



KENYA'S ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY AT UNEP IN MOBILISING CLIMATE ADAPTATION FINANCE

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Abstract

Climate change causes devastating socio-economic and environmental effects. Developing countries like Kenya that contribute little to global greenhouse emissions are disproportionately affected. This paper explores how Kenya's environmental diplomacy at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) contributes to mobilisation of climate adaptation finance. The study is guided by concepts of environmental diplomacy and climate finance, utilizing qualitative research methods through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The findings demonstrate that through environmental diplomacy at UNEP, Kenya strengthens diplomatic visibility, builds coalitions and global partnerships that would indirectly increase the chances of securing climate finance. Nonetheless, some drawbacks hinder the transformation of Kenya's diplomatic leverage into concrete financial outcomes. These include geopolitics, institutional separation of UNEP and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), competition, bureaucracy and national institutional capacity. This research contributes to academic discourse on environmental diplomacy, affirming that to effectively mobilise climate finance, a country must balance between diplomacy, reinforcing national institutions and engagement with global governance structures.

Keywords: climate adaptation, climate finance, environmental diplomacy, global environmental governance, UNEP

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has become among the most urgent problems that the world grapples with in the 21st century, causing devastating socio-economic and environmental effects (Feulner, 2015). Despite being a global issue, its impacts are uneven and disproportionately affect countries that contribute little to greenhouse gas emissions (Althor et al., 2016). Africa contributes less than 4% of global greenhouse gases but remains vulnerable to climate change effects (Powanga & Kwakwa, 2024). Kenya is one of the African countries disproportionately affected despite low greenhouse gas emissions. Kenya experiences frequent drought, floods, increased temperatures, unreliable rainfall, desertification, water scarcity and reduced agricultural productivity (Ochieng et al., 2016). Climate fragilities create an immediate need for rigorous climate adaptation measures by Kenya to safeguard livelihoods, ecosystems, and promote sustainable development (Ouma, 2023).

Kenya has adopted several climate adaptation strategies, like reforestation, community resilience projects, water conservation, climate smart agriculture, legal and organisational frameworks. These include the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the Climate Change (Amendment) Act of 2023, and the National Adaptation Plan (2015–2030), all of which mainstream climate adaptation into Kenya's development agenda. These frameworks demonstrate Kenya's commitment to climate adaptation; however, their implementation remains resource-intensive (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010; Kenya Vision 2030, n.d.).

To tackle climate change, countries must not only adopt effective national policies but also cooperate at the multilateral level, as climate change is a global problem (Volchenko et al., 2023). This need for multilateral cooperation has necessitated environmental diplomacy, through which countries discuss shared concerns, collaborate on policy responses, and mobilise resources to address climate-related challenges. Kenya hosts the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the only United Nations headquarters located in the Global South. The organization is responsible for devising international environmental priorities, facilitating environmental agreements and harmonising international action on environmental challenges like the loss of biodiversity, pollution and climate change (UNEP, 2025).

Environment and climate diplomacy is one of the focus areas of Kenyan Foreign Policy, 2024. Kenya recognizes the importance of safeguarding natural resources to sustain livelihoods and collaborates globally on environmental issues by participating in global environmental agreements like the Paris Agreement. Kenya advocates for fair pricing of Africa's carbon sinks, increased climate finance, reinforcing UN agencies in Nairobi, as well as stronger and feasible Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) (Government of Kenya, 2024). The Foreign Policy also emphasizes facilitation for climate adaptation, mitigation and environmentally friendly economic transformation. Finally, it encourages cooperation in research, technology, innovation, development, and the intersection between science and policy, demonstrating a commitment to global cooperation to achieve national policy objectives (Government of Kenya, 2024).

To realise its climate adaptation ambitions, Kenya needs climate finance. It is estimated that drastic climate shifts will cost Kenya roughly USD 500 million every year. This amount equals 2.6% of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, Kenya experiences significant finance gaps. For example, the Africa region was allocated less than one percent of global climate financing raised through the Clean Development Mechanism. Other developed countries, like China, received more than 80%, while other regions, like South America and the Middle East, received 18% of the funds. Furthermore, it is observed that Kenya raised funds that are way below the \$ 3.2 billion yearly target (Odhengo et al., 2024).

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the main international convention that harmonizes global interventions on climate change and offers a foundation for multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) (UNFCCC, n.d.-a). Through the Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol frameworks, UNFCCC urges developed countries to assist developing countries, and those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, in meeting their climate finance needs through the convention's principle of "common but differentiated responsibility and respective capacities" (UNFCCC, n.d.-b). UNFCCC also set up a financial mechanism, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), to enable the provision of climate finance to developing countries. There are also special funds like the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), managed by GEF and the Adaptation Fund (AF) under the Kyoto Protocol. The

Conference of the Parties (COP) manages the financial mechanism and makes decisions on who obtains climate funds, rules and program priorities (UNFCCC, n.d.-a)

Aside from funding opportunities from the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), countries can also benefit from bilateral grants and loans, green bonds and climate change trust funds. There are also continental funding opportunities from the African Union Agenda 2063, which mobilises funds for member countries to tackle climate change, the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) and East Africa Development Bank (Odhengo et al., 2024).

While UNEP is the global authority on the environment and focuses on policies on the environment, science, research and forming standards on the environment, it does not have control over climate finance, as this mandate only lies with UNFCCC. UNEP offers technical and policy assistance while UNFCCC, headquartered in Bonn, Germany, controls the funds. The institutional separation raises a pertinent question on whether Kenya's diplomatic engagement at UNEP has a positive effect on the country's access to climate finance for climate adaptation (Henk Harmsen, 2018). Despite Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP and its leverage as a host country, the country continues to experience climate adaptation finance shortfalls. Why does Kenya's diplomatic visibility and leverage fail to achieve significant climate finance results?

Various studies have explored climate finance and climate adaptation in Kenya. However, these studies largely concentrate on financial flows or domestic fund management as opposed to diplomatic processes, which have an impact on the accessibility of climate finance (Climate Policy Initiative, 2022). Some studies have explored environmental diplomacy as a critical tool for environmental protection. Still, they do not align Kenya's environmental diplomacy, especially within multilateral institutions like UNEP, with climate adaptation finance mobilisation outcomes (Guyo et al., n.d.). This creates a gap in understanding how Kenya's diplomatic efforts and leadership at UNEP transform into concrete funding results. The research gap is significant because climate finance can be mobilised indirectly through diplomatic efforts at UNEP, including but not limited to coalition building, agenda setting, collaborations and Nairobi's proximity to UNEP.

This research fills this gap by exploring how Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP contributes to the mobilisation of climate finance for climate adaptation. It

scrutinises diplomacy, institutional opportunities, and structural drawbacks that influence finance mobilisation outcomes while considering the nexus between global governance structures and national capabilities. Through an examination of these factors, this study offers novel additions on environmental diplomacy, climate finance, and Global South agency, while offering policy-relevant insights for enhancing climate adaptation financing strategies in Kenya and similar contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing writings on environmental diplomacy and climate finance demonstrate the increasing role of states in capitalizing on multilateral institutions like UNEP to solve problems arising due to climate change. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. As the host country, Kenya has diplomatic opportunities as well as significant drawbacks in mobilising climate finance for climate adaptation purposes. This literature review explores concepts that are significant to this research, namely, environmental diplomacy and climate finance.

Environmental Diplomacy

Environmental diplomacy is defined as the utilisation of dialogue, consensus building, agreement, compromise and engagement at a multilateral level with a variety of actors, with a goal of solving global and transnational environmental problems (Li et al., 2020). Environmental diplomacy facilitates countries to shape global environmental agreements, build standards and marshal funds for climate action. To secure the engagement on agreed environmental decisions, states normally enter into agreements at a country-to-country level, multilaterally and at global levels. In this regard, the more agreements a country has signed and ratified, the more the country is considered to be practising environmental diplomacy (Li et al., 2020).

Environmental diplomacy has emerged as an important aspect of modern-day international relations. It reflects an increasing realization that problems in the environment are transnational and cannot be solved by individual countries but rather require multilateral collaboration (Harmsen, 2018). In contrast with traditional diplomacy, which is heavily invested in trade or security, environmental diplomacy plays out in multiplex multilateral platforms whereby technical knowledge, principles of

conduct and strategic goals bisect (Stroebel & Wurgler, 2021). It entails countries, global organisations, non-state players and expert networks collaborating to influence standards, policy framework and combined effort. Environmental diplomacy is especially necessary in solving problems caused by climate change, loss of biodiversity and environmental destruction, which require sustainable collaboration as opposed to win-lose negotiations (Guyo et al., 2024). In this regard, this form of diplomacy has grown to be a principal factor in international environmental governance models.

Global governance bodies have an important part to play in shaping environmental diplomacy by offering formal avenues for cooperation, dialogue and establishing shared expectations. Organisations including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) facilitate countries to undertake consistent diplomatic negotiations on issues concerning the environment (Guyo et al., 2024). Under the umbrella of these institutions, countries can bargain for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), formulate policies, and marshal technical expertise as well as finances. In multilateral platforms, environmental diplomacy entails building coalitions, setting up priorities and advocacy by developed and developing states to shape end results in alignment with the national interests of the respective countries (Susskind & Ali, 2015). The standardisation of environmental diplomacy has promoted honesty, responsibility and regularity in international environmental governance, though power imbalances persist and shape the end results of diplomatic negotiations. As a result, the efficacy of environmental diplomacy is dependent on the ability of a country to engage with these global governance bodies with diplomacy and tact.

Effectively, environmental diplomacy has been significant in facilitating international environmental agreements like the Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol. These Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) show that consistent diplomatic negotiations, scholarly agreement, and trade offs can yield collective climate action (Guyo et al., 2024). To enumerate, small island developing countries have leveraged environmental diplomacy to raise issues on loss and damage and climate adaptation in international discussions regardless of their limited financial muscle. In addition, the European Union (EU) has successfully used environmental diplomacy to advance environmental governance and green standards globally (Volchenko et al., 2023). In the

Global South, several countries like Kenya, Costa Rica and Morocco have used environmental diplomacy to place themselves as leaders in environmental governance, secure key environmental partnerships, and shape policy priorities. All these examples prove that environmental diplomacy can be a significant mechanism for promoting visibility and influencing social norms in geopolitics.

Environmental diplomacy is inextricably connected to development priorities, especially in developing countries that are under the threat of environmental vulnerabilities. Experts note that for most of these countries, environmental diplomacy is not just a tool for advocating for the protection of the environment but a mechanism to attract climate finance to facilitate climate adaptation and realization of sustainable development goals (Ivanova, 2010). By way of public diplomacy, countries in the Global South champion for the acknowledgement of differentiated responsibilities, obtaining resources and transfer of technology to support national adaptation plans. Environmental diplomacy for developing states, therefore, becomes a bridge between international pledges on the environment and the national development agenda. On the contrary, evidence points out that environmental diplomacy does not automatically produce climate finance, as decisions on who is funded are mainly made within the scope of different global environmental bodies like UNFCCC (Susskind & Ali, 2015). This demonstrates that there is a need to scrutinize how diplomatic engagement is standardised in larger climate finance frameworks.

Regardless of the increasing eminence, scholarly literature on environmental diplomacy highlights a couple of drawbacks and voids. There have been criticisms that environmental diplomacy puts prominence on a sense of obligation while neglecting systemic limitations like power imbalance, challenges in funding and institutional disjointedness (Susskind & Ali, 2015). Moreover, the bulk of writings concentrates on international discussions and resolutions on treaties, and there is no focus on how each country uses their organisational capacity to realise national development priorities. There is also insufficient data driven examination that connects environmental diplomacy to significant results, like an increase in climate finance mobilised or increased resilience nationally. This void is demonstrated in research on countries that host key environmental institutions, where it is expected that such diplomatic advantage yields tangible climate outcomes. Yet, there is a notable disparity between environmental diplomacy and climate

finance mobilised. To fill this void, there is a need for a contextual examination of the practice of environmental diplomacy, challenges and conversion into meaningful benefits (Susskind & Ali, 2015).

Climate Finance

Climate finance can be defined as funds that are mobilised both domestically and internationally to assist countries in meeting their climate adaptation and mitigation priorities (Stroebel & Wurgler, 2021). It also includes public flows and private equity redistributed through global financing mechanisms, mutual agreements, green assets-backed securities, preferential loans, and carbon markets to facilitate net-zero transitions and strengthen resilience (Steckel et al., 2017). The Climate Policy Initiative's (CPI) Global Landscape of Climate Finance report notes that climate funding increased from roughly USD 632 billion in 2019/2020 to about USD 1.3 23 trillion in 2021/2022, mainly due to growth in investments made towards climate mitigation, such as green energy and low-carbon mobility (Bhandary et al., 2021). Notwithstanding this increase, international climate finance is still limited and is way below the required trillions of dollars yearly to fund efforts to combat climate change and strengthen resilience by the year 2030. The Climate Policy Initiative (CPI) estimates that there is a need for a five to ten times increase to realise global climate aspirations (Steckel et al., 2017). These dynamics highlight advancements made as well as voids in the global climate finance framework.

The UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement advocate for developed countries to take a lead in mobilising climate finance to assist developing countries in climate action because they consider the difference in contribution to greenhouse emissions, as well as the impact of climate change on developing countries and their ability to cope. UNFCCC supports developing countries with climate financing through a financial mechanism and has also established the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and further specialized funds like the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), which GEF manages. The Adaptation Fund was set up in 2001 under the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC, n.d.-a). Climate finance is critical for Kenya as it is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change despite not being a top greenhouse gas emitter. The country needs financing to realize the

Sustainable Development Goals, the country's 2030, Paris Agreement, and Africa Agenda 2063 (Odhengo et al., 2024).

There are several players involved in mobilising climate finance. These include central governments, global financial institutions, private sector financial services, multilateral organisations and family units (Buchner et al., 2019). Public funding is sourced from domestic budgets, mutual aid, and global finance, like the Green Climate Fund and Global Environmental Facility (GEF). Private sector financing entails equity, project bonds, green bonds and sustainably linked financial instruments (Stroebel & Wurgler, 2021). According to the Climate Policy Initiative (CPI), private climate funding, especially in green energy, contributes to a considerable amount of aggregate flows and has gradually been increasing. However, concessional public finance is still heavily relied on for climate adaptation initiatives (Buchner et al., 2019). Financial instruments, such as green bonds, are gradually becoming significant in capitalising on private investment for projects on climate change, assisting in filling financial voids over time and showing market interest in green investing. The variety of players and climate finance instruments points to the fact that climate finance is complex, and there is a need for harmonised processes to direct finance to where there is an urgent need.

Notwithstanding the expansion of climate finance, existing writings highlight a regular trend in the strong deployment of funds to climate mitigation projects like renewable energy, energy conservation, and sustainable transport (Bhandary et al., 2021; Stroebel & Wurgler, 2021). On the other hand, countries that are susceptible to the impacts of climate change continue to receive limited climate finance for climate adaptation. To enumerate, according to CPI, adaptation finance grew by 53% from USD 30 billion in 2017/2018 to USD 46 billion in 2019/2020, but largely continues to be inadequate considering the adaptation needs of countries vulnerable to climate change (Giglio et al., 2021). Actual climate funding initiatives, including water and drainage resilience initiatives or cross-cutting adaptation projects, demonstrate the growing but still insufficient concentration on resilience in several states. The gap between mitigation and adaptation finance has been noted as a significant drawback in realising objectives geared toward fair climate adaptation, specifically for developing and least developed states that are disproportionately impacted by the adverse effects of climate change and have lessened capacity to secure private sector financing. Climate finance is managed at

different levels, ranging from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) modalities to domestic policy frameworks and development bank approaches. Global financial mechanisms, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund (AF), were set up under the umbrella of UNFCCC to aid developing countries in effectively responding to climate change through the mobilisation and deployment of funds (Stroebel & Wurgler, 2021). Nonetheless, existing evidence portrays constant drawbacks in converting commitments into real payments, and there have been reported challenges regarding required qualifications, operational limitations and coordination among funders and receiving states. In addition, climate finance circulation is not geographically equitable. Developing countries like China control the mobilisation and distribution of finance, while developing countries are allocated a limited proportion of global climate finance (Steckel et al., 2017). These modalities of management highlight that climate finance is not only about numbers but also equity and efficacy in international action on climate change.

Regardless of the growth of climate finance, there are persisting impediments that hinder its capacity to realise international climate goals. To begin with, there is a significant funding void manifested by the big disparity between what is presently available to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and strengthen resilience by the year 2030 (Buchner et al., 2019). Developing countries, for instance, face several drawbacks that prevent private financing for climate adaptation efforts, such as subjective risk assessment, limited bankable initiatives in susceptible areas and limited local regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, the incorporation of climate risks in making funding decisions, as well as how financial markets price physical and transition risks, is a contemporary area of interest to researchers (Giglio et al., 2021). To address these setbacks, there is a need for financial innovations, enhanced organisational alignment and increased transparency in the distribution of climate finance, as well as incorporating climate considerations into larger economic strategy and global fiscal policies.

Conceptual Framework.

This study uses a conceptual framework to expound how Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP impacts climate finance mobilisation. The conceptual framework is guided by an understanding that diplomatic engagement does not always equate to more

climate finance mobilised, but that various global and domestic institutional intervening factors influence results. The relationship between environmental diplomacy and mobilisation of climate finance is therefore understood to be indirect, as whether Kenya mobilises sufficient climate finance or not is also dependent on a set of other influencing factors.

In this regard, environmental diplomacy is the independent factor applied through Kenya's diplomatic engagement at UNEP. Kenya diplomatically engages with UNEP through agenda-setting, building alliances/coalitions and alignment (Susskind & Ali, 2015). Through these practices, Kenya aims to strengthen its diplomatic visibility, legitimacy and leverage in international environmental governance. As a host country for UNEP, Kenya benefits from good diplomatic standing, access to global environmental networks and the ability to influence social norms. All these factors offer a significantly conducive setting for environmental diplomacy.

This paper posits that environmental diplomacy doesn't automatically transform into significant climate finance mobilised for Kenya. Rather, environmental diplomacy functions through mediating mechanisms and contributes to increased diplomatic visibility in international environmental governance, accessibility to global networks, coalitions and leverage over international conversations on the environment, including the ability to set the agenda through discussing climate finance mobilisation for developing countries in key meetings on the environment. Consequently, these results may present avenues for Kenya to interact with funding partners and institutions, hence indirectly contributing to desirable results in climate finance mobilisation for Kenya.

The dependent factor is the mobilisation of climate finance, demonstrated in Kenya's capacity to obtain, impact and profit from global climate finance mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Adaptation Fund (AF), as well as other bilateral and global funding sources. The mobilisation of climate finance is evaluated through a lens of access, proportion, aligning with national climate adaptation plans and efficacy in responding to adaptation requirements.

Intervening factors shape the nexus between environmental diplomacy and mobilising climate finance. First, climate finance management frameworks whereby UNEP and UNFCCC have different functions, with one located in Nairobi, Kenya and the other in Bonn, Germany. While UNEP is the global authority on the environment,

UNFCCC is the global custodian of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and makes funding decisions. Other intervening factors include the complex nature of securing climate finance, competitiveness and especially among developing countries, geopolitics and economic considerations, which have an impact on decision-making on funding. Domestically, organisational capacity, policy integration, harmony between national and county governments and intake capacity influence Kenya's capability to translate its environmental diplomacy into concrete funding outcomes.

The framework demonstrates that climate finance end results emanate from the interplay between diplomatic engagement, organisational frameworks and systemic barriers as opposed to only the status as host country. This study, therefore, utilises the conceptual framework to illustrate how environment diplomacy serves as a strategic mechanism that could facilitate or impede Kenya from obtaining climate finance depending on how it is applied and supported by structural influences.

Overall, this conceptual framework moves from a one-dimensional comprehension of a cause-and-effect link between environmental diplomacy and climate finance and embraces a multidimensional analysis explaining that climate finance results emanate from the interaction between diplomacy, global structural and domestic institutional factors. This understanding moves the paper from a descriptive analysis to a profound interpretive understanding of why Kenya's diplomatic leverage as a host country for UNEP doesn't spontaneously transform into significant mobilisation of climate finance for the country.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs qualitative research methods to examine Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP in mobilising climate finance for climate adaptation. Qualitative research is notably suited for exploring intricate social and political phenomena because it highlights comprehending meanings, processes and experiences in their natural environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study method is most suitable as it permits the researcher to carry out a thorough examination of the diplomatic practices of Kenya and their result in relation to the institutional framework of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Moreover, the method is beneficial for responding to

“how” and “why” questions, making it suited for investigating the connection between diplomacy, various intervening factors and the result on climate finance (Yin, 2018).

This research utilizes two fundamental sources of data, namely primary and secondary data in the form of semi-structured interviews and documented information. The researcher conducted one (1) interview via Zoom with a key informant working at UNEP specifically on environmental governance, climate action, policy support, multistakeholder connection and programme delivery. Interviews offer detailed analysis, background and practical knowledge that may not be fully provided by information from documents. Due to the busy schedule of the research respondents, the researcher developed a structured Google form with open-ended questions, which was shared with a total of seven (7) respondents. Open-ended questions permit interviewees to provide in-depth insights while at the same time offering the researcher versatility to examine further for greater comprehension (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Purposive sampling was used, but overall, the study was guided by data saturation, which is important in qualitative research as opposed to statistical representation. The study reached saturation after analysing four (4) surveys. The data collection phase began in January 2026 and was completed in March 2026.

The Google form with open-ended questions was shared with the following persons:

- Government of Kenya Officials from the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, particularly those working at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to UNEP and the Multilateral Affairs Directorate.
- Government of Kenya Officials from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, specifically those working on climate finance and coordination of policies.
- Staff of UNEP located in Nairobi and working on climate finance, country engagement and securing partnerships.
- Experts on climate finance and negotiation from NGOs, think tanks like the African Centre for Technology Studies and Kenya's delegation to the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COPs).

The researcher examined the following documents as part of secondary data:

- Formal policy and legal documentation like Kenya's Climate Change Act (amended 2023), National Adaptation Plan (2015 -2030), Vision 2030 and Kenya's Foreign Policy (2024).
- Works published by UNEP, yearly reports and documents on climate finance, including those on the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- Global reports and briefs from institutions like UNFCCC, World Economic Forum, Climate Policy Initiative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and African Development Bank.
- Academic research, scholarly articles, books and theses that examine environmental diplomacy, role theory and climate finance.

Thematic analysis was utilized for data processing and analysis. Thematic analysis entails methodically coding data to point out patterns, categories and themes that are pertinent to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This technique was chosen because of its versatility and applicability in pinpointing sequences and meaning in intricate sociopolitical processes. The data for this study came from one key informant interview and an online Google form with open-ended questions and documents. All this was treated as qualitative data and was analysed altogether.

The analysis was carried out in six steps. The interviews were first transcribed and organized together with data obtained from documents and Google Forms responses. The researcher then read all individual responses from the Google Forms and recorded relevant insights. The data were analyzed through both deductive and inductive coding. Deductive coding was guided by the conceptual framework, using codes such as agenda setting, policy alignment, and coalition building. Inductive coding was conducted by identifying emerging themes from documents, interviews, and Google Forms responses. The codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories, including environmental diplomacy practices, climate finance, and institutional and structural factors. These themes were interpreted within the conceptual framework of environmental diplomacy and climate finance to address the research questions and to explain how environmental diplomacy interacts with global, structural, and domestic institutional factors in shaping climate finance outcomes. The researcher also cross-checked the themes against the collected data to ensure consistency and analytical validity. The use of multiple data

sources strengthened the analysis by enabling cross-validation of findings and minimising researcher bias (Lamont, 2015).

To facilitate validity, this research uses triangulation through a comparison of data from various sources, including documents from the Government of Kenya, UNEP, UNFCCC, World Economic Forum, academic works and interviews. This method minimises the likelihood of depending on just one source of proof and increases the precision of results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure reliability, there were regular and coherent coding procedures. The researcher put in place coding specifications before analysis and employed them methodically across the entire data set. Furthermore, the researcher utilised peer debriefing, whereby another researcher evaluated the coding and interpretation for uniformity.

There are several limitations in this study. First, as this study employed qualitative data, the analysis prioritised depth and richness of insights rather than statistical generalizability. Consequently, the findings are primarily applicable to the Kenyan context and may not be directly transferable to other countries. Moreover, the use of Google Forms with open-ended questions may have constrained the depth and detail of participants' responses. Moreover, the respondents may have been biased according to their professional backgrounds, institutional prejudice or personal experiences. Nonetheless, this study is relevant in offering an understanding of the connection between environmental diplomacy and climate finance. The study is also a good foundation for future research.

RESULTS

Kenya's Environmental Diplomacy at UNEP as a Strategic Platform

Findings demonstrate that by way of its environmental diplomacy at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Kenya influences global conversations on the environment and enables access to international networks on the environment. Kenya plays a significant role as the host country for UNEP, the only United Nations headquarters in the Global South, giving the country an elevated status in international environmental governance. This diplomatic leverage boosts Kenya's visibility among global environmental negotiations. It offers her unique opportunities to hold deliberations

with international players on sustainable development, leadership on the environment, and climate policy-making.

Document scrutiny indicates that Kenya has rigorously leveraged its diplomatic advantage as a host country for UNEP to champion for reinforced international action on climate and greater climate finance for developing countries. Through engagement in UNEP assemblies, including the Committee of Permanent Representatives and global discourse on environmental matters, Kenya consistently influences the global environmental agenda while at the same time championing its climate priorities at the national level. Through diplomacy and the engagements, Kenya builds coalitions with other countries in the Global South and champions for finance structures that facilitate climate adaptation activities, especially in areas that are highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change (Government of Kenya, 2024).

The interview held strengthened the significance of UNEP as a diplomatic avenue for Kenya's environmental diplomacy. According to the key informant interview, as a host country, Kenya benefits from diplomatic visibility, permitting the country to engage on a regular basis with global partners on development, environmental and climate finance organisations that operate within the UNEP ecosystem. These engagements are a source of invaluable collaborations and avenues for sharing expert knowledge that can have a direct impact on funding access. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that even though UNEP grants diplomatic visibility and access to avenues for forming powerful networks, decisions on who gets funded lie with organisations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other global climate funds, which function outside the UNEP institutional structure. *'Hosting UNEP grants Kenya diplomatic visibility and access to partnerships, but doesn't directly lead to funding because funding decisions are made outside of UNEP,* key informant. These findings highlight that Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP primarily offers diplomatic visibility and engagement as opposed to direct opportunities for funding.

Diplomatic Strategies Used by Kenya at UNEP

Findings demonstrate that Kenya utilizes a few diplomatic approaches within the UNEP ecosystem to shape global environmental governance and discourse on climate finance. These approaches include building alliances, policy advocacy and agenda setting. When

engaging at UNEP meetings and international convenings on environmental matters, Kenya leverages its host country position to advocate for greater funding for climate adaptation for developing countries. It speaks actively on the unfavourable effects of climate change on the African continent (UNFCCC, n.d.-b).

In addition, Kenya builds coalitions with other developing countries, for example, within the African Group of Negotiators and Global South Coalitions. Respondent three (3) noted that *'Kenya works with other countries from time to time to advocate for more climate adaptation finance.'* These coalitions reinforce Kenya's ability to negotiate in global environmental discussions by magnifying joint calls for climate finance and the transfer of technology. Through these coalitions, Kenya shapes discourse on climate finance and champions for climate finance frameworks that are responsive to the needs of developing countries, which are mostly susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

According to respondent two, *'Kenyan diplomats participate from time to time in discourse on climate policy, breakaway sessions and collaborations courtesy of convenings that UNEP has hosted'*. Through these diplomatic deliberations, Kenya posits itself as a formidable authority in environmental governance within the African region and boosts its legitimacy in global negotiations on climate policy. This is an indication that agenda setting, coalition building and policy alignment are important tactics that Kenya uses to strengthen its voice in climate finance discourse.

Climate Finance Mobilisation Outcomes

The findings highlight that Kenya has mobilised climate finance from an array of international avenues like bilateral partners, global development banks and multilateral climate funding. This supported a few climate adaptation and mitigation activities, including green energy, sustainable agriculture, protection of forests and climate resilience initiatives.

Kenya's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) funding plan approximates that the country needs roughly \$62–65 billion between the years 2020 and 2030 to actualise its plans on climate mitigation and adaptation. Nevertheless, findings point out a significant climate finance gap, as what has been mobilised falls way below the expected financing needs, thereby jeopardising the country's ability to actualise its climate adaptation goals. It is observed that the influx of climate funding has increased in the past

years but remains insufficient for Kenya's ambitious environmental objectives (United Nations Development Programme(UNDP), 2024), (Climate Policy Initiative, 2022).

Moreover, findings show that mitigation initiatives are more funded, especially in renewable energy infrastructure. At the same time, adaptation projects like management of water resources, disaster preparation and response receive lesser funding even though Kenya has significant adaptation needs to strengthen climate resilience. Findings from the survey support this observation. Respondent five (5) noted that, *'climate adaptation initiatives have a hard time in securing climate finance and especially from the private sector as they translate into little commercial yields in comparison with projects on mitigation'*. To this end, adaptation projects often rely on preferential financing and global assistance from donors. These indicate that there are structural barriers in the global financing system that constrain Kenya from obtaining enough climate adaptation.

Structural and Institutional Constraints

Notwithstanding Kenya's elevated diplomatic visibility within the UNEP ecosystem, findings indicate that there are a few systemic and organisational drawbacks that hinder the country's capacity to translate diplomatic influence into actual climate funding results. For instance, although Kenya is the host country for UNEP and has diplomatic influence within the UNEP system, climate finance decisions are not made within UNEP. Although UNEP is the global authority on environmental governance, offering solutions to environmental challenges, climate finance decisions lie with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and related funding mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility.

Moreover, the results show that despite its diplomatic standing at UNEP, Kenya is still subject to the funding procedures of UNFCCC and related climate finance mechanisms, including challenging application processes, technical eligibility and competition because these considerations are applied fairly to all developing countries. The key informant observed that *'hosting UNEP does not spontaneously lead to privileged treatment in accessing climate finance because decisions on who gets funded are dependent on independent governance mechanisms based on project proposals and funding criteria'*. This shows that institutional structures impede Kenya's ability to obtain funding despite its diplomatic standing.

Domestic Institutional Capacity and Climate Finance Mobilisation

The findings also demonstrate that national organisational capability has an impact on Kenya's capacity to mobilise climate funding. To access global climate finance, there is a need for the country to demonstrate strengthened technical know-how, synchronisation procedures and organisational structures that have the capacity to design competitive proposals to solicit funding. Respondent six (6) highlighted that, '*the problem is not only obtaining finance, but having strong systems to handle proposal preparation and project management.*' This shows that domestic institutional capacity has a role to play in transforming diplomacy into tangible funding.

In terms of reinforcing its climate finance management system, Kenya has improved, for instance, through legal frameworks like the Climate Change Act and domestic climate finance coordination frameworks. Nonetheless, organisational disintegration, inadequate technical expertise and challenges in coordination between national and county governments constrain Kenya's capacity to completely use existing opportunities for climate financing. Interview respondents noted that there is a need to improve project preparation capacity and reinforce harmonisation within government ministries, departments and agencies to boost Kenya's capacity to benefit from global climate funding sources.

DISCUSSION

Environmental Diplomacy and Climate Finance Mobilisation

The results of this study indicate that environmental diplomacy has an indirect impact on the mobilisation of climate adaptation finance. Through its environmental diplomacy, UNEP Kenya gains visibility within the global environmental governance system and permits the country to shape international discourse on climate policy as well as advocate for increased funding to tackle the impacts of climate change for developing countries. Nonetheless, Kenya cannot rely only on diplomatic visibility to mobilise climate finance because findings indicate that decisions on who gets climate finance are made by institutions that are separate from the UNEP system, like the UNFCCC, Global Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility. There are eligibility requirements that apply equally to all developing countries (Li et al., 2020).

Kenya's environmental diplomacy, therefore, plays a role as a strategy to champion advantageous global climate funding policies and reinforce collaborations with partners in development. Moreover, through its environmental diplomacy, UNEP Kenya influences international environmental management norms that shape how developing countries are supported financially (Okoth, 2021). Kenya's environment diplomacy, therefore, is an enabling factor and creates an impact through mediating mechanisms like diplomatic visibility as opposed to directly determining funding results.

Host Country Advantage and Its Limitations

The findings of this study concur that by virtue of hosting UNEP Kenya gains diplomatic benefits. However, this does not spontaneously lead to increased climate finance mobilisation. As host country for UNEP, Kenya has built a reputation as a leader in global environmental governance as well as a United Nations hub. In addition, the country can easily access international environmental networks, global discourse on environmental policy, form partnerships and benefit from technical support from UNEP, which can indirectly open opportunities for funding (Kasaija, 2019; Government of Kenya, 2024).

The findings of this study, however, do not support the expectation that hosting UNEP and diplomatic visibility automatically lead to preferential treatment or increased access to climate finance for Kenya. Despite Kenya hosting UNEP, the country still experiences significant climate finance gaps because UNEP does not directly make funding decisions. Because funding decisions do not lie within the UNEP ecosystem, there are systemic drawbacks that hamper Kenya's ability to transform its environmental diplomacy at UNEP into measurable climate funding outcomes. In this regard, through hosting UNEP, Kenya can majorly shape discourse on environmental policy as opposed to automatically leading to climate finance resources (Henk Harmsen, 2018; Schalatek, 2020).

Through the findings, it can be deduced that Kenya's status as host country for UNEP should be viewed as diplomatic capital as opposed to an opportunity for automatic financial leverage. Diplomatic capital can be defined as a country's capacity to influence policy discourse, shape global priorities and form coalitions in multilateral organisations. For Kenya, hosting UNEP is a source of enhanced diplomatic capital, but this does not mean that the country will not face systemic barriers related to the global climate funding

management. Consequently, Kenya must depend on targeted diplomacy and strengthening the technical capacity of its institutions to transform diplomatic capital into tangible funding results (Kasaija, 2019; Okoth, 2021). To this end, the efficacy of Kenya's environmental diplomacy will depend on how the country takes advantage of its diplomatic capital, engages with funding institutions, as well as meet key funding requirements.

Intervening Factors in Climate Finance Mobilisation

A conceptual framework guides this study to expound how Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP impacts climate finance mobilisation. The conceptual framework acknowledges that the nexus between environmental diplomacy and mobilising climate finance is shaped by intervening variables. These include climate finance management frameworks whereby there is an institutional separation between UNEP and UNFCCC, which makes funding decisions. Other intervening factors include the complex nature of securing climate finance, competitiveness and especially among developing countries, geopolitics and economic considerations, which have an impact on decision-making on funding (Stroebel & Wurgler, 2021; Buchner et al., 2019). Domestically, organisational capacity, policy integration, harmony between national and county governments and intake capacity influence Kenya's capability to translate its environmental diplomacy into concrete funding outcomes (Schalatek, 2020; Wambugu, 2020).

Through the findings of this research, it can be observed that these intervening variables have an impact on Kenya's ability to mobilise climate finance as opposed to only the country's environmental diplomacy. Even with targeted environmental diplomacy at UNEP, Kenya still must balance relationships with donors, align with the development priorities of donor countries, and tactfully manoeuvre geopolitics to attract climate finance. Moreover, it must compete with other countries for funding, meet technical eligibility requirements, and strengthen its institutional capacity. Even though environmental diplomacy can be used to build partnerships and reinforce trust among countries and donors, it cannot totally erase structural barriers arising due to geopolitics in international climate finance management. This means that environmental diplomacy should be accompanied by strong domestic institutions, balancing interests, and coherent policies to increase the chances of funding.

Implications for Environmental Diplomacy in Developing Countries

Results from this research are invaluable in providing a deep comprehension of the role of environmental diplomacy in environmental governance, especially in the Global South. Countries in the Global South can use environmental diplomacy as a strategy to champion for fair and increased climate finance allocation, as well as voice out the disproportionate impact of climate change that they experience. Through multilateralism and diplomacy, these countries can influence global policy discourse, champion for financial systems that are responsive to their climate adaptation needs (Li et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, the findings reveal that environmental diplomacy does not always translate into tangible climate finance outcomes. For instance, environmental diplomacy alone is not a remedy for structural inequalities brought about by geopolitics. In addition, there are other intervening variables, as expounded in the section above, that also have an impact on climate finance mobilisation. In this regard, countries in the Global South must create an equilibrium between environmental diplomacy and reinforced national organisational cohesion and deliberate and targeted engagement in international climate finance systems (Buchner et al., 2019; Stroebel & Wurgler, 2021).

For the case of Kenya, the country needs to fill the gap between diplomatic visibility at UNEP, host country status and mobilisation of climate finance to facilitate its national climate adaptation plans. This can be achieved through improving cohesion among its institutions, enhancing its capacity to prepare for projects and tactful engagement with multilateral climate finance institutions. Environmental diplomacy is still a relevant mechanism, but for it to be effective in mobilising climate finance, there is a need for integration with national governance systems and global financial mechanisms (Okoth, 2021; Government of Kenya, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study explored how Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP contributes to mobilising climate finance for climate adaptation. The results highlight that by way of environmental diplomacy in the UNEP ecosystem, Kenya gains diplomatic visibility, builds a reputation as a leader in global environmental governance and builds global networks, alliances and partnerships. By engaging in global meetings on the environment within UNEP, Kenya leverages this unique diplomatic positioning to champion for larger

international action on environmental protection and more climate funding for the Global South.

Nonetheless, the study demonstrates that environmental diplomacy alone and Kenya's host country status do not spontaneously lead to increased climate finance for the country. Moreover, the management of climate finance and decision-making on who gets funding lies with the UNFCCC and finance mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility. There are eligibility criteria that apply to all developing countries, as opposed to allocation of funds due to diplomatic standing, and the competition is also high.

The findings demonstrate the existence of a huge void between diplomatic advantage and the mobilisation of climate adaptation finance. Even though environmental diplomacy reinforces Kenya's ability to shape international environmental governance, there are a few intervening factors that have an impact on Kenya's climate finance mobilisation. These include institutional separation between UNEP and UNFCCC, where funding decisions are made, geopolitics, technical requirements, competition, institutional capacity and the complex nature of securing climate finance.

This research also highlights that Kenya's institutional capacity contributes to its ability to translate diplomatic leverage gained through hosting UNEP into measurable funding results. In this regard, it is recommended that the country should reinforce its domestic structures to coordinate climate finance mobilisation better, enhance its technical expertise in preparing project activities and strengthen coordination between national and county governments to attract more funding.

This study is significant in academic discourse on environmental diplomacy. Crucially, it shows that funds for climate adaptation cannot be obtained through diplomatic outreach alone. Effectively mobilising climate finance is dependent on the interplay of several factors, including diplomacy, institutional capacity and multilateral governance mechanisms. Kenya and other Global South nations must strike a balance between environmental diplomacy, more robust national policy-making on environmental matters, and diplomatic participation in the global climate finance architecture.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This study adhered to ethical considerations in research. The participants were informed of the objectives of the study, which were to understand the relationship between Kenya's environmental diplomacy at UNEP and climate finance mobilisation outcomes. The researcher obtained the consent of participants, requested their permission to take notes, record and assured them that the research report would be anonymised. No personal data was taken during this entire process.

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