal realised by November, 24th was USD 300 billion instead of the 1.3 trillion developing nations were targeting including PACJA.

PACJA in their exit Press Conference on 22nd, November 2024 blamed the developed nations for playing tricks on the African nations by extending COP since they (developed nations) have money to extend their flights yet Africans and other developing nations might not have the luxury of extending their flights;

This is betrayal of the highest order by the developed nations, they do this so that by the

time they are making the final decision on financing, CSOs and majority of people from developing nations would no longer be there but we are used to this, its a continuous process.

PACJA also accused the developed nations of refusing to add on the quantified financing target of up to USD 1.3 trillion;

They spent 2.2 trillion on global defence in 2023 and are expected to grow the space economy to 1.8 trillion by 2035 from the current USD 630 billion.; in military aid go and calculate what the United States the United Kingdom and the EU mobilized for military aid for Ukraine by March 2024 and you will see that they did that with USD 69.2 billion.

DISCUSSION

The beehive activities of PACJA and the number of delegates they sponsored illustrated in *Table 1.0* is a clear sign that there is relevance in numbers and advocacy hence from the interviews it has been clearly observed that the press or media both locally and internationally normally takes the focus of the climate action activities since the negotiation at the diplomatic table negotiation results comes later. Beyond PACJA; this amplifies the agenda-setting role of the media that the CSOs are quite well versed with and have partnered with the media in ensuring the world gets a glimpse of COP 29 from climate action activities that seem to be louder than most of the activities of the CSOs in reference to COP29. Even at COP 29, the media decided to set the agenda on the negligence of the developed nations in increasing climate financing to USD 1.3 collective quantified climate financing goal, and it wasn't a total raw deal with increment to USD 300 Billion out of the USD 1.3 trillion target announced.

PACJA members had left Azerbaijan when the USD 300 billion was announced since the official date they had planned to stay there was November, 22nd and by 23rd November 2024, the entire team had left although they kept following the proceedings. These media partnerships and their role in drumming the activities for the greater good in climate justice for developing nations expand the debate on why the media is important and can contribute to positive change in the community by exercising their influence positively (Mwangi, 2010; Athanas, 2011; Laker, 2019).

This finding also builds on the relevance of the CSOs at the international stage in bargaining and negotiation approaches that benefit state governments as well in fighting climate change disasters; in context, the accountable machinery on climate disasters on the people is the states. CSOs like PACJA invest heavily in the collective responsibility of getting more support from the developed nations through a series of activities at COP as witnessed in this paper. It sends an early warning to African governments that there is a need to have strong mutual relationships with the CSOs to develop reach where they are limited as in the context of the open climate action activities where government officials might not do much due to many diplomatic matters but the civil society does the donkey work in the corridors of negotiation without fear or favour.

Therefore, it indicates that even locally, nationally or internationally, developing nations' governments and CSOs should invest in looking for activities that would make them partner strongly at that level for the strategic development of the nations and the populace (Child, 2009).

Plate 1: PACJA Youths from Across Africa Doing Real Advocacy Through Their Famous ‘Climate Actions /Protest at the Corridors of Negotiations at Buku, Azerbaijan During COP 29



Plate 2: Charles Mwangi, Head of Programs at Pan African Climate Justice Alliance Addressing the Press During One of Their Engagements at COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan



Plate 3: PACJA Team During Their Exit Press Conference on 22nd of November 2024,

CONCLUSION

The recorded beehives activities of PACJA as illustrated in Table 1.0, based on the final outcome of the climate Justice financing to USD 300 Billion instead of the USD 1.3 collective quantified climate financing at COP 29, clearly demonstrates the power of advocacy in policy decisions but the research also concludes that Civil Society Organisations who plans to do advocacy at COP meetings should ensure they plan more days. This is so; because this paper roots that developed nations are never affected when COP meetings are extended beyond the planned days yet it becomes an emergency on the side of developing nations and CSOs as noted by the PACJA team during their submission to the research team and once the voice of advocacy goes off, there would be no pressure on any matter under discussions hence CSOs should plan ahead of time so that extension never becomes an emergency to sustain and contain advocacy even when there is extension of COP meetings. This

study also concludes that PACJA is a big asset that needs more support from both African Governments and the donor community sensitive to climate justice based on the level of investment they put up in driving the agenda at COP 29; it's evidenced that PACJA has the capacity to drive debate and agenda on matters of climate justice bargain at COP meetings hence furthering support and empowering them for upcoming COPs would be a great initiative towards standing and defending climate injustice in the whole of Africa.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this research work.

Authors Contribution

Ojok James Onono drafted and revised the document after the first peer review.

Uchenna Igwe provided the second eye and contributed to the document draft.

O'Brien Kimani helped in collecting some of the data used in this paper

Nyeko Kenneth was instrumental in doing the final revision.

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