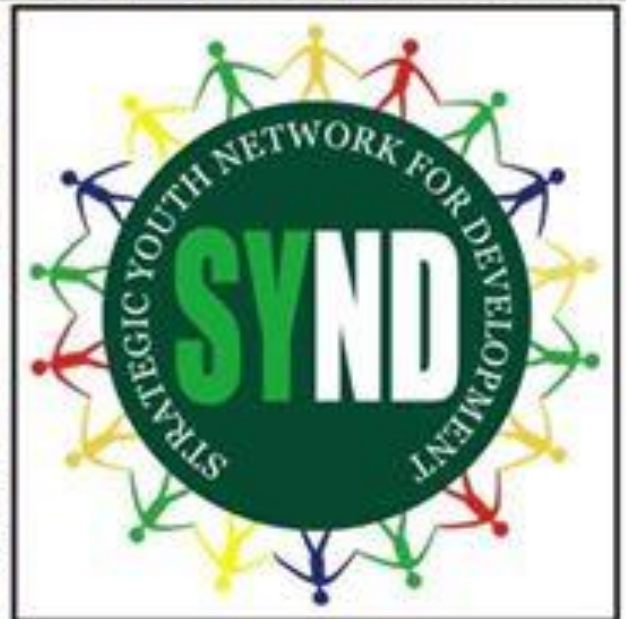


Survey Report

Climate Change Impacts: The experiences of Youth Leaders in Ghana

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: THE ROLE OF YOUTH LEADERS & COMMUNITIES



Contact:

Chibeze Ezekiel
Executive Coordinator
Strategic Youth Network for Development (SYND)
Email Address: chibeze@hotmail.com / synd.ghana@hotmail.com
Website: www.strategicyouthnetwork.org

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Background & Context:

Discussing further on Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which bothers on Education, Training & Public Awareness, the 33rd session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation held from November 30th - December 4th, 2010 in Cancun in its decision charged parties among others to:

1. Enhance the involvement of, and create training opportunities for, groups with a key role in climate change communication and education, including journalists, teachers, youth, children and community leaders;
2. Foster the participation of women, youth, indigenous peoples, civil society groups and relevant stakeholders in decision-making on climate change at the national level and their attendance at intergovernmental meetings, including sessions of the Conference of the Parties, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the subsidiary bodies;
3. Improve reporting on education, training and public awareness activities through national communications.

At the national level, the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), 2012 of Ghana acknowledges the role of young people in the fight against climate change. It states that *“the youth form a significant proportion of the population of Ghana and live with the impacts of climate change much longer. As such, the youth are key stakeholders in the climate change process”*. Additionally, the National Climate & Green Economy Strategy, 2016 of Ghana notes that *“children and youth are vulnerable to the impact of climate change but can also be agents of change in the fight against climate change.”*

The Strategic Youth Network for Development (SYND) on the basis of the above conducted a survey in 2016 among **youth leaders (between the ages of 15 – 35 years)** in selected communities in Ghana as part of a Youth Role in Climate Change Adaptation project.

Ghana is divided into 3 zones namely the Northern, Middle and Southern zones and each of them have unique geographic and environmental characteristics. Thus for this exercise, one community per zone was selected to obtain a fair and accurate representation or data on climate change experiences by young people. The southern zone represents the coastal areas; the middle zone represents rainforest areas while the northern zone represents high temperature areas.

Youth leaders were purposely selected because they are undeniably very active and key influencers in the welfare of their respective community. Social actions or community-led mobilisation activities often have them leading the cause hence a major force to reckon with.

The exercise among others seeks to demonstrate on-going climate change adaptation actions by young people and how such effects can positively contribute and influence national plans. Climate change adaptation has been defined as adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities¹. Young people undoubtedly have energies, skills and talents that should be discovered, developed and deployed to assist in achieving national climate adaptation programme objectives.

The communities selected were as follows:

- ❖ James Town – Southern Zone
- ❖ New Abirem – Middle Zone
- ❖ Gumani – Northern Zone

¹ National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) of Ghana



Survey Results:

1. James Town Community:

In all 25 youth leaders from groups such as **No Noise Fund club, United Youth, Ashabienaa Youth, Concern Youth, Willows International, Ga Mashie Association, Great Thinkers and New Generation** were identified.

Survey Analysis:

A major observation was that females were woefully under-represented as youth leaders, in spite of conscious efforts made to ensure that females are well represented to promote gender equality. The survey findings show that only 12% were female (3 out of 25 respondents).

80% of respondents did acknowledge that they have observed some changes in the weather pattern such as change in rainfall pattern (32%), weather becoming too hot (20%) and changes in harmattan periods (12%). 16% were unable to provide specific changes even though they acknowledged observing changes in the weather. Furthermore, 94% indicated that they are aware of climate change with majority saying it represents change in weather patterns (28%). 44% got to know about climate change through TV and 36% each through community durbars and radio.

In terms of how climate change has affected them, 26% have had bad experiences with floods and 24% faced with low yields in fish business which is their major source of employment or livelihood. For this reason 68% of the respondents indicated that they are making personal efforts to fighting climate change; some of which are: educating family members, community etc. against bad practices such as polluting gutters and drainages, sand winning, bush burning, open defecation etc. (44%); engaging in tree planting (8%) and participating in community clean-up exercises (8%). When respondents were asked which measures they want to see in place to tackling climate change, 24% mentioned the need for community education and more climate change advocacy; 12% also feel enforcement of laws and/or bye-laws is critical. For the best medium of communication, 40% representing majority opted for audio-visuals.

Respondents believe that key stakeholders such as government, private sector, community leaders and CSOs have major roles to play in the fight against climate change. Expected key roles from each of the identified stakeholders were as follows:

Government – 16% expect the state to use TV and radio for more education on climate change.

Private sector – 20% expect this sector to use posters, community durbars and music band to do more sensitisation or education.

Local leaders – they are expected to mobilise young people for clean-up activities, support public and private sector initiatives as well as checking and monitoring community members against bad practices

Community members – 12% expect them to change negative attitudes and participate in clean-up activities while 8% indicated the need to inform and support one another through education.

Civil society – 8% expect them to educate public more with up to date knowledge on climate change.



2. New Abirem Community:

In all 32 youth leaders from groups such as **Hweakwae Youth Association, Assembly Unit Committee, Yayaaso, Aduasena, and Assembly Members** participated in the survey.

Survey Analysis:

From the survey, 33% (representing majority) of the youth leaders were 35 years and above. Only 12% were females, which demonstrate that women are not actively playing leadership roles as young people in the community.

97% of respondents did acknowledge that they have observed some changes in the weather pattern such as change in rainfall pattern (31%), limited rainfall (28%), change in weather patterns (harmattan, regular strong winds etc.), (25%) and too much heat or hot weather (13%). Furthermore, 97% claimed they are aware of climate change with 31% saying it represents change in weather patterns; 12% said it represents weather becoming too hot. 69% got to know about climate change through Radio and 28% each through TV and community durbars.

In terms of how climate change has affected them, 50% lamented that it has caused low food production or farm produce, increasing their poverty levels. For this reason 78% of the respondents indicated that they are making personal efforts to fighting climate change; some of which are: educating family members (28%) and engaging in tree planting activities (22%). When respondents were asked which measures they want to see in place to tackling climate change, 25% mentioned the need for more community education or awareness creation on climate change; 25% also feel enforcement of laws and bye-laws is critical and 13% proposing tree planting activities. For best medium of communication, 47% opted for radio.

Respondents believe that key stakeholders such as government, private sector, community leaders and CSOs have major roles to play in the fight against climate change. Expected key roles for each of the identified stakeholders are as follows:

Government – 22% expect more education and/or awareness creation; need to enact laws or policies that protect the environment (22%) and need for necessary infrastructure and support systems (16%).

Private sector – 28% expect this sector to organise meetings/workshops to provide climate change education. 6% feel the sector should also provide support to local initiatives.

Local leaders – 28% expect leaders to do more education and awareness on climate change. Embarking on tree planting exercise (13%) and engaging more with Assembly members and community members (6%)

Community members – 22% expect them to contribute to the education and awareness creation efforts; planting of trees (13%) and participating in clean up exercises (6%).

Civil society – 28% expect them to do more education and sensitisation; tree planting efforts (9%) and providing support such as relief items to affected victims (6%).

3. Gumani Community:

A total of 23 youth leaders from **Zee Sung youth, Nzagsi- ηuni association, Nasara Youth Association, N-Gang ηuni Youth Association, and N-Zagsi ηuni Youth Association** participated in the survey.



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Survey Analysis:

Most of the respondents were above 30 years old with females representing 35%. 61% of respondents were married while 30% are still single. The survey showed that most of them 39% have some tertiary education.

All the respondents did acknowledged that they have observed some changes in the weather pattern such as hot weather (39%), change in rainfall pattern (22%), and limited rainfall (17%). Furthermore, 91% claim they are aware of climate change with majority saying it represents change in weather patterns (39%) and 12% said it represents negative effects that exist in our environment due to human activities. 30% got to know about climate change through Radio; TV (30%) and community durbars (17%).

In terms of how climate change has affected them, 61% lamented that it has caused low crop yields, affected income levels or created economic hardship (17%) and flood disaster (17%). For this reason 65% of the respondents indicated that they are making personal efforts to fighting climate change; some of which are: encouraging afforestation or tree planting exercises (30%), educating others (26%) and practicing natural resources management and organic ways of farming (17%). When respondents were asked which measures they want to see in place to tackling climate change, 22% mentioned the need for more community education or awareness creation on climate change; 22% also proposed planting of more trees and 17% indicated the need to adopt good methods of farming. For best medium of communication, 48% opted for gong gong² beating.

Respondents believe that key stakeholders such as government, private sector, community leaders and CSOs have major roles to play in the fight against climate change. Expected key from the identified stakeholders were as follows:

Government – 17% expect partner with CSOs to do more education and/or awareness creation; and provision of funds for the construction of drainage system (13%).

Private sector – 22% expect this sector to support educational and sensitization efforts on radio, TV etc. 9% feel the sector should also make effort in tree planting exercises by providing seedlings.

Local leaders – 22% expect leaders to educating against bush burning and tree cutting and using gong gong to create awareness (9%).

Community members – 13% expect community members to stop cutting down trees, cleaning and clearing of choked gutters after rainfall (9%) and acting responsibly by making themselves available towards contributing to the fight against CC (9%).

Civil society – 9% expect them to do continue advocating or educating against tree cutting and bush burning and creating awareness on preparedness against climate change (9%).

Our Observations:

The survey with the youth leaders in these communities did produce some issues for consideration in climate related policy reviews and national programming and action plans.

Gender – gender equality is one of the key focused areas in all aspects of socio-economic development. Its relevance or significance has culminated into ensuring that all projects be planned and implemented from a gender perspective. Indeed it took a major shape during the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Agenda, 2000-2015 and is still considered critical in the new global

² Gong-gong is an instrument usually used in a typical rural setting to make announcements, call for a meeting and/or reach out to community people.



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development agenda – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2015-2030. Our findings show that young women are not actively involved at the local level to contribute to climate change decision making processes. This confirms that women's participation in decision making remains very low³. At both James Town and New Abirem communities only 12% of the youth leaders were females except for Gumani which recorded 35%. This means local or community based organisations have not properly been engaged to appreciate and make conscious effort to encourage more female participation in leadership roles. The women themselves need to be oriented on their important roles in achieving local development agenda or goals. Even though climate change affects women and girls more than men and boys; the National Gender Policy of Ghana launched in 2015 unfortunately has no policy commitment on Gender and Climate Change. Promoting a gender perspective in climate change adaptation is critical for improved impacts on development⁴.

Awareness Level – we have observed that young people are very much aware of climate change irrespective of their geographic location as gathered from 94%, 97% and 91% of youth leaders in James Town, New Abirem, and Gumani communities respectively. Interestingly in all the 3 communities engaged, the youth leaders said climate change means changes in weather pattern, weather becoming hot and negative effects that exist in our environment due to human activities. The implication is that climate change is well known among young people since they are already experiencing its adverse effects. This may confirm that climate education and awareness exercises have yielded the desired results consistent with **Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**. The youth in the southern zone are of the view that use of audio-visuals (40%) is the best medium of communication as compared to Radio (47%) by the youth in the middle zone and Gong-gong (48%) by the youth in the northern zone.

Impact of Climate Change – our findings reveal that climate change is directly affecting the source of employment or livelihood of the youth. The youth expressed worry over low yields in fishing, flooding leading to occurrence of sicknesses, low food production or farm produce hence affecting income levels, unbearable heat in the weather among others. This requires further analysis into how climate change is possibly derailing some gains made in farming by young people. The Youth in Agricultural Programme for example was introduced as an intervention to increase production to ensure food security while creating employment for the youth. The year 2010, recorded a total of 57,319 youth involvement in the initiative, of which 39,841 were males (69.5%) and 14,094 females (30.5%)⁵. How many of these young farmers have (or are) been affected by climate change to inform or produce corrective actions? Already, 50% of the youth leaders interviewed at New Abirem, lamented that climate change has caused low food production or farm produce. As part of its climate adaptation programme, government intends to support efforts to mainstream the effects of climate change into the design of new cropping systems while simultaneously working towards enhancing existing cropping systems to make them responsive to current and future climatic effects. The programme will also support efforts to expand the scale of adoption by farmers of other sustainable productivity-enhancing technologies, with special emphasis on those that have additional mitigation potential including conservation agriculture and agroforestry⁶. We are yet to witness how such initiatives are salvaging young farmers from the adverse effect of climate change.

Conclusion:

In line with on-going climate related interventions at the national level, the role of young people cannot be underestimated. Young people through this survey have demonstrated that they are also relevant actors and should be actively involved especially with regards to the conceptualizing, planning and implementation of **adaptation mechanisms**. Not only are they informed about climate

³ Ghana Millennium Development Goals Report (2015)

⁴ National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) of Ghana

⁵ 2010 Annual Progress Report, Ghana

⁶ NCCP Master Plan, Ghana



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change but are taking personal efforts to fighting it **by growing trees and educating others**. Such efforts have been captured in the NCCP Master Plan thus the need to leverage on the skills, abilities and energies of young people to achieving common goals or objectives. In so doing, there has to be a conscious effort to identify young women to build their capacity at local levels to also play active roles to eschew inequalities and promote gender empowerment as the SDGs seek to attain.

Fishing and farming which are the main sources of employment or livelihood for the youth are under threat. This strongly bothers on food security which is currently eroding some successes chalked in the fight against poverty. The more prices of food crops go up, the more poor people are forced to eat less due to low income levels which likely will lead to a cascading effect of malnourishment among children, women and other vulnerable groups.

Also, enforcement of the environmental laws or regulations has been very poor. Such laws if enforced can reduce floods and other forms of disaster drastically. For example, if trees are not cut down indiscriminately, they can serve as wind breaks thereby bringing the storms under control thus saving lives and properties. Government must be relentless on this.

Recommendation:

From the survey findings, the SYND hereby makes the following recommendations:

1. Ghana government should work closely with youth groups by providing them the space to contribute to the national climate change agenda.
2. Establish and sustain a youth-oriented platform for peer-to-peer learning and sharing experiences among young people for cross pollination of ideas and ideals in creative or innovative climate adaptation practices.
3. Provide financial and technical support to youth groups as change agents relevant to the fight against climate change.

About Strategic Youth Network for Development (SYND):

SYND is a youth-oriented NGO which focuses primarily on contributing to ensuring good governance in the natural resources and environment sector through active youth inclusion or partnership with relevant stakeholders such as government, private sector, civil society and media.

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