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Promoting Sustainable Development in Nigeria through Deployment of Renewable Energy: an Analysis of the Legal Framework

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PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA THROUGH DEPLOYMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK.

By

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ABSTRACT

Renewable energy is an important pathway to promoting sustainable development in Nigeria through improved energy access, environmental protection, energy security and economic growth. Despite Nigeria abundant renewable energy resources, their deployment remains limited by legal, regulatory, and institutional challenges. This study examines the Nigerian legal framework governing renewable energy deployment and its effectiveness in promoting sustainable development. The study adopts a doctrinal methodology, analysing relevant constitutional provisions, statutes, government policies, regulatory guidelines, international instruments, case law, textbooks, journal articles, and comparative legal materials. The findings reveal that Nigeria's existing legal framework, particularly, the Electricity Act 2023(as amended) provides a foundation for renewable energy deployment. However, the frameworks, especially the policies remain inadequate due to fragmented policies, overlapping institutional mandates, weak enforcement mechanism, insufficient fiscal incentives, and the absence of a clear, binding renewable energy targets. The study recommends the enactment of a comprehensive renewable energy Act to harmonise existing laws and policies, establish enforceable renewable energy target, clarify institutional responsibilities, strengthen regulatory oversight, and provide appropriate financial incentives. The study concludes that effective renewable energy deployment is essential to promoting sustainable development in Nigeria and requires comprehensive legal reform, and effective implementation and enforcement.

Keywords: Renewable Energy, Sustainable Development, Nigeria, Deployment, legislation.

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1 Introduction

Energy is fundamental to economic growth, social progress and sustainable development. It supports essential human needs and activities, including healthcare, education, agriculture, transportation, communication, manufacturing and industrial production. Recognising the importance of energy to economic and social advancement, Nigeria has established various legal and policy frameworks to regulate the development, production, distribution and consumption of energy sources.[1]Nigeria possesses abundant renewable energy resources, including petroleum, natural gas, hydropower, solar, wind and biomass. Despite this potential, the country continues to experience inadequate and unreliable electricity supply, infrastructural deficiencies and limited access to affordable energy. The economy remains heavenly dependent on oil and gas, while the development and utilization of alternative energy sources remain insufficient to meet the country's growing energy needs. This situation constrains industrial development, limits economic opportunities and undermines efforts to improve the welfare of the population. Consequently, the diversification of Nigeria's energy sources has become increasingly important to achieving sustainable development.

Although conventional energy sources, especially petroleum, natural gas and coal have contributed significantly to economic development, their production and consumption present considerable environmental challenges. The combustion of fossil fuels release greenhouse gases that contributes to global warming and climate change. Unreliable electricity supply also encourages dependence on petrol and diesel generators, resulting in additional emissions and environmental pollution. These environmental challenges demonstrate the need for an energy transition that supports economic development while safeguarding the environment and promoting social well-being.

Renewable energy is an important means of addressing these challenges and advancing sustainable development. Renewable energy is energy that is continuously and naturally replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed with minimal environmental impacts. It is derived from naturally replenishing sources, which includes solar, wind, hydropower, geothermal, biomass and marine energy. Its deployment can contribute to sustainable development by reducing pollution, improving access to reliable and affordable electricity, particularly in rural and undeserved communities creating employment opportunities, stimulating economic activities and promoting energy security. Globally, the importance of

[1] Electricity Act 2021(as amended).

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renewable energy has received increasing recognition in sustainable development initiative, including the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, energy was one of the contentious issues.[2]These initiatives underscore the importance of expanding renewable energy deployment as part of broader efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Renewable energy gained attention in Nigeria due to energy challenges in the country caused largely by intermittent supply of electricity to consumers and partly as a result of global trend of reducing the emission of carbon dioxide to curtail disastrous consequences of using fossil fuel for energy, which leads to climate change.[3] Nigeria's initial engagement with renewable energy focused primarily on hydropower, and one of the most significant projects was Kainji Dam which has historically contributed to electricity generation and continues to provide major portion of the country's electricity. Today, renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and biomass contributes to Nigeria's energy supply.[4]

Despite Nigeria's substantial renewable energy potentials, its deployment remains constrained by legal, regulatory, institutional and financial challenges. Although the country has introduced several laws and policies to promote renewable energy and improve electricity access, questions remain regarding their adequacy and effectiveness in promoting widespread renewable energy deployment and advancing sustainable development objectives. Accordingly, this study examines the promotion of sustainable development in Nigeria through deployment of renewable energy, with particular emphasis on analysis of the legal framework. It will evaluate relevant legislation and policies governing renewable energy deployment, with a view to identifying existing legal and institutional gaps and recommending reforms capable of strengthening renewable energy development as a means of achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

2 Analysis of the Legal and Policy Framework for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Development

Nigeria has several laws and policy instruments relevant to renewable energy and sustainable development. These include the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999(as amended), Electricity Act 2023 (as amended), Environmental Impact Assessment Act 1992,

[2] J Riti and Y Shu, 'Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, and Eco-friendly Environment(R-E5) in Nigeria' (2017)6(1)6(1) *Energy Sustainability and Society* 2.
[3] Y Oke, *Nigeria Energy Resource: Law and Practice,* (Princeton & Associates Publishing Co. Ltd 2019) 631.
[4] O Kehinde and Others, 'Renewable Energy in Nigeria-A Review'(2018)(9)(10) *Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology* 1085-1094.

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National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act 2007, National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (Establishment) Act 2006, Climate Change Act 2021, Petroleum Industry Act 2021 Petroleum Industry Act 2021, the National Renewable Energy and Efficiency Policy 2015, National Electric Power Implementation Policy 2001, National Energy Policy, Renewable Energy Master Plan 2006, Renewable Energy Policy Guidelines 2006, Nigerian Biofuel Policy and Incentives 2007, Captive Energy Generation Regulation 2008, Sustainable Energy for All 2011, National Renewable Energy Efficiency Policy 2013, National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2015-2030, Nigeria Energy Transition Plan 2021, the Renewable Energy Roadmap 2023, National Climate Change Policy for Nigeria 2021-2030, the National Energy Policy. There are also regional and national legal frameworks such as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Some of the legal frameworks will be considered.

2.1 The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended)

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999(as amended) is the source of all laws, and the legitimacy of all other laws is derived from it. While the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN)1999 does not have specific provisions dedicated exclusively to renewable energy and sustainable development, there are some sections of the CFRN that are relevant. The CFRN places electricity generation, transmission and distribution on the concurrent legislative list, thereby bringing power generation within the competence of the federal government and the federating units. The Second Schedule, Part 11[5] of the CFRN, divides powers between the federal and state governments. While electricity generation and distribution are under the federal jurisdiction, states may be involved in policy or regulation to some extent, especially in local matters related to energy distribution. State are also free to explore other energy sources to meet the needs of their rural communities.

Renewable is a major source of electricity generation as it contributes a significant and growing share of the world's total electricity supply. Renewable energy is a significant source for generating clean electricity that help reduce environmental impacts, supports sustainable energy systems and powers modern life without depleting natural resources. As such renewable energy falls under the wider category of electricity generation or energy policy. Many countries pass specific renewable energy laws or regulations under the umbrella of electricity and energy

[5] CFRN 1999, 2nd sch, (schedule) pt(part) 11, it(item) 13, 14 and 15.

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laws, and these laws work within the constitutional provisions to promote renewables without the need to amend the constitution.[6]

With respect to the environment, Chapter 11 of the Constitution titled, "The Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy" acknowledges social and environmental objectives. Section 20[7] encourages the state to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air, and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria. This provision imposes a constitutional duty on the Nigerian government to protect and enhance the environment, and promoting renewable energy is one of the most effective modern strategies to fulfil that obligation. This section is particularly relevant to renewable energy because the deployment of cleaner energy sources can contribute to environmental protection and sustainable resources utilization. Although the constitution provides a foundation for environmental protection and economic development, it does not establish a comprehensive, directly enforceable constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment, or expressly prescribe a renewable energy deployment obligation.[8]

2.2. Electricity Act 2023 (as amended)

The Electricity Act 2023 (as amended) is the primary legislation governing Nigeria's power sector. The Electricity Act 2023 repealed the Electric Power Sector Reform Act No. 6, 2005, and consolidated the laws relating to the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry by providing a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the power sector in Nigeria. The Electric Power Sector Reform Act 2005, merely recognised renewable energy within the electricity sector framework without establishing any mechanism for its promotion.[9] The Electricity Act governs electricity generation, transmission and distribution and establishes the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), and saddles it with the responsibility of ensuring optimal utilization of resources for the provision of electricity services.[10]

One of the objectives of the Electricity Act is the integration of renewable energy into Nigeria's energy mix, aimed at providing opportunities for investors in the growing renewable energy market.[11] The Electricity Act defines renewable energy resources as 'natural resources such as

[6] Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), 'Electricity Act, Constitution Alteration Aim to Improve Power Sector'(2023)<https://placng.org/legist/electricity-act-constitution-alteration-aim-to-improve-power-sectot/> accessed 22 February 2025.
[7] CFRN, (n 5).
[8] Ibid, s 6(6)(c), and 20
[9] Electric Power Sector Reform Act 2005, s 88(9)(c).
[10] Electricity Act 2023(as amended) s 34.
[11] Ibid, s 1(j).

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sunlight, rainfall, winds and geothermal heat which are renewable and naturally replenished'[12]. The Electricity Act emphasises the advancement and use of renewable energy by permitting the integration of renewable technologies into Nigeria's existing power grid.[13] It prioritizes renewable energy through initiatives like the Feed-in-tariff, which ensure a set price for renewable electricity supplied to the national grid, as well as various tax incentives,[14] which offer financial incentives for renewable power generation.[15] The Electricity Act encourages the production of renewable energy-based generation and establishes a framework for rural electrification in the country.[16]

The Act strengthened the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) and the Rural Electrification Fund (REF), with explicit mandates that supports off-grid/mini-grid, renewable energy technologies, sustainable and renewable rural electrification programs.[17] This enables public-private partnership and helps reduce the risk and cost for renewable energy in underserved areas. The Rural Electrification Agency has deployed hundreds of solar mini-grids supported by legal frameworks enabling off-grid solution. The rural electrification via solar home systems and mini-grids has increased access to energy in off-grid communities, reducing reliance on kerosene lamps and diesel generators, thereby improving health, and the environment. With this, there has been expansion of renewable energy access, especially in rural areas.

The Electricity Act encourages investment in renewable energy projects, and sets renewable energy targets to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Section 166(1) of the Electricity Act requires the Federal Ministry of Finance to introduce necessary tax incentives to encourage the generation and consumption of energy from renewable sources, in line with the industrial development (Income Tax Relief) Act or other fiscal policies that support tax reliefs to boost renewable energy projects in Nigeria.[18]

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[12] Ibid, s 232.
[13] Ibid, s 80.
[14] Electricity Act , 2023(as amended) s 165, 168
[15]E Ezekwesiri and Others, 'A review of the Electricity Act, 2023-Impact and Major Issues Arising'(2023)<https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract-id=4560855&download=> accessed 23 February 2025.
[16] EA 2023(as amended) s 128.
[17] EA 2023(as amended) s 128, 129, 142, and 143.
[18] P A Ogbodo-Nathaniel and Others, 'An Examination of the legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework for Promoting Renewable Energy Projects As a Panacea for Sustainable Development in Nigeria'(2024)(15)(3) *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy 64-90.*

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The Electricity Act (Amendment) Act, 2024 substituted sections 95(2)(c) and (d) of the Electricity Act 2023 with new provisions to address the developmental concerns of host communities. It changed the funding structure of the National Hydroelectric Power Producing Areas Development Commission(N-HYPPADEC) by power generating companies (GenCos). It amended section 95(2) of the Electricity Act 2023, by deleting paragraphs (c) and (d) and substituting them with new provisions, which now impose a 5% operating expenditure contribution by GenCos for host community development. The 2024 amendment also strengthened regulatory oversight, and provided for more private sector participation[19]. While the Recent amendment by the Electricity Act (Amendment) Act 2025 strengthened the centralization that allowed states to develop electricity solutions tailored to their unique needs and recognition of Electricity as an essential service, thereby limiting industrial actions that could disrupt power supply.[20]

Despite these opportunities, the effectiveness of the Electricity Act 2023 (as amended) in promoting sustainable development depends on how its provisions are implemented and supported by appropriate regulations, investment mechanisms and institutional coordination. Furthermore, expanding electricity generation alone does not necessarily guarantee sustainable development. The electricity supplied must be accessible, reliable and affordable. The development of renewable energy projects must also consider environmental impacts, community interest and the long-term sustainability of the infrastructure.

2.3 The Environmental Impact Assessment Act 1992

The Environmental Impact Assessment Act 1992 [21] establishes a framework for assessing the environmental consequences of proposed projects before decisions are made concerning their implementation. This Act is relevant to renewable energy development because renewable energy projects may have environmental and social consequences. Solar installations may involve land acquisition and the management of damaged panels and other equipment at the end of their useful lives. Sections 1, 2 and 4 provides a legal mechanism for promoting sustainable development in Nigeria by requiring environmental considerations to be incorporated into the planning and implementation of development projects.[22] Although the

[19] N Oni, 'The Electricity Amendment Act 2024'<https://www.mondaq.com/nigeria/oil-and-gas-electricity -act/> accessed 8 April 2026.
[20] A Adekola, 'Beyond the Grid: What the new Electricity Act Really Changes' (2026)<http://www.thecable.ng/beyond-the-grid-what the-new-electricity-act-really-changes/> accessed 8 April 2026.
[21] EIA Act, Cap E12, LFN, 2004.
[22] Ibid. s 1, 2, and 3.

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existence of an environmental impact assessment requirement does not automatically ensure that renewable energy projects will be environmentally sustainable, its effectiveness depends on the quality of assessment, public participation, regulatory oversight, and compliance with prescribed mitigation measures.

2.4 National Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy 2015

The National Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy (NREEEP) seeks to improve access to modern and clean energy, strengthen energy security, address climate objectives and promote the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency. It addresses energy sources and considers policy strategies and incentives for encouraging renewable energy development. So far, there has been growth in renewable energy use and off-grid electrification. The off-grid /mini-grid solutions under programmes like Rural Electrification Agency (REA), and Nigeria Electrification Projects (NEP) have provided electricity for small businesses that has never had grid access and households. In the rural communities, off-grid or undeserved areas, the impact has been positive but modest: more mini-grids, more solar home systems, and small scale renewable energy projects have improved energy access, though still far from universal electrification.[23]

There has been expansion in the deployment of mini-grids, solar and hybrid mini-grid, as well as productive-use appliances for businesses, public facilities and farms have gotten to remote and off-grid communities.[24] This helps bring electricity to rural and undeserved communities who have been left out of grid expansion, thereby improving livelihoods, empowering MSMEs, supporting education and health facilities. Rural areas benefit most from mini-grids, off-grid solar systems, hydro or biomass, which are decentralized systems, because extending national grids to remote areas is often expensive and inefficient.[25]Notwithstanding its broad objectives, the effectiveness of the policy depends on the extent to which its strategies are translated into enforceable obligations, funded programmes and measurable implementation outcomes.

2.5 United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

[23] REA, ' Rural Electrification Agency' (2023)<https://rea.gov.ng/2023/06/> accessed 8 December 2025.
[24] C Ekeh, 'Nigeria's Rural Electrification: Renewable Energy for Remote Areas'(2025) <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/08/nigeria-rural-electrification-renewable-energy-for-remote-areas/> accessed 8 December 2025.
[25] I L Worika, 'Rural Applications of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy'(2016) *UNEP Guide for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Laws* 260-285.

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The United Nation Agenda for sustainable was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.It provides a global framework for achieving sustainable development through 17 sustainable development goals(SDGs). The relevant goals include: [26]SDD 7, which promotes access to affordable and Clean Energy; SDG 8: decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 13, which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and SDG 9, which encourages sustainable industrialization, infrastructure development and innovation. The agenda therefore provides an important international policy framework for Nigeria to promote renewable energy as a means of expanding electricity access, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, creating employment opportunities and protecting the environment. The achievement of these goals in Nigeria depends on the effective incorporation of these objectives/goals into national laws, policies and institutional frameworks, as well as adequate funding, effective implementation and enforcement mechanisms.

The Legal and Policy framework for renewable energy and sustainable development in Nigeria contains important instruments addressing electricity sector development, environmental protection, and national energy planning. Nevertheless. The presence of these instruments is not sufficient, by itself, to establish that the existing framework is adequate or effective in promoting sustainable development. The development of sustainable development systems is recognised as the driver for achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. Government efforts such as financial supports, policy supports for off-grid renewables, and frameworks for long-term renewable technology supports are steps towards sustainable development, but it is still not enough and this emphasizes the urgent need for policy makers to implement robust and inclusive renewable energy policies that address energy demand and supply as part of a broader strategy to achieving sustainable development.[27]

3. Institutional Frameworks for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Development

Some of the relevant institutions includes: Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Energy Commission of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Power, Federal Ministry of Water Resources, Federal Ministry of Environment, Rural Electrification Agency, The Nigerian Bulk

[26] SDGs, 'Sustainable Development Goals'<https://www.sdgs.gov.ng/ accesses 15 December 2025.
[27] T A Ugah and Others, 'An assessment of Renewable Energy Policies in Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities'(2025)(13)(2*) International Journal of Innovative Mathematics, Statistics and Energy Policies* 250-264.

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Electricity Trading Plc, The Transmission Company of Nigeria, National Council on Climate Change, National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency, and National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency. A few of the institutions will be considered.

3.1 Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission

Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was established by the Electric Power Sector Reform Act of 2005(repealed), now the Electricity Act 2023(as amended), and is the main participant in the energy sector.[28] It plays a key role in various aspects of the electricity sector, including renewable energy. The Electricity market is primarily regulated by the NERC, which oversees the generation, transmission, distribution, sale and supply of the commodity in the country and at the Federal Electricity Market (FEM).[29] One of the key mandates of NERC under the Electricity Act is to facilitate electricity in Nigeria through conventional and renewable sources. The commission is also charged with the promotion, development and utilization of renewable energy services to enhance the role of renewable energy in Nigeria energy mix. Its responsibilities include:[30]

(a) Regulation: Formulating and implementing regulations, codes and standards for electricity generation, transmission, distribution and supply. Under its powers to formulate regulations, it established the Renewable Energy Feed-In-Tariff(REFIT) of 2015, which aims to promote investment in renewable energy in Nigeria.[31]The tariff aims to provide stable income for investors by ensuring fixed electricity prices from renewable sources over a set duration, covering projects with capacities between 1 MW and 30 MW, which is expected to

[28] EA 2023(as amended), s 33.
[29] EA 2023(as amended, s 34.
[30] Ibid.
[31] B B Bulama and S N Nchi, 'Examination of the Legal, Policy and Institutional Framework for the promotion of Renewable Energy in Nigeria'(2023)(7)(01) African Journal of International Energy & Environmental Law 14-28.

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add approximately 1000 MV to Nigeria's power supply from renewable energy. The REFIT introduces a dedicated tariff system to encourage private investment by guaranteeing priority access for renewable energy fed into the national grid. NERC requires that the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading (NBET) and the electricity distribution companies acquire 50% of the renewable energy capacity set by the regulation.[32]

Another key regulation introduced by NERC is the Mini-Grid Regulation of 2016. Mini-Grids are systems that can either function independently or be connected to the main distribution network, supplying electricity to multiple users. The regulation provides a framework for setting up and operating mini-grids in Nigeria, and its goal is to speed up electricity in areas that lack adequate power supply by streamlining the process for establishing mini-grids, developers, can register with NERC rather than go through the more complex licensing process. While the rules apply to all kinds of mini-grid projects, they are most often used for renewable energy initiatives, due to both technical and economic advantages.[33]

(b) Tariff Setting: It determines and approves electricity tariffs to balance affordability and sector viability.

(c) Licensing and Compliance: Granting licenses to industry participants and monitoring compliance with regulations and technical standards.

4.Market Monitoring: It oversees the functioning of Nigeria's electricity market, promoting competition, transparency and efficiency within the market, ensuring fair practices and preventing market abuse.

[32] O O Aguda, 'Constitutional and Institutional Governance of Electricity Sector in Nigeria'(2023)(14)(4) Journal of Energy Research and Reviews 32-44.
[33] P A Ogbodo-Nathaniel and Others, 'An Examination of the legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework for Promoting Renewable Energy Projects As a Panacea for Sustainable Development in Nigeria'(2024)(15)(3) *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy 64-90.*

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5.Consumer protection: It safeguards the rights and interest of electricity consumers as well as establishing and enforcing consumer protection policies, which addresses consumer complaint and promotes awareness of consumer rights and responsibilities.

3. 2 Energy Commission of Nigeria

The Energy Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was established under Energy Commission of Nigeria Act.[34] It is tasked with strategic planning and coordination of the country's energy policies, with the goal of enhancing the performance and development of the energy sector's contribution to the economy by ensuring sustainable energy supply, supporting the development of local technology and skills, promoting energy efficiency, and attracting private sector investment. The ECN works to align policies with the national Energy Policy and coordinates efforts related to renewable electricity within the larger energy framework.[35]

3.3 Federal Ministry of Environment

The Federal Ministry of Environment (FME) was established in 1999 with a mandate to address environmental concerns and ensure comprehensive coordination of all environmental matters nationwide. Its functions include the regulation of environmental issues, the protection and conservation of natural resources, and the formulation and oversight of policies designed to mitigate dissertation, deforestation, floods, erosion and pollution.[36] The EME has about seven parastatals, including NESREA and NOSDRA.

The FME plays a significant role in promoting renewable energy in the country as it issues guidelines for carrying out environmental and social impact assessment and approves EIAs for all renewable projects. Although the principal coordinating institution for achieving the

[34] ECN Act, Cap E10 LFN 2004.
[35] B B Bulama and S N Nchi, 'Examination of the Legal, Policy and Institutional Framework for the promotion of Renewable Energy in Nigeria'(2023)(7)(01) African Journal of International Energy & Environmental Law 14-28.
[36] Federal Ministry of environment, 'Mandate' <https://environment.gov.ng/mandate/> accessed 28 June 2025.

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sustainable development in Nigeria is the office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals(OSSAP-SDGs), sustainable development cannot be achieved by one institution alone. It requires coordinated action and cooperation from others institutions, especially the Ministry of Environment.

4 Promoting Sustainable Development in Nigeria through Deployment of Renewable Energy.

Renewable energy is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria and around the world. It is essential to global progress towards the United Nation's Sustainable development goals, providing a key basis for tackling social, economic and environmental challenges. As the 2030 deadline for sustainable development goals draws near, renewable energy continues to play a crucial role in advancing innovative responses to global challenges and supporting a cleaner, more equitable future.[37] To promote sustainable development in Nigeria through the use of renewable energy involves a combination of policy reforms, community engagement, investment, and technological adoption. Some of the possible strategies includes the following:[38]

(a) Strong Policies and Regulations

Regulations like the Electricity Act 2023(as amended) and policies on renewable energy can be strengthened. This can be done by providing for tax incentives, reduction of import duty on renewables and subsidies for renewable energy technologies. Private investment can be encouraged by enforcing feed-in-tariffs, as well as strengthening the role of the Rural Electrification Agency to facilitate renewable energy deployment. The provision in the Electricity Act 2023(as amended) empowering states to make and establish their own regulatory bodies for the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity within their boundaries, simplifies the process of developing off-grid and mini-grid solutions, which are important for rural electrification and sustainable development.[39]

The mini-grid regulations are specifically designed to accelerate electrification in unserved and undeserved areas, which is a core tenet of sustainable development.[40] This regulation creates a

[37] V. Agbakwuru and Others, 'The Role of Renewable Energy in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals'(2024)(7)(02) *International Journal of Engineering Research Updates* 13-027.
[38] A T Ajia, 'Renewable Energy Policy and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: A Systematic Scoping Review'(17)(6)(2025)*Journal of Energy Research and Reviews* 1-16.
[39] EA 2023(as amended) s 230(2-9).
[40] Sustainable Development Goals 7.

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streamlined and faster approval process for mini-grid projects below 1MW, allows developers of isolated mini-grids not connected to the grid to set cost-reflective tariffs in consultation with the community. This promotes social inclusion by making it legally feasible and financially attractive to power rural communities, schools and health centres with renewable energy. Strong laws can help protect the environment. Laws like the Environmental Impact Assessment require developers to conduct EIAs before a project is approved, ensuring that a windfarm or hydro dam does not cause undue ecological damage. Land Use Laws can designate suitable areas for renewable development, protecting culturally sensitive lands or ecosystems.[41]

(b) Advancement of Sustainable Development Goals

Renewable energy directly supports the achievement of key Sustainable Development Goals, particularly goal 7(affordable and clean energy).Effective climate change mitigation also safeguards ecosystems, supports food security through climate-smart agriculture, and aligns with broader sustainable development goals.[42] Certainly, the deployment of renewable energy promotes sustainable development by reducing degradation, expanding energy access, creating jobs, conserving natural resources, and supporting long term economic, and social stability, ensuring that development today does not compromise the needs of the future generation.

(c) Expansion of Renewable Energy Infrastructure

Renewable energy promotes sustainable development by expanding access to affordable and reliable energy (SDG 7 and 1), especially in underserved and rural communities. This is done by installing mini-grids in rural communities, promoting solar homes systems for households and small businesses, and encouraging local assembly of solar panels to reduce cost. This will improve energy access, reduce poverty and cut emissions.[43]

(d) Increase Investment and Access to Finance

Foreign direct investment can be attracted through favourable regulations. Low interest loan can be given for small businesses and farmers to adopt renewable energy, and financing for mini-grid developers through public-private partnerships.[44]

(e) Reduction of Environmental Degradation

Switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which helps to address climate change. This will also reduce air and water pollution and protects

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[41] Y Omoregbe, *Promoting Sustainable Development Through the use of Renewable Energy*: The Role of Law (Oxford University Press 2008) 39-59

[42] J K Adebisi and O Adebisi-Adelani, 'Carbon Emission, Impact on Climate and Mitigation Strategies in Nigeria'(2023)(2)(1) *African Journal of Climate Change and Resource Sustainability* 2790-9638.

[43] R Lin and J Ren, 'Renewable Energy and Sustainable Development'(2020)6(1) 3-7, <https://dx.doi.org/10.21622/resd.2020.06.1.003> accessed 4 October 2025.

[44] Ibid.

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biodiversity, directly combating climate change and environmental disasters like flooding and desertification. This support the wider goal of maintaining healthy ecosystems and sustainable communities.[45]Shifting to renewables ensures environmental sustainability by curbing pollution and protecting land and biodiversity. This directly improves public health by preventing millions of annual deaths from air pollution.

(f) Economic Growth and Industrial Development

Renewable Energy drives economic development by creating jobs and fostering innovation across various sectors, including manufacturing, maintenance and installation. It supports sustainable industrialization by improving productivity and competitiveness. As renewable energy technologies expand, they stimulate new industries and contribute to long-term economic growth.[46]

(g) Increase Public Education and Awareness

Nationwide campaigns on the benefits of renewable energy and sustainability is important. It helps people understand the environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy, thereby encouraging more responsible energy use, and adopt to energy saving habits and support clean alternatives like solar and wind. This directly supports sustainable consumption patterns and advances sustainable development goal 12.

5 Challenges to Renewable Energy Deployment in Nigeria

Despite its vast renewable energy potential, investment in renewable energy in Nigeria faces several significant challenges that hinder large-scale adoption and growth. These challenges create a complex investment environment, slowing the pace of Nigeria's transition towards a more reliable and sustainable energy sector. Some of the challenges includes:

(a) Lack of a Comprehensive Renewable Energy Law

This is a major challenge that discourages investor confidence. Although, there is the Electricity Act of 2023(as amended) which governs the development, financing, operation and sale of power in Nigeria, but there is no specific-sector focused legislation aimed at providing clarity and precision. The frequent policy changes and inconsistency in the Nigerian energy sector is worsened by the lack of a comprehensive Renewable Energy law. This situation underscores the urgent need for a cohesive and stable policy framework backed by targeted

[45] Sustainable Development Goal 6 and 11.
[46] D Zakirova and Others, 'Renewable Energy and Economic Growth'(2024)(56) *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University Series* 2786-6688.

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legislation to support renewable energy development, and build trust in investors and encourage long-term investment in the renewable energy sector.[47] When there are laws that mandates obligations or incentives, private investors are more likely to engage.

(b) Lack of Sufficient Public Awareness

There is limited public awareness of the benefits of renewable energy and resistance to its adoption due to cultural preferences for conventional energy sources like oil and gas. This can undermine the potential impact of legal frameworks.[48]Many Nigerians are not aware of the environmental and economic benefits and advantages of utilizing renewable energy sources. There is a shortage of reliable data and information on renewable energy and its energy statistics are often outdated or inaccurate.[49] It is essential to raise public awareness of their importance, because they are seen by many as still developing and not fully mature, which leads to the belief that they are only viable in niche markets and would need substantial subsidies to be effective.[50]

(c) Limited Technical Expertise and Innovation

There is insufficient technical expertise and innovation to access, use and manage renewable energy resources. This leads to difficulties in sourcing for equipment and obtaining maintenance support. Additionally, the high cost of the required technology poses significant barrier to the growth of renewable energy in the country. As a result, prospective independent power producers could encounter major logistical difficulties when it comes to obtaining equipment and accessing maintenance services for renewable energy projects.[51] The initial investment required for renewable energy technology is higher than the traditional energy projects. This is because the energy source storage techniques which are needed due to the intermittent and fluctuating nature of renewable energy sources are costly.[52] These storage

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[47] J Onwubuariri, 'Reviewing the Legal Framework for Renewable Energy Projects in Nigeria'(2014) < https://www.academia.edu/12116036/Reviewing_the_Legal_Framework_for_Renewable_Energy_Projects_in_Nigeria> accessed 20 September 2025.

[48] Ibid.

[49] R Cervigni and Others, 'Low Carbon Development Opportunity for Nigeria'(2013) World Bank 103-104.found in P A Ogbodo-Nathaniel and others, 'An Examination of the Legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework for Promoting Renewable Energy Projects as Panaceas for Sustainable Development in Nigeria'(2024)(15)(3) *The Journal of Sustainable Development, Law and Policy* 65-90.

[50] I Oghogho, 'Solar Energy Potential and its Development for Sustainable Energy Generation in Nigeria; A Road Map to Achieving this Feat'(2014) 5(2*) International Journal for Engineering and Management Sciences* 61, 67.

[51] O J Olujobi*, Nigerian Petroleum, Energy and Gas Resources Law*(Princeton & Associate Publishing Co Ltd 2022) 213-214.

[52] N Farquhar, 'Energy Security , Climate: Converging Solutions'(2009)(29)(1*) Journal of Land, Resources and Environmental Law* 10-11.

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solutions, such as batteries will need to be arranged for by Nigerians investors, raising the overall cost per unit of the electricity generation.[53]

(d) Political factors and Priorities

Policy inconsistency, overlapping or weak regulations, changes in administration, weak enforcement, and delay in moving policies into law limit their effectiveness. Political interference of corrupt politicians often disrupts the policy making process, manipulating the content and quality of policies to serve their own interest, as most of these policies are designed to boost the public image of political figures and gain popularity. This situation weakens the effectiveness of renewable energy policies, slowing down progress in the sector.[54]

(e) The Cumbersome Process of Acquiring License

Acquiring licenses for renewable energy projects in Nigeria poses a major obstacle to their progress due to bureaucratic red tape, inconsistent application of rules, and ambiguous regulations. This delay and complexity of the licensing process can deter potential investors and challenging for smaller renewable energy developers, limiting their ability to compete effectively in the energy market.

(f) Absence of Required Technology

Apart from Hydropower, bio-fuel and solar technologies, no other renewable energy technology has been developed in Nigeria. Most of the technology has to be imported at outrageous cost. Limited local manufacturing of key components like solar panels, inverters and batteries, leads to reliance on imports, high costs and issues with quality control.[55] High capital cost for renewable energy projects and insufficient funding can hinder the realization of investment in renewable energy.[56]Lack of technological expertise or innovations tailored to the local context is a great challenge.

(g) Poor Infrastructure

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[53] M S Adaramola, 'Viability of Grid Connected Solar PV Energy System in Jos Nigeria'(2014)(61) *Electrical Power and Energy System* 64.

[54] U B. Ikechukwu and E Chukwuemeka, 'The Obstacles to Effective Policy Implementation by the Public Bureaucracy in Developing Nations: The Case of Nigeria'(2013)(1)(8) *Singaporean Journal of Business, Economics and Management Studies368.*

[55] D Abdullahi and Others, 'Key Barriers to the Implementation of Solar Energy in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis'(2017)(83)(1) IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science<https://rgu-repository.worktribe.com/output/1919661/key-barriers-to-the-implementation-of-solar-energy-in-nigeria/> accessed 30 December 2025.

[56] O J Olujobi and others, 'The Legal Regime on Renewable Energy as Alternative Sources of Energy in Nigeria's Power Sector: The Impacts and the Potentials' (2020)(19)(3*) Academy of Strategic Management Journal* 1-19.

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There is a significant challenge of inadequate infrastructure in Nigeria, both in terms of quality and quantity. Essential facilities such as reliable electricity, accessible road network, and adequate water supply are lacking. These deficiencies hinder the production, processing, and distribution of agricultural products and other materials critical to the success of renewable energy initiatives in the country.[57]

(h) Unstable Weather Condition

This can negatively affect energy supply, especially since Renewable energy sources rely heavily on specific weather patterns. This reliance can lead to inconsistencies in power generation. For example, hydroelectric plants need adequate rainfall to fill dams and maintain a steady flow of water for electricity production. Wind turbines depend on sufficient wind to operate effectively, while solar panels require clear skies and sunlight to generate the necessary heat for power. Compared to non-renewable sources, it is challenging for renewable to consistently produce the same volume of electricity. Meeting the large-scale power output of traditional fossil fuel generators can be difficult for renewable energy systems.[58]

(i) Geographical Disparities

Renewable energy potential, such a solar or wind energy, varies significantly a cross Nigeria due to geographical differences. This can make it difficult to implement one-size-fit-all legal framework for renewable energy development. Also, variability in climate patterns and natural disaster can affect the viability and sustainability of certain renewable energy sources, complicating the evaluation of their potential for climate change mitigation.[59]

(j) Fossil Fuel Dependency

This is a major challenge because the country's economy, energy system, and government revenue are deeply tied to oil and gas. A large share of government income and foreign exchange earnings comes from fossil fuels, especially crude oil exports, as such government prioritizes budgets, policies, and infrastructure that supports fossil fuels, leaving renewable energy projects underfunded or treated as secondary. Strong political and economic interest in fossil fuels sector, slows renewable energy reform. There is also a resistance to change by the

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[57] Olujobi (n 56).
[58] Y Omoregbe, *Promoting Sustainable Development Through the Use of Renewable Energy*: The Role of Law(Oxford University Press 2008).
[59] X Wang, 'Legal and Policy Frameworks for Renewable Energy to Mitigate Climate Change'(7)(2)(2007) *Sustainable Development Law and Policy* 17-20, 77-78.

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public due to familiarity with fossil fuels. Many households and businesses depend on petrol and diesel generators for electricity, which reduces demand for renewable alternatives.[60]

(k) Insecurity

Insecurity in some parts of the country, vandalism, and conflicts are a major obstacle to renewable energy development in Nigeria. It causes investors to exclude high-risk area sites, limiting access to prime areas for mini-grids and wind farms. Field personnel face limited freedom of movement and rely on private security escorts, while vandalism and attacks increase insurance costs and discourage funding.[61]

Indeed, overcoming these challenges will require strong domestic policies and increased local capacity in renewable energy development.[62]Although, renewable energy sources have minimal consequences on the environment, such as disturbance of wildlife habitats as a result of large solar farms and wind farms, but when compared to fossil fuel, while doing a cost-benefit analysis, the benefits of renewable energy outweighs their environmental impact.[63]

6 Conclusion

Promoting sustainable development in Nigeria through the deployment of renewable energy requires an effective comprehensive and coherent legal framework capable of addressing the country's energy, environmental and developmental challenges. Without a coherent, strong and consistently enforced legal framework, efforts to promote renewable energy will remain inefficient and unable to achieve the scale required for meaningful sustainable development. Although Nigeria has enacted laws and developed policies that support renewable energy development, weaknesses in implementation, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, fragmented institutional responsibilities continues to hinder the effective utilization of the country's abundant renewable energy resources. The success of these framework hinges on the effective implementation, consistent enforcement by both the federal and state government. Promoting sustainable development in Nigeria through renewable energy is a necessary and viable path, that may take some time, as such natural gas can be a bridge fuel leading to a

[60] T Fwadwabea and Others, 'Low Carbon Design and Technologies: Pathway to Net-Zero Emissions in Nigeria'(2024)(xi)(x*)International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation* 2321-2705.
[61] Ibid.
[62] N K John and Others, 'Potential of Integrated Energy Solution in Nigeria: Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Development-Multi-Facet Assessment Model'(2025)(6*) Discover Sustainability* 239.
[63] 'Does Renewable Energy Cause pollution?' <https://www.inspirecleanenergy.com/> accessed 15 November 2025.

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gradual shift to renewable energy sources, but the most crucial ingredient for success is the political will to create the enabling environment.

7 Recommendations

1. The National Assembly should enact a dedicated renewable energy law to consolidate existing legal provisions, establish clear renewable energy targets, provide investment incentives, and promote the deployment of renewable energy technologies.
2. The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and the Federal Ministry of Power should strengthen the implementation and enforcement of the Electricity Act to encourage renewable electricity generation and ensure compliance with applicable regulatory standards.
3. The Federal Ministry of Finance, the Federal Ministry of Power, and the Rural Electrification Agency should develop effective financial incentives, grants, tax reliefs, and accessible funding mechanisms to attract private investment in solar, wind, biomass, and small hydropower projects, particularly in rural and underserved communities.
4. The Federal Ministry of Power, Energy Commission of Nigeria, and Rural Electrification Agency should establish effective coordination mechanisms to harmonise policies, clarify institutional responsibilities, and accelerate renewable energy deployment across Nigeria.
5. The Federal Ministry of Environment and the Federal Ministry of Power should strengthen the integration of renewable energy objectives into national environmental policies and sustainable development programmes, supported by effective safeguards monitoring and periodic reviews of implementation.
6. The Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Environment, Civil Society Organizations, and relevant agencies, should implement nationwide awareness campaigns on the benefits of renewable energy and sustainable use of resources.

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