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**How best to align planning for Nationally Determined Contributions
and Sustainable Development Goals:
West African Lessons**

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How best to align planning for Nationally Determined Contributions and Sustainable Development Goals: West African Lessons

SUMMARY

This note summarises a West African regional analysis of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) developed for the Paris Climate Agreement, to assess their alignment to global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to national sectoral policies. Implementation challenges are explored in-depth for the case of Ghana, where a national multi-stakeholder workshop was held to investigate opportunities for greater policy coherence and the implementation challenges faced across different Government departments.

We investigate the following questions:

- i) Which priority sectors are mentioned in relation to climate adaptation and mitigation in the NDCs of West African states?
- ii) Are the NDCs of West African states well aligned with the SDGs?
- iii) What are the co-benefits (and/or trade-offs) of NDCs in contributing towards the SDGs? and
- iv) How are West African states planning to finance actions outlined in their NDCs?

Results show that agriculture and energy are priority sectors where NDCs have pledged significant commitments. The analysis displays **good alignment between climate adaptation and mitigation actions proposed in NDCs and the SDGs**. These represent opportunities within the NDCs that can be harnessed through their integration into national sectoral policies.

However, discussions in Ghana identify **significant challenges relating to institutional capacity, a lack of co-ordination amongst various institutions and agencies and insufficient resources** in moving towards integrated implementation of national planning priorities to address both NDCs and SDGs. National governments **need to enhance institutional capacity and funding support for co-ordinating bodies to ensure greater alignment between the NDCs and SDGs**.

Key Messages

- We highlight a range of positive alignments between West African NDCs and SDGs that provide an opportunity for exchange of lessons on integrated planning to advance national development on a low-carbon, climate-resilient pathway.
- West African states require finance, technology/data and capacity building through strengthened cross-sectoral co-ordinating bodies to implement actions in their NDCs.
- Multi-sectoral insights from Ghana show the need to empower the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the national coordinating body required to mainstream climate commitments across national development plans and sectoral policies.

Introduction

Building on the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed in September 2015 include a set of 17 Goals (with 161 targets) aimed at ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change by 2030 (UNDP, 2015), in a more coherent way. In December of the same year, 2015, countries at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) agreed a new global climate protocol, termed the Paris Climate Agreement. The Paris Climate Agreement adopted a bottom-up approach, where countries communicated their intentions to address the adverse impacts of climate change based on their unique national circumstances (Northrop *et al.*, 2016). Together, these agreements set a new trajectory for addressing climate change and offer important opportunities for countries to develop in a more climate-resilient way.

While the SDGs and NDCs are two of the most important policy frameworks of the 21st century so far, the interactions, synergies and potential trade-offs between the SDGs and the NDCs have not yet been analysed, especially in sub-Saharan African countries. Such analyses are paramount as their absence risks perverse outcomes. This study explores these issues for West African states to examine if they are in danger of assessing targets one after another without a coherent strategy. In particular, there is a lack of understanding on how the NDCs can advance progress towards achieving the SDGs.

This study asks:

- (i) Which priority sectors are mentioned in relation to climate adaptation and mitigation in the NDCs of West African states?

- (ii) Are the NDCs of West African states well aligned with the SDGs?
- (iii) What are the co-benefits (and/or trade-offs) of NDCs in contributing towards the SDGs? and
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Climate projections suggest that West Africa will continue to experience significant temperature increases coupled with considerable rainfall variability (Niang *et al.*, 2014). This will exacerbate climate and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in this region. The region has also experienced frequent food crises and famines which are triggered by pest infestation, droughts, floods, and conflicts linked to climate change (Okpara *et al.*, 2017).

Research approach

The study adopted a two-stage methodology. In stage one, we used content analysis (as per Kalaba *et al.*, 2014) to understand the priority sectors of submitted NDCs of 11 West African states (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo). Positive and negative alignment between the eleven NDCs and six SDGs (1, 2, 6, 7, 13 and 15) was considered. This analysis focuses on these six SDGs covering poverty, food security, water, energy, climate action and land degradation, given their core importance to the national economies of sub-Saharan Africa (Niang *et al.*, 2014).

Stage two involved using expert interviews and a multi-stakeholder workshop in Ghana, chosen for further study given its status as a regional leader in developing climate policy

(Mawunya & Adiku, 2013). This workshop involved input from 40 experts drawn from across Government Departments including national sectoral representatives and regional extension officers, international bodies and academic researchers. The workshop explored the potential co-benefits, or trade-offs, between different national policies, as well as the implementation challenges associated with the NDCs.

This analysis contributes to contemporary water – energy – food nexus debates and (Rasul and Sharma, 2016) and is important for the African Union’s Agenda 2063, which details development objectives for all African states (Africa Union Commission, 2015).



Summary of main findings

Energy and agriculture are the priority sectors for climate adaptation and mitigation planning in West Africa NDCs

The study identified the energy sector as key for mitigation actions in the NDCs of West African member states (Figure 1). The results show that agriculture is the main focus for adaptation commitments relating to building resilience in the most vulnerable sectors and offers the greatest scope for ‘win-win’ actions

addressing both climate adaptation and mitigation. Although the energy and agriculture sectors were identified as key sectors for mitigation and adaptation efforts, other sectors including forestry, water, transport and waste management were given considerable attention.

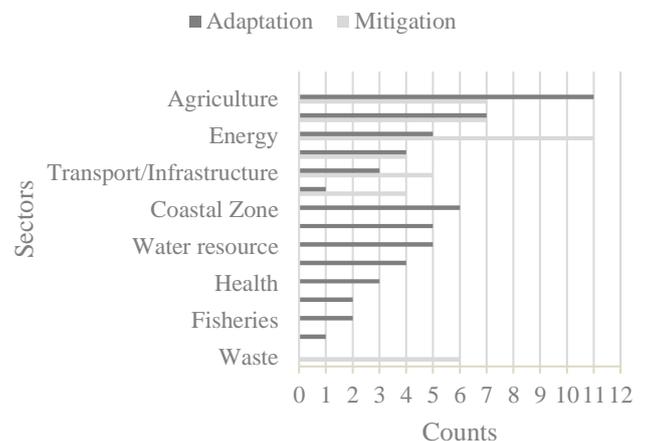


Figure 1: Priority areas for mitigation and adaptation of NDCs submitted by 11 West African states.

NDCs of West Africa states align well to SDGs

The analysis shows that West African states have outlined various measures in their NDCs that will help advance towards the achievement of the SDGs, particularly across goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 6 (access to clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy); 13 (climate action) and 15 (life on land). Specific climate actions (SDG 13) have been outlined including: “enhancing resilience to increasing rainfall variability through the diversification of crop cultivation and small ruminants rearing” (Republic of Liberia, 2015, p.13 & 15). The Gambia notes that “climate change adaptation priorities will be mainstreamed into national agriculture and livestock policies, plans and programmes” (Republic of The Gambia, 2015, p.10). Similarly, Sierra Leone offers to “strengthen the adaptive

capacity of the most vulnerable groups and communities through social safety nets and insurance schemes” (EPA Sierra Leone, 2015, p.9).

Actions proposed to reduce poverty include “seeking to diversify income generating activities in rural areas by promoting artisanal fishing activities (providing training, equipment, and micro-credit) in coastal areas” (Republic of Cape Verde, 2015, p. 20). Nigeria encourages informal savings and insurance schemes to make credit available to industry and vulnerable groups (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2015).

All 11 NDCs indicated commitment to improving the food security situation. For example, Gambia’s NDC indicates “value addition of products will be promoted to complement and support crop diversification” (Republic of The Gambia, 2015, p. 11) Other intended actions include “the establishment of a gene bank of climate resilient varieties of indigenous food crops” (Republic of Liberia 2015, p.14) as well as “disseminating more efficient small-scale irrigation techniques and promoting soil conservation schemes for farmers and rural producers” (Republic of Cape Verde, 2015, p. 7).

Results show the various actions proposed to sustainably manage forests whilst combating land degradation and halting biodiversity loss. For example, Guinea Bissau indicates that it will “develop a national reforestation and sustainable management of forest and agro forestry ecosystems programme by 2025 and establish and schedule a new forestry policy.” (Republic of Guinea Bissau, 2015, p.5). Ghana has also offered to “promote sustainable utilization of forest resources through REDD+” (Republic of Ghana, 2015, p. 13).

There are trade-offs and co-benefits associated with the various adaptation and mitigation actions outlined in the NDCs of West Africa states.

The results demonstrate both trade-offs and co-benefits associated with the various climate adaptation and mitigation actions in West African NDCs. For example, Figure 2 shows that the policy focus on increased use of alternative energy sources (including solar and biofuels) (as in NDCs for Burkina Faso and Ghana) can adversely affect food production, resulting in increased food insecurity (SDG 2). This results from the displacement of marginalised households from fertile agricultural lands in favour of commercial biofuel cultivation. Reduced food production could also imply reduced farm income, which would perpetuate poverty (SDG 1). Low agricultural output has the tendency to also affect household food consumption which can then affect the health of household members (SDG 3), making them more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change (SDG 13).

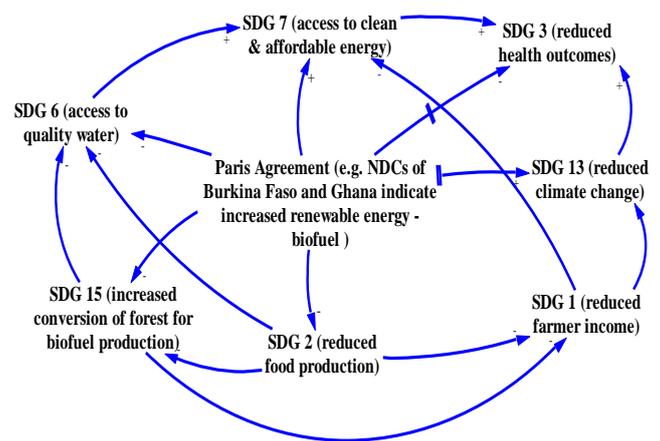


Figure 2: A simplified causal loop diagram illustrating the interactions between increased renewable energy use and SDGs

Funding remains a major challenge in implementation of climate adaptation and mitigation actions outlined in the NDCs

Finance remains a major issue for the implementation of climate adaptation and mitigation actions outlined in NDCs. Most actions remain conditional on the ability of West African states to receive international or foreign assistance in the form of funds and technology. For instance, based on 2010 emission levels, Togo has indicated its readiness to achieve unconditionally an emission reduction target of 11% but has stated a conditional emission reduction target of 31% by 2030 (Republic of Togo, 2015). Many West African states have formally requested international financial support via the Green Climate Fund to implement the actions outlined in their NDCs.

Significant challenges relating to institutional capacity, a lack of coordination amongst various institutions and agencies can undermine good intentions in the West African NDCs

Cross-sectoral national workshop discussions in Ghana identified significant challenges relating to institutional capacity, a lack of co-ordination amongst various institutions and agencies and insufficient resources in moving towards integrated implementation of national planning priorities to address both NDCs and the SDGs. The challenges faced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as the body responsible for cross-sectoral planning display problems faced when such bodies are not supported financially by a Finance Ministry, or Office of President / Vice President as seen in a number of southern African states (England *et al.*, 2018).

Lessons for policy and practice

Our analysis demonstrates **positive alignment between mitigation and adaptation actions proposed in the NDCs and SDGs and this can be used to advance national development on a low-carbon, climate-resilient pathway.**

Significant challenges relating to funding and a lack of collaboration amongst the different institutions and agencies whose input and participation are critical to the successful national implementation of these international frameworks. **Governments across West Africa need to provide the necessary institutional and funding support to cross-sectoral co-ordinating bodies to ensure greater alignment between the NDCs and SDGs.**

Fostering collaboration can be achieved by ensuring greater inter-agency and inter-ministerial partnerships as well as situating NDC projects/actions within appropriate sectors. **Coherent planning for NDCs requires aligning projects and actions with the existing mandates of the relevant sectors and institutions.** This will help to overcome some of institutional and capacity challenges facing national agencies and institutions who are mandated to co-ordinate environmental planning, as witnessed by the **capacity and funding challenges for the EPA in Ghana.** Donors and policy makers need to explore innovative funding mechanisms for the implementation of climate adaptation and mitigation actions across West Africa NDCs.

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