

GHANA: CLIMATE CHANGE RISK COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR COASTAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

May 2013



Overview

Aim: To integrate climate risk analysis and disaster risk reduction into Ghana coastal cities' development planning.

Lead: Regional Institute for Population Studies, University of Ghana

Project partners: Environmental Protection Agency, Ghana; University of Calabar, Nigeria

CDKN funding: £200,000

Duration: February 2012 – May 2013

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Ghana has urbanised rapidly in the past century, and now a half of Ghanaians live in cities. A quarter of the population inhabits cities along Ghana's coastline. Coastal Ghanaians, many poor and urbanised, are increasingly vulnerable to future impacts of climate change and are already suffering the effects of flooding, settlement displacement, and infrastructure loss. Managing climate-related risks in coastal environments has come under scrutiny in recent years. However, a comprehensive framework to manage these risks in Ghana is still lacking.

With support from CDKN, the **Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS)** at the **University of Ghana** initiated a research project to give vulnerable communities, and state and non-state actors the opportunity to collectively rethink the impacts of climate change on coastal livelihoods and improve communication of appropriate interventions across local, district and national platforms. The project aims to help integrate climate risk analysis and disaster risk reduction into coastal cities' development planning.

During the past 12 months, RIPS have held capacity building workshops with municipal assembly leaders. They have brought participants on study tours to witness coastal erosion and livelihood impacts first hand and discuss solutions. Following the collection and validation of site-level information about climate vulnerability, government, NGO and civic representatives held district and regional-level 'platforms' to identify policy challenges. These activities also provided a platform to link vulnerable communities to different levels of planning; from district to national policy discussions.

The process has been one of community-based, popular participation in policy communication, participatory awareness creation, targeted law enforcement, and community level ownership of policy processes.

Six communities participated; three urban and three peri-urban. The research combined innovative methodologies, like theatre and participatory learning, with standard methodologies like surveys and policy dialogues. Researchers and policy makers did not prescribe adaptive practices. Rather, coastal communities were supported in defining their own adaptation and resilience pathways through community-based ‘reciprocal learning’ processes

The Community Based Risk Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods (CRISTAL) provided the basis for a climate change impact assessment. It helped to identify social and economic vulnerabilities to climate change, and resources within the communities themselves that can reduce vulnerability. The tool empowered local participants to articulate climate related disaster risk reduction and planning.

In turn, these co-productive learning activities validated and increased ownership over the emerging research results.



Policy maker training workshop



RIPS facilitators engage fishmongers in a CRISTAL exercise



Municipal leaders visit an affected community at Dangbe-East

Similarly, policy makers and practitioners weren’t simply lectured on climate-related risk management, but had to think through challenges with activity-based, ‘learning by doing’ and dialogue-based roundtables. Ghanaian policy actors were given an opportunity to create future coastal environments. They envisioned communities that had access to clean, efficient energy and are well defended against coastal erosion and sea level rise through properly planned fish stock storages and building codes that promote climate resilient infrastructure.

Project impacts: Promoting regional learning and guiding climate compatible development planning in Ghana's coastal zones

As a result of the project, three of the focal communities have prepared **rapid community-based disaster preparedness plans**. Capacity building workshops have trained **40 local leaders** in methods for climate vulnerability assessment. Awareness raising and planning doesn't stop at the local level. The contingency plans will **inform district level and regional preparedness plans** and ultimately contribute to national level disaster management planning.

Finally, the inputs from these subnational assessments and discussions were 'rolled up' into a national level policy roundtable in the capital, Accra – Ghana's largest coastal city. Here, inputs from the platform meetings were shared with national ministries including the Ministries of Environment, Science and Technology; Local Government; Water Resources, Works and Housing; and National Development Planning Commission. Participants used diverse communications tools and participatory methods, including drama, discussions, films, animations, toys and environmental objects, to debate the challenges of coastal climate change impacts and form recommendations for mainstreaming climate disaster risk management into policy.

There are some early signs of policy influence. Daniel Benefor of the Environmental Protection Agency indicated that lessons from the roundtable **will "impact greatly" on Ghana's emerging climate finance framework and associated policies**. Winfred Nelson, of Ghana's National Development Planning Commission said he was optimistic that the project would **guide climate and development planning in the country's coastal zones**. In late 2012, **RIPS brought its policy findings to Nigerian policy, research and scientific communities** as part of the project's comparative learning approach with its sister organisation, the University of Calabar (UNICAL), Nigeria. "It was a moment to note the interest of state level participants including lawmakers who were ready to lead knowledge sharing and direct project implementation," said Dr Delali Dovie of RIPS. Prof Francis Bisong of UNICAL's Senate Working Group on Climate Change Impact welcomed both the seminar and the broader project, calling for "regional dissemination of the innovative model being used by RIPS under this project."

What is the Climate and Development Knowledge Network?

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