

## Climate change policies and citizen's rights



Addressing climate change is critical for sustainable development in the country. At the national level, efforts have been made to comply with the decisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but bilateral and multilateral funding opportunities affect the extent to which the real concerns of citizens are addressed. Donor consultations on adaptation and mitigation of climate change are constrained by a neo-liberal economic framework that limits the space for a citizen-led process. Civil society organizations must intensify efforts to ensure that efforts to address climate change promote social justice, human security, gender equality, and sustainable development.

### NETRIGHT

Like other African states, Ghana is already experiencing the impact of climate change: hotter weather, reduced or increased seasonal rainfall, changes in rainfall patterns, flooding, sea surges, tidal waves and a rise in sea-level causing inundation and coastal erosion. The result is a reduction in food security, increased transmission of vector and water-borne diseases, significant economic losses through weather crises and the displacement of the population.

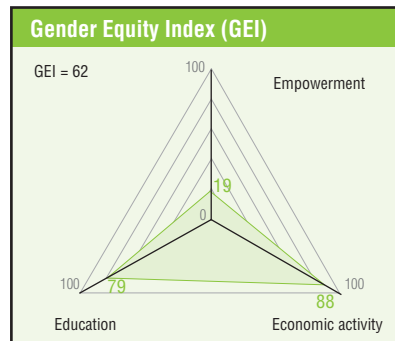
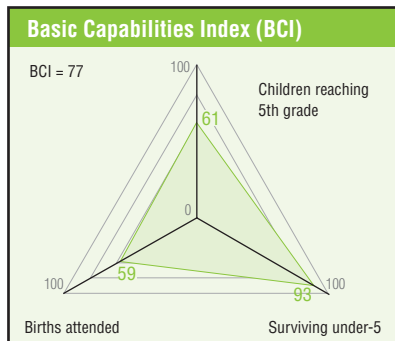
However, since the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference on Sustainable Development, after which Ghana adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol, the Government has engaged with the issue of climate change at all levels, from global to local.

#### Institutional and policy initiatives

Having ratified all the Rio Conventions on the environment--the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Ghana established several national institutions as policy focal points, including the Ministry of Environment Science and Technology (MEST), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ghana Environment and Climate Change Authority (GECCA).

However, the uncritical stance of these institutions towards the UNFCCC and KP decisions is problematic. Ghana was among the first 23 countries in Africa that associated itself with the Copenhagen Accord in 2009 in spite of the fact that African countries had developed a collective position at Copenhagen against the Accord. The Government took that position ostensibly to access the various funding windows available for adaptation and mitigation measures on climate change. Nonetheless, since then, Ghana has developed a National Adaptation Strategy, set up a National Climate Change Committee and developed a discussion paper on a National Climate Change Policy Framework (NCCPF).

In its National Communication Assessments (NCA), the Government's Environmental Protection Agency has provided useful information about the effect of various climate change scenarios on different economic sectors and the implications for



people's livelihoods. The analysis, however, of the implications for women is premised on women's vulnerability rather than women's human rights or human development.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its assessment of countries developing National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) has said:

"In general NAPAs portray women as victims without the skills that would allow them to become involved in negotiations of strategic planning. Most of these plans do not even recognize that women with the knowledge they have can make a contribution to adaptation processes and that they should be a focal group for adaptation programmes".<sup>2</sup>

The NCCPF discussion paper is another concern. Its three objectives – promoting low carbon growth; effective adaptation to climate change; and social development – seem laudable, but their articulation and the policy implications leave much to be desired. Similar to earlier proposals, the NCCPF is located in a framework of market-oriented options, such as carbon-trading schemes including Reducing Emis-

sions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). It focuses on financial schemes available to developing countries that demonstrate compliance with laid down market-driven criteria on adaptation and mitigation.

#### Civil society engagement

Whereas the NCCPF has been based on broad consultation with a range of actors in Ghana including civil society groups such as Friends of the Earth and ABANTU for Development, the issues of concern to these groups have not been sufficiently articulated in the discussion paper. A case in point is the gender issue which is discussed under the 'social development' objective of the NCCPF. While the document acknowledges the contribution of women and the need to address the risks they could face as a result of climate change, the policy prescription merely refers to the need for "measures such as social protection to smooth out inequities."<sup>3</sup>

#### Climate change

Data from 1960 to 2000 indicates a progressive rise in temperature and a decrease in mean annual rainfall in all agro-ecological zones.<sup>4</sup> Estimates show that temperature will continue to rise on average "about 0.6 degrees C., 2.0 degrees C. and 3.9 degrees C. by the year 2020, 2050 and 2080

1 I. Dankelman, "Climate Change: Learning from Gender Analysis and Women's Experiences of Organising for Sustainable Development", in *Gender & Development*, Vol. 10 (2002):21-29; Dankelman, et al., "Gender, Climate Change and Human Security Lessons from Bangladesh, Ghana and Senegal," prepared by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) with ABANTU for Development in Ghana, ActionAid Bangladesh and ENDA in Senegal, (2008), <[www.wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/hns-study-final-may-20-2008.pdf](http://www.wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/hns-study-final-may-20-2008.pdf)>.

2 UNDP, *Resource Guide on Gender and Climate*, (New York: 2009).

3 Ministry of Energy Science and Technology (MEST), *Ghana Goes for Green Growth: National Engagement on Climate Change*, (Accra: 2010), p. 13.

4 Modern Ghana, *Climate Change Ghana's Threat to Cocoa Production*, (22 August 2008), <[www.modernghana.com/news/179906/1/climate-change-ghanas-threat-to-cocoa-production.html](http://www.modernghana.com/news/179906/1/climate-change-ghanas-threat-to-cocoa-production.html)>.

Year	Forest Cover (Hectares)	Rate of Deforestation
1990	7,448,000	-
2000	6,094,000	-18.2%
2005	5,517,000	-9.5%
Annual Average		-1.8%

Source : Rainforest Alliance, 2006/FAO

respectively” in all agro-ecological zones except for the rainforest zone where rainfall may increase. Available data also shows a sea-level rise of 2.1mm per year over the last 30 years, indicating a rise of 5.8cm, 16.5cm and 34.5cm by 2020, 2050 and 2080 respectively.<sup>5</sup>

While 23% of the urban population and 51.6% of the rural population still live below the poverty line,<sup>6</sup> it should be noted that data from the 2008 Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) shows that the number of extremely poor declined by 8.6 percentage points from 26.8% in 1998-99 to 18.2% in 2005-06.<sup>7</sup> However, given the country's high dependence on agriculture and forestry, changing climate conditions have serious implications for the standard of living of women and men in those communities and could reverse that trend. There is already evidence that vital economic resources – the coastal zone, agriculture, and water – have been affected by climate change with adverse implications for women's rights, poverty, health and livelihoods. Those who live in communities with high poverty levels will be most negatively affected.

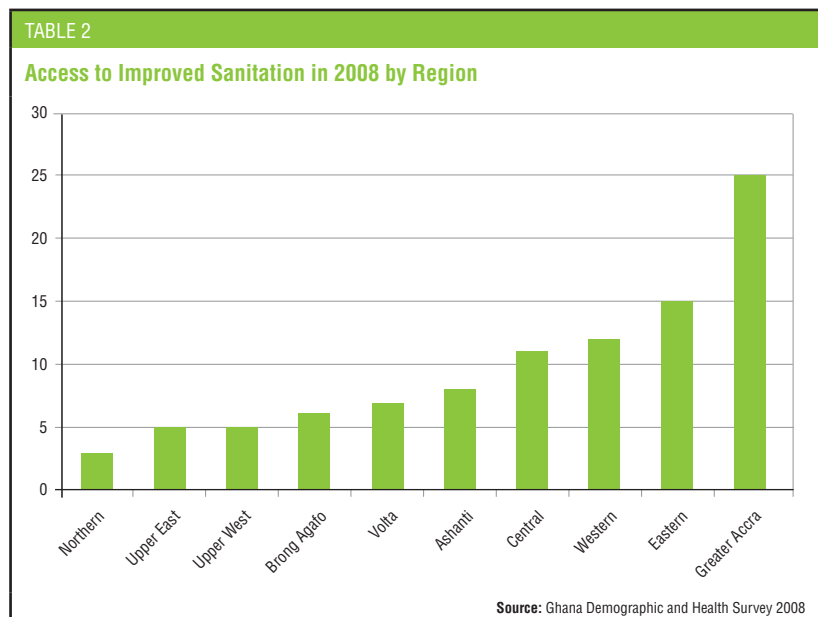
In the northern parts of the country, flooding in 2007 showed that the impact of climate change on development efforts is overwhelming. An estimated 317,000 persons were affected; 1,000 kilometres of roads were destroyed; 210 schools and health facilities were damaged; and 630 drinking water facilities were damaged or contaminated.

Since then, weather variability has continued to affect different societal groups and geographical locations, inhibiting efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were incorporated into Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS 1-2003-2005 and GPRS 11-2006-2009), but the impact of climate change already makes clear that Millennium Development Goal 7 (MDG-7) – en-

5 LWF Youth Blog, *Youth challenge leaders on climate change at UN*, (September 2007), <wfyouth.org/2007/09/25/youth-challenge-leaders-on-climate-change-at-un

6 Ghana's poverty line was set in 2006 based on calorie requirements for nutrition based poverty lines.

7 UNDP, *Human Development Report*, (Accra: 2007).



suring environmental sustainability – will not be met. Further, given the market-driven nature of Government policy to guide action on climate change, it is difficult to see how current trends can be reversed to achieve MDG-7.

The four agreed targets for MDG-7 are:

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015;
- Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving a significant reduction in the rate of loss by 2010;
- Halve the proportion of persons without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015;
- Achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

Regarding the indicator for the biodiversity target, the proportion of land area covered by forest, it is estimated that Ghana's forests declined by 8.5 percentage points between 1990 and 2005, from 32.7% to 24.2% (see Table 1). Forested area was estimated at 7,448,000 ha and has declined steadily each year to 5,517,000 ha in 2005.<sup>8</sup> The continuous depletion of the country's forests has negative consequences for people's livelihoods, especially those of women and contributes to global warming. Another indicator measuring progress towards the

achievement of MDG-7, “populations without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation”, is unlikely to be met by 2015. Available data from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) shows that the national coverage for improved sanitation has increased 8.4 percentage points from 4% in 1993 to 12.4% in 2008.<sup>9</sup> But there are wide regional variations in access to improved sanitation. The proportion of the population with access to improved sanitation in the Greater Accra and Eastern regions is above the national average of 12.4% with those in the Western and Central regions also close to the national average (see Figure 1). However, other regions including Ashanti and the Western regions were lower than the national average, while the three northern regions (Northern, Upper West and Upper East) with the worst experience of poverty are less likely to have access to improved sanitation facilities.<sup>10</sup>

Already faced with significant effects of climate change, the Government has established national institutions to meet the challenge. Its policy solutions, however, are not keeping pace with ecological deterioration and are compounded by a preference for market-driven solutions that do not articulate with sufficient sensitivity and specificity the issues of concern to civil society. ■

9 The Ghana Statistical Service and The Ghana Health Service, *The 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey*, (Accra: 2008), <www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/GF14/GF14.pdf>.

10 The rural areas in the three northern regions in Ghana are far behind the target for access to basic sanitation. See: National Development Planning Commission, *Ghana Millennium Development Goals 2007*, (UNDP, 2007).

8 Ministry of Energy Science and Technology (MEST), *Ghana Goes for Green Growth: National Engagement on Climate Change*, (Accra: 2010).