



## **Pathways for the Impacts of Climate Change and Variability on Agricultural Productivity in Ghana, Including a Gendered Analysis**

### **ABOUT THIS BRIEF**

*Climate change and variability are no longer myths. The reality of their impacts is evidenced by their negative effects on the environment with great repercussions on livelihoods and agricultural productivity. Globally, climate change impacts, among others, on agricultural production and agriculture-related activities. Crop production has been severely hampered through rising temperatures, irregular rainfall and increasing concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, leading to crop failure in some cases. In livestock, the effect of unfavorable thermal conditions resulting from climate change leads to compromised meat quality and reduced production potential, including death of farm animals. Rise in sea level, warming of upper layers, high water temperatures, ocean acidification, reduced water flows and drought were the climate change pathways to fisheries productivity. This brief advocates for the creation of stronger links between global policy and local-level realities and innovations and to ensure that climate change policies are informed by the voices of the women and men who deal with the consequences of climate change every day.*

### **BACKGROUND**

The fact that historically, the earth has experienced periods of cooling and warming; with mean temperatures remaining relatively stable is well documented. While the phenomenon of climate change and variability is global, its effects vary from region to region, country to country, community to community and among people of diverse social identity and status based on several factors.

The manifestations of climate change and its negative repercussions on economic activities such as agriculture have long been recognised. Most crop production activities in Africa and the tropics are rainfed, hence the effects of climate change are very evident in agriculture. A significant portion of the cause of climate changes is through human activities, even though some are through natural phenomena.

There are numerous pathways for the impacts of climate change and variability on

agricultural productivity in various countries all over the world. Many of the countries have developed very elaborate policies, programs and projects to deal with the menace of climate change. The same cannot be said about many developing countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

The perspective of gender has far been neglected when analysing climate change issues, policies, programmes and projects. Climate change to a large extent impacts on individuals depending on their gender and status and other socioeconomic factors. Thus climate change has a differentiated impact and hence policymakers and development partners should develop strategies to address the needs of the differentiated groups. As Skinner (2011) puts it, "Climate change policies and processes will be ineffective unless they become more *gender sensitive*". Men and women are constrained in different, often unequal ways, sometimes due to conflicting needs and priorities. Greater

gender awareness also means recognising that men and women have the *right* to be included in climate change-related decisions and to benefit from them equally. According to Skinner (2011), much can be learnt from initiatives that are emerging at all levels. In addition to the vital work of national, regional and global organisations and networks at the policy level, many local organisations are already responding to women's and men's actual needs and promoting gender-aware, transformative approaches.

## CONCLUSION

The world may not be able to mitigate climate change entirely, and hence developing adaptation strategies is the most practically available option to deal with the menace. However, in developing these strategies, there should be a focus on long-term actions rather than short-term. Also, developing strategies and actions towards adaptation should be specific (local) and not general (international). African countries, including Ghana, should learn the best practices from the international level and modify them to suit local conditions. In order for a particular adaptation strategy to be effective, it must have political support from government and other policymakers. Climate change adaptation strategy must be incorporated into our national policies, development plans and budget in order to ensure that its implementation is fruitful and sustainable.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create stronger links between global policy and local-level realities and innovations.
- Ensure that climate change policies are informed by the voices of the women and men who deal with the consequences of climate change every day.
- Developed economies should assist developing countries, especially African countries, adequately to combat the climate change menace in order to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- Government and development partners should do more to help farmers adapt to changes in the climate to help sustain agriculture in Africa.
- Government and development partners should help promote FAO's Climate-Smart Project.
- Ghana should adopt holistic approaches to address climate change issues.
- Policymakers should reconsider irrigation investment needs and allow farmers increased control over water.
- Strengthen farm-level managerial capacity of efficient irrigation to ensure efficient water use.
- Build capacity of new farmers whose numbers have increased as a result of the implementation of land reforms, but who do not have the skills and information gathered by experienced farmers.
- Increase farmers' access to extension services.

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## REFERENCE

Skinner, E. (2011) *Gender and Climate Change: Overview Report*. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.