

GHANA'S VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE



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In 2012, Ghana developed a National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) to help tackle the adverse impact of climate change. With the increasing impact of climate change, it was essential to put mechanisms in place to ensure resilience in development and reduce vulnerability, as climate change and climate variability may pose serious challenges to national development.

The strategy has been agreed on as a trigger under the Natural Resources and Environmental Governance Programme in Ghana. Again, Ghana's economy relies heavily on climate sensitive sectors mainly on agriculture, energy and forestry. About 70% of the population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture (fisheries, crop and animal farming etc.) and forest sector for both timber and non timber forest products.



The strategy intends to:

1

Ensure a consistent, comprehensive and a targeted approach to increasing climate resilience and decrease vulnerability of the populace.

Deepen awareness and sensitisation for the general populace particularly policy makers about the critical role of adaptation in national development efforts

2

3

Position Ghana to draw funding for meeting her national adaptation needs

Strengthen International recognition to facilitate action

4

5

Facilitate the mainstreaming of Climate change and disaster risk reduction into national development.

This paper is purely for outreach or public education purposes. Our intention is to support government's efforts on awareness creation on climate vulnerability in Ghana. The content is a section of the NCCAS document.

Vulnerability in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy and among households results from both climate-induced and socio-politico-economic drivers. Vulnerability in the context of climate change is the consequent fall in well-being attributed to the change simply because people are unable to cope and adapt positively without adverse effects. Two sides of vulnerability are worth noting: the first is the extent to which an area is susceptible to unfavourable climate impact changes, and the second is the adaptive capacity of local population. The vulnerability of a society is influenced by its development path, physical exposures, the distribution of resources, prior stresses and social and government institutions (Adjer et al. 2007).



Vulnerability to climate change in Ghana is spatially and socially differentiated. Each ecological zone has peculiar physical and socio-economic characteristics that define their sensitivity and resilience to climate change impacts. Poverty is a good indicator of resilience, while occupation and location determine sensitivity, though occupation and location define poverty. Poverty reduces the

capacity of people in meeting climate challenges and leading sustainable livelihoods. Poverty in Ghana is highly spatialise

Generally, rural areas compared to urban areas harbour the bulk of Ghana's poor. Climate seems to have a relationship with poverty levels with the exception of the coastal savannah whose economy is highly urbanised. This correlation is the result of high dependence of a majority of the people on natural resource-based activities.

Drier areas such as the savannahs are more risky and vulnerable to climate change and variability than wetter areas. However, the drivers of vulnerability due to climate change are gradually penetrating the better ecological zones aided by non-climate drivers of vulnerability.



Droughts are a major problem for the northern and coastal savannahs with increasing significance for the transitional zone. Climate variability in terms of fluctuating weather conditions increases the vulnerability of the bulk of the population who depend on natural resource based activities for their living.

Variability of rainfall has serious consequences for farmers in the transition and forest zones where slight changes in weather conditions affect cocoa and fruits such as pineapples, mangos, papaya etc.

Environmental change emerging through the driver of climate change inflicts harsh and extreme environmental conditions upon rural smallholder farmers and therefore has direct implications for creating unsustainable livelihoods.

Farmers have their investments washed down the drain by floods and droughts almost every second or third year, especially in the northern savannah zone.

The severity of climate change impacts are felt mostly by poorer groups depending on natural resource-based activities and living in marginal environments. The socio-economic groups affected most by climate change include small-scale food crop farmers, women small-scale farmers, Livestock operators, fishermen and fishmongers, slum dwellers, and migrant farm workers. These groups are vulnerable due mostly to institutional bottlenecks, legal frameworks, poor capacities and market imperfections. These non-climate drivers of vulnerability define the access patterns of different people in different places to productive resources which builds resilience and adaptive capacity.

Migration and urban vulnerability constitute important dimensions of climate change in Ghana. The increasing rate of migration is attributable to both climate change and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The northern regions and parts of Volta region have substantial numbers of their population moving to the wetter south and urban areas. Increasing weather extremes will exacerbate these movements with consequences of creating open spaces and concentrating populations especially in urban areas where vulnerability to flooding, diseases, heat waves, poor water supply are aided by poor urban

The major characteristics of these groups that make them prone to climate change impacts are the dependence on nature using poor technology. The poor adaptive capacity is the result of poverty due mainly to poor assets, poor institutions, poor markets, poor physical infrastructure and eroding social support systems. The focus of adaptation should begin with the most vulnerable to climate change impacts and up-scaled to the other groups, rather than enforcing the interest of the few elite.

Generally, the future of the country depends on the ability to cope with these climate risks and realise opportunities that propel sustainable livelihoods, reduce poverty and increase national growth. Inability to reduce Ghana's vulnerability by reducing exposure and building adaptive capacity will result in unsustainable livelihoods with consequences of food insecurity, poverty and environmental degradation. These in turn will further increase vulnerability of human and physical systems to harsher impacts of climate change.

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