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YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE LEADERSHIP (YELC) ESSAY COMPETITION

Essay Theme: Climate Finance and Grant Writing

Essay Topic: Grant Writing Fellowship For Addressing Climate Change In Nigerian
Marginalized Areas



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Introduction

We are in 2025 - fifty-two years after the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established, thirty-three years after the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted, ten years after the Paris Agreement was ratified, ten years after the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) was submitted, and two years four months after the Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) was submitted, with one mission - to tackle climate change. Yet, in Nigeria, food insecurity is sailing on the [flood](#), carting away hundreds of thousands of metric tons of food that should have fed millions of us. Our carbon sinks are being bored by the continuous burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, and we have already lost over [1.25 million hectares of trees](#) to logging. That is not all; [Lake Chad](#) is shrinking, our blue economy might sooner or later turn red, thirty-three million Nigerians are projected to suffer from [malnutrition](#), and by 2050, more plastics could be in our ocean than fish. Do all these mean these goals, plans, and targets are ineffective? The answer to this question is no. However, the country has not met its climate goals, targets, and plans primarily because of insufficient finance. A recent [report](#) on the state of climate finance in Nigeria reveals that the country receives only 4% of the \$17.7 billion it needs yearly to tackle the impact of the climate crisis. These statistics mean that without innovative and sustainable climate finance instruments, millions of lives, especially in marginalised communities, would be put at risk. [Climate Finance](#) can be defined as local, national, or transnational financing - drawn from public, private, and alternative financing sources seeking to support mitigation and adaptation actions to address climate change. The question is, what is the most adequate and sustainable climate finance instrument? How can it serve vulnerable, underrepresented communities? In addition to answering the questions, this essay aims to briefly explore the concept of climate finance.

Body

Climate finance took the world by storm in 1992 at the first UNFCCC meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where countries recognised the need for climate financial assistance for developing countries. This climate funding mechanism went on to birth others such as the [Global Environment Facility](#) (1994), the [Kyoto Protocol](#) and the Clean Development Mechanism (1997), the [Adaptation Fund](#) (2001), the [Bali Action Plan](#) (2007), the [Copenhagen Accord](#) (2009), the [Green Climate Fund](#) (2010), the [African Climate Funds](#) (2014), the [Paris Agreement](#) (2015), the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) (2021), among others. The types of climate finance are Loans, Equity, Bonds, Insurance, Guarantees, Grants, and Debt Swaps. Climate finance is a viable mechanism for funding Nigeria's climate mitigation, adaptation, and education projects, especially in underrepresented areas. However, between [2015 and 2021](#), the country received \$4.9 billion in climate funding, of which 75% (\$3.7 billion) came from concessional loans - adding to the nation's debt portfolio. Given this reality, there is a need for a more adequate and sustainable source of funding, such as a grant.

Regarding this essay, grants are patterned to propel progressive solutions tackling pressing issues such as climate change mitigation, biodiversity loss, clean water, and agricultural and land use activities. While grants are provided for knowledge management programs, capacity-building programs, ongoing activities that do not generate financial returns and technical and costing plans, this essay argues they are sustainable for solving climate-related issues, especially in marginalised communities. For instance, In 2023, [Oluwaseyi Jesuton](#), Nigerian environmentalist, and her team at U-recycle Initiative Africa and twenty-two others

secured a \$100,000 grant from [GEF](#) to tackle plastic pollution in marginalised coastal communities.

However, the groundwork in Nigeria primarily addresses only national and transnational grants, reflecting the financial consequences of efficiency in execution. Financing climate-related projects in marginalised areas is under-explored and lacks sufficient funding to demonstrate their effectiveness. This essay proposes a grant writing fellowship to address climate change in marginalised Nigerian areas.

The grant writing fellowship in Nigerian disadvantaged areas is a unique grant writing program focused on empowering young people who are passionate about helping marginalised communities tackle the climate crisis to become sustainability grant writers who will go on to write compelling and world-class grant proposals for reducing carbon footprint, protect biodiversity, and promote climate education. Irrespective of whether their projects are new, ready to scale, seeking expansion, fostering resilience and sustainability, or indirectly impacting cross-sectoral goals, this solution is designed to teach, support, and empower young Nigerians to develop grant writing skills. The key goals of the fellowship are to support Indigenous youth in addressing pressing climate issues such as climate adaptation, education and awareness, and mitigation, as well as to promote inclusivity in the movement for climate and environmental leadership.

The grant writing fellowship is critical in making sustainable, impactful climate mitigation and adaptation outcomes. Even the most promising project may struggle to get funding without adequate grant writing skills. Also, it provides project promoters with the necessary capital to hire the right people and invest in essential climate infrastructure. Furthermore, this fellowship enables the focus on the mission rather than being distracted by resource constraints. In addition, the fellowship provides insights into strategic planning, robust project management, and evaluation.

While this novel approach has immense potential, lack of interest from potential beneficiaries, lack of access to the Internet and computers, conflict, political instability, and access to experts and support staff could be barriers. However, strategic partnerships with local community leaders, learning centres, grant-writing agencies, and technical organisations would remove the barriers.

Conclusion

The climate crisis is an opportunity, grants are a more viable and sustainable climate finance instrument than concessional loans and debts, and grant writing is an opportunity to break the silos and leave no one behind. Passion for writing can turn into a passion for writing for climate actions to create a better, safer, and just Nigeria. A grant is needed to execute this solution. The big question to ask ourselves now is whether we can consider the solution provided by this essay. The clock is ticking!

