# REGIONAL DIAGNOSTIC STUDY in the semi-arid regions of Ghana

## Background

West Africa's dryland region has long and misleadingly been labelled as "the Sahel", perpetuating the image of a relatively homogeneous entity. In reality, the region hosts an enormous variety of biophysical environments intertwined with highly contrasted socio-economic, demographic and land-use conditions. Semi-arid areas of West Africa experience strong inter-annual and inter-decadal climate variability with high exposure to dry spells, drought and land degradation, which exacerbates impacts of climate change. In Ghana, the regional diagnostic study (RDS) was conducted to understand the dynamics of semi-arid regions through national and district level stakeholder engagements.

## Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- Develop a systematic understanding of existing knowledge of climate change trends, impacts, vulnerabilities, and adaptation strategies.
- Identify the key barriers and enablers of effective adaptation in semi-arid regions.
- Identify gaps in research, policy and practice related to climate change adaptation.
- Provide the basis for developing an integrated regional research program (RRP) on climate change vulnerability and adaptation.

## Methods

**Literature Review**

- Focus group discussions
- Key informant interviews
- National Expect meetings

**Stakeholders engaged**

- Women
- Farmers
- Civil society
- Traditional council
- Government institutions (e.g. MoFA, District Assemblies)
- Non-governmental organisations (e.g. CCAFS, OXFAM)
- Community-based organisations (e.g. Tsi-song Taa Foundation)

## Findings

- Women, disabled, the elderly and smallholder farmers are considered to be the most vulnerable social groups with limited access to resources.
- High levels of poverty, population growth and inadequate access to information are some of the key factors that exacerbate climate impacts.
- Existing indigenous adaptation practices are helping communities to cope with current climate extremes even though they are unsustainable.
- Cultural practices, governance structures and development factors are serving as catalysts to facilitate or hinder adaptation activities.
- The impacts of climate change have presented opportunities for communities to work together.

## Policy Implications

- The active participation of all social groups – especially women and the disabled – at the local level will be key in establishing the appropriate adaptation needs within climate change policies in order to eliminate social inequalities in the adaptation process.
- Already-existing adaptation strategies that have sustained semi-arid communities for years should be the starting point for addressing climate change impacts at the local level.
- The ineffectiveness of the decentralisation system acts as a barrier to adaptation policies in Ghana. Structures should be put in place to ensure the effective implementation of adaptation policies across scales and levels within the governance system.
- There is no one-way solution to addressing climate change. Given the climatic sensitivities of the region, adaptation strategies and climate change policies should be context specific and multi-scaled.

## Contact Us

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