

Adaptation to Climatic Hazards in the Savannah Ecosystem: Improving Adaptation Policy and Action

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Received: 13 July 2016 / Accepted: 30 May 2017 / Published online: 12 June 2017
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Abstract People in Ghana's savannah ecosystem have historically experienced a range of climatic hazards that have affected their livelihoods. In view of current climate variability and change, and projected increases in extreme events, adaptation to climate risks is vital. Policies have been put in place to enhance adaptation across sub-Saharan Africa in accordance with international agreements. At the same time, local people, through experience, have learned to adapt. This paper examines current policy actions and their implementation alongside an assessment of barriers to local adaptation. In doing so it links adaptation policy and practice. Policy documents were analysed that covered key livelihood sectors, which were identified as climate sensitive. These included agriculture, water, housing and health policies, as well as the National Climate Change Policy. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were also held with key stakeholders in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Analyses were carried using thematic content analysis. Although policies and actions complement each other, their integration is weak. Financial, institutional, social, and technological barriers hinder successful local implementation of some policy actions, while lack of local involvement in policy formulation also hinders adaptation practice. Integration of local perspectives into policy needs to be strengthened in order to enhance adaptation. Coupled with this is a need to consider adaptation to climate change in

development policies and to pursue efforts to reduce or remove the key barriers to implementation at the local level.

Keywords Adaptation · Policy action · Multiple climatic hazards · Savannah ecosystem

Introduction

Projections indicate the Earth will continue to get warmer during the 21st century (IPCC 2014), with climate variability and change (CVC) interacting with several other pressures and stresses that affect people's lives (Stringer et al. 2010). While all the key climate models project temperature rises until the end of 2100 over West Africa, projections for rainfall are mixed showing rainfall decreases at the beginning of the rainy season and increases towards the end (Biasutti and Sobel 2009; Biasutti et al. 2009; Seth et al. 2010). Similar mixed results on rainfall were obtained by Stanturf et al. (2011) when they ran all 16 ensembles of the atmosphere-ocean coupled global climate models under three of the Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (B1, A1B2, and A2) over the region.

In Ghana, mean annual temperatures have risen by about 1 °C since 1960, with a more rapid increase in the Guinea and Sudan savannas of Northern Ghana (Minia 2008). Dry season mean temperatures are projected to rise by about 3 °C by 2080, especially in Northern Ghana (Minia 2008). Rainfall, however, has been highly variable since 1960, with a downward trend (Nkrumah et al. 2014). In the Guinea and Sudan savannas, while temperature is increasing and projected to increase, projected precipitation shows both increases and decreases. Decreases range

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between 25 and 28%, while increases range between 24 and 32% in wet season rainfall (Stanturf et al. 2011). The projected decrease in the early part of the rainy season implies high likelihood of frequent and intense droughts/dry spells and a small delay in the monsoon season, whereas intensification of late-season rains implies high likelihood of frequent floods and heavy rainfall events. These climate hazards (high temperatures, dry spells/droughts, heavy rainfall, floods, and windstorms) are already occurring in the savanna ecosystem of Ghana and affecting the livelihood and socio-cultural settings of the population (Stanturf et al. 2011; Antwi-Agyei et al. 2012; IPCC 2014; Yiran and Stringer 2016). Yiran (2014) showed that the people in the savanna ecosystem are not able to adapt effectively to current climate challenges, leading to high vulnerabilities. Projected increases in frequency and severity of these climatic hazards will most likely exacerbate vulnerabilities if proactive adaptation measures are not put in place.

Adapting and responding to CVC is imperative (Nelson et al. 2007), as impacts are inevitable. Adaptation to CVC has been seen as necessary for poor countries and communities, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where nations contribute very little to the global greenhouse gas emissions yet suffer the brunt of climate risks (Ludi et al. 2012). There is nevertheless a serious climate change adaptation policy gap in the African continent (Mburia 2015). While many of Africa's least developed countries have developed National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Stringer et al. 2010), and these are gradually being implemented (Moors et al. 2011), Ghana, like many low-middle income to middle-income countries was not required to prepare a NAPA. Instead, the country operated with development policies geared towards achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs) and now the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Yiran 2014). These goals have targets which countries translate for specific sectors. However, the MDGs/SDGs cannot be achieved without reference to adaptation to climate change because most sectors in Ghana that support livelihoods, such as agriculture, health, housing, water, roads, energy, are climate sensitive (Yiran and Stringer 2016). Until recently (when Ghana developed a climate change policy that is yet to be implemented), Ghana's policy adaptation actions were derived from actions linked to these sectoral policies, while local people developed their own autonomous adaptations to tackle CVC. The implementation of policies and the ways in which they interact with local autonomous adaptation actions in many countries have been met with a number of challenges that can be described as barriers (e.g., Urwin and Jordan 2008; Ekstrom et al. 2011). Understanding these barriers and their links to practice remains an important knowledge gap.

Recognition that barriers can be surmounted and that there is an urgent need to adapt has motivated a growing body of research into this area (e.g., Adger et al. 2009; Ekstrom et al. 2011; Moser and Ekstrom 2012; Antwi-Agyei et al. 2014; Islam et al. 2014). Nevertheless, much still remains to be learned (National Research Council 2009). For example, Islam et al. (2014) identify a lack of knowledge about the interactions between barriers and stress that little is known about how these interactions affect the well-being of smallholder communities. Antwi-Agyei et al. (2014) also note that the focus on types of barriers by many studies in SSA do not show how the barriers interact at different levels to influence adaptation.

Besides the focus on barriers, several studies on the gaps between the development of adaptation policy and its implementation have emerged in the last few decades (IPCC 2014). These studies concern policy development/implementation (e.g., Dovers 2005; Corfee-Morlot et al. 2011; Howlett and Giest 2013), policy analysis (e.g., Urwin and Jordan 2008; Dunn 2012; Dupuis and Knoepfel 2013), provide policy reviews (e.g., Ford 2008; Jordan and Lenschow 2010; Dazé and Echeverría 2016; Mensah et al. 2016), and offer policy conceptual and methodological frameworks (e.g., Gupta 2012; Bauer and Knill 2014; Vogel and Henstra 2015). Many of these demonstrate challenges associated with the interaction or interplay of policy at different scales, horizontal, or vertical (Young 2002; Adger et al. 2005; Urwin and Jordan 2008). Nevertheless, it remains critical to examine the interaction between policies and practices at the micro level where policies are implemented. This is especially vital in SSA where such studies are limited, policies largely do not target adaptation to CVC, and where resources and knowledge are lacking in relation to the expected CVC impacts (IPCC 2014). Further, very few studies have explored barriers to policy implementation sector by sector, let alone linking this to the interplay between policy and local practices. The questions we therefore ask are: to what extent do Ghana's development-oriented sector policies address adaptation to climate change? What kind of interplay exists between the policies, and between policies and local action? What kind of barriers frustrate implementation of these policies and actions?

We begin to address these questions by reviewing sector policies and examine the interplay between national policies and local practices, identifying important areas of both support and conflict, and the barriers to implementation of sectoral policies and local actions. Our findings aid identification of those policy actions that require strengthening, as well as highlighting local practices that could be better integrated into and supported by policy to enhance adaptation to climate hazards. In doing this, we provide a valuable extension to the growing body of literature that has

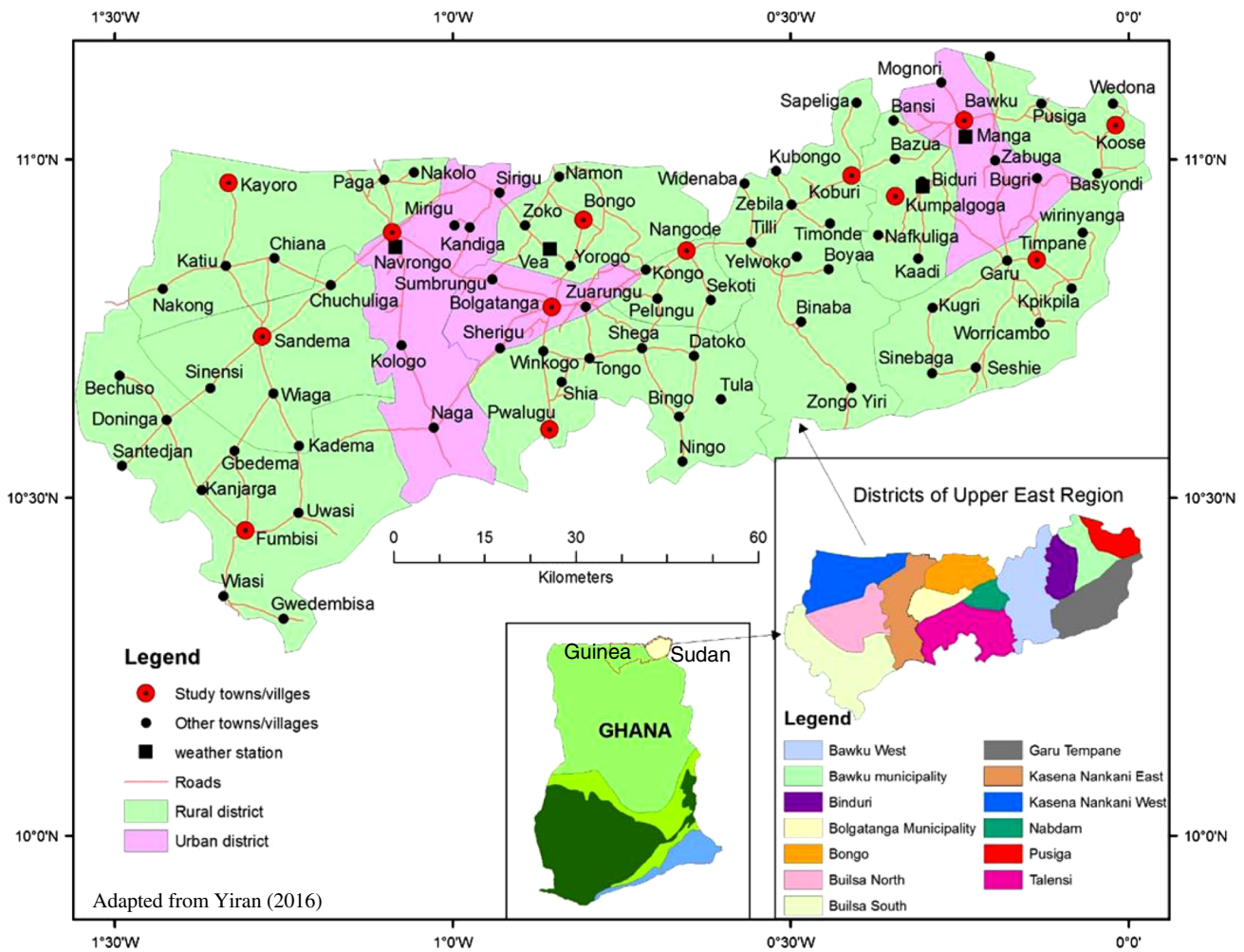


Fig. 1 Map of the study area

sought to better understand climate adaptation in Ghana (e.g., Stanturf et al. 2011; Antwi-Agyei et al. 2012, 2014; Bawakyillenuo et al. 2014). Our findings will also inform the implementation of policies linked to the SDGs and the national climate policy.

Methodology

Although Ghana has a decentralised governance system, most policies are formulated at the national level, in line with international considerations, especially the MDGs (now SDGs) and the country’s obligations under the UNFCCC. Those policies targeting sectors identified as highly vulnerable to climatic hazards in the savanna ecosystem (i.e., agriculture, water, health and housing; see Yiran 2014) were selected for analysis, so as to identify priority areas that can be improved to enhance adaptation. Specific climate policies were also included in the sample. To examine the implementation of the policies and barriers,

we selected a region in Ghana where we interviewed stakeholders. In the ensuing subsections, we discuss the study area, methods of data collection, and analysis.

Study Area

The study area selected was the Upper East Region (UER) (Fig. 1, adapted from Yiran 2016). Though the savanna ecosystem stretches from latitude 7°N to latitude 11°N, the UER was chosen because it experiences nearly all the climatic hazards that occur in the savanna and receives the lowest rainfall (Logah et al. 2013). The region also has the highest percentage of poverty (90%) in the savanna ecosystem and is the only region with two variant ecological zones of the savanna (Guinea and Sudan; see Fig. 1) (Yiran 2016). To conduct the focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) (described later), 13 communities were selected using the restricted random sampling technique (Stevens and Olsen 2004). The three big towns (Bolgatanga, Bawku, and Navrongo) were purposively selected

to ensure that varying characteristics of urban areas were captured. A list of all communities in each of the remaining districts was generated. Communities were selected at random but ensuring that no two selected communities were within 10 km from each other. This allowed good spatial coverage of the region. Districts in the region are divided along major ethnic groups and therefore responses from any one community could reflect the generality of the district.

Methods of Data Collection

Policy documents from the climate-sensitive sectors mentioned above as well as information from stakeholders were collected from the institutions responsible for implementing such policies.

More than 90% of the documents were downloaded from the institutional websites. Policy documents include the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) (MESTI 2015), the Food and Agricultural Sector Development Policy (FASDEP II) (MOFA 2007), and its programmes and action plans including the Medium-Term Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (MOFA 2009), the Health Sector Policy (MOH 2007), the Housing Policy (MWRWH 2015), and the Water Sector Policy (MWRWH 2007). References NCCP (2014); FASDEP II (2007); Medium-Term Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (2009); Health Sector Policy (2007); Housing Policy (2014); Water Sector Policy (2007); Ghana Statistical Service (2013) not listed in references. Please provide complete publication details to add in the reference list, else delete text citation.

FGDs and IDIs were held with community members and institutional representatives (officials). Participants in FGDs comprised males and females from age 18 upward who were economically active (Ghana Statistical Service 2013). We held one FGD in each community. We ensured we included a wide mixture of participants, including people with different backgrounds, ranging from those who have experienced at least one of the hazards and/or have knowledge of climate change, community leaders, rich/poor, professionals, and educated/non-educated. This made the number of participants in the meetings range between 10 and 15 but this was manageable and comparable to other reports in the literature (see Fern 1982; Krueger and Casey 2009). These people were identified following initial meetings with opinion leaders in which the diversity of the communities was discussed. We explained to participants that no point raised was irrelevant provided it related to climatic events, helping to ensure a congenial atmosphere and fruitful discussions. The initial intention was to hold a FGD in each district (in selected communities in Fig. 1). However, after five FGDs (one in an urban community (Navrongo) and four in rural communities (Bongo, Koore, Kumpalgogo, and Tempene)), the information being

obtained was almost the same. According to Rebar et al. (2011), if after the 4th FGD, no new information is being added, then the discussions are assumed to have reached a saturation point and the FGD process should end.

For the IDIs, six individuals, drawn from similar backgrounds as the FDGs, were interviewed in each study community. Participants in IDIs were identified during FDGs so interviewees were not part of the FDGs. In communities where FDGs were not held, discussions with the Assembly member, Chief, and his elders during the community entry stage identified participants for the IDIs. Also, 25 institutions drawn from both government institutions and NGOs in the region that engage in climate-related issues were contacted for IDIs. These included the district offices of Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA 2007, 2009), National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), Ghana Irrigation Development Authority (GIDA), and NGOs who were collaborating with these government agencies. An interview was also held with the regional NADMO Coordinator. Efforts were made to interview officials of Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) and Ghana Red Cross Society, but these attempts proved futile. However, interviews with cognate institutions, the regional NADMO coordinator, and the residents provided insights into the activities of these institutions. Officials of the agencies were considered as experts as well as policy implementers.

Data Analysis

Until the promulgation of the NCCP, which was launched in 2014, climate responses in Ghana were tied to the development agenda, which was driven by sectoral policies. Thus, these policies were reviewed to see the extent to which they supported adaptation and to identify possible weaknesses. We also compared policy implementation and local actions to examine possible areas of reinforcement/conflict. Gaining the perspectives of local actors (policy implementers) and local people is key in understanding the interplay between policies as well as the links between policies and local actions (see also Urwin and Jordan 2008).

In reviewing the documents, we followed a content analysis approach (i.e., qualitative document analysis) that has been widely used (see WHO 2009; Huang et al. 2010; Wesley 2010). First, we read through the policy documents to identify themes or focal areas we considered aided adaptation to climatic events. These sections were noted. We then thoroughly read the identified themes or focal areas, and their objectives, actions, and outputs on identified themes or focal areas were recorded. At this stage, we categorised the themes or focal areas and their programmes/actions that address climatic hazards in the study area identified by Yiran et al. (2017). These include droughts/

high temperatures and flooding/heavy rainfall events. We next examined the implementation of policy actions and their outcomes by analysing FGDs and IDIs held with community members and officials using thematic content analysis. Here also, the notes were read and analysed to identify actions, following the same procedure adopted for the policy analysis. Activities mentioned in the interviews were grouped into themes. Themes were then labelled as actions and categorised into those that resulted from the implementation of the policies and those that constituted local adaptations. This considered whether the respondents learned the activity or action from extension agents/NGOs, from neighbours or from experience and compared the responses from both implementers and local people. A brief literary description of some of the responses and direct quotations from respondents in the FGDs and IDIs were also made to explain/provide deeper insight into some findings. From the responses, we also identified actions that have been successfully implemented, local good practices, as well as highlighting barriers to implementation.

Results

Sector policies are formulated at national level and intended to be implemented at district level. This could be viewed as a top-down approach to policy implementation. This section presents the results of the policy analysis (top-down approach) and the analysis of the FGDs and IDIs (bottom-up approach). Presentation of barriers and opportunities that emerge following the analysis of the two approaches then follows.

Policy Content Analysis

Four sectoral policies and the NCCP, taken from sectors that were identified as most vulnerable to CVC in the savannah of Ghana, were reviewed. No reference was made to CVC in the health sector policy, while it was referenced once and thrice in the agricultural sector policy and the housing sector policy, respectively. The water sector policy and the Ghana National Urban Policy Action Plan have policy actions that focus on CVC. However, the housing sector policy only has policy initiatives and no actions; it was therefore substituted with the National Urban Policy Action Plan that contained actions for the housing sector. The NCCP programmes were more focused on adaptation than mitigation. All policy actions critical for adaptation to CVC are shown in Table 1.

Although policy documents were not intended for adaptation, as can be seen in Table 1, the water sector policy and National Urban Policy Action Plan contain actions that support adaptation to CVC. Health and agricultural sector

policies have actions that indirectly address adaptation though not expressly stated. Almost every sectoral area has at least one action that has something to do with adaptation, while the housing and water sectors have two focus/action areas dealing with adaptation. The agriculture sector has one that is essential as far as adaptation to CVC is concerned. The NCCP was more specific and has several programmes devoted to enhancing adaptation (Table 1). The NCCP also went a step further to budget the programmes and actions and identified institutions within the sectors where such actions can be mainstreamed. It also had a log-frame indicating timelines. This demonstrates the political will and commitment behind the NCCP.

Interview Results

In the interviews with policy implementers and local people, it was realised that some policy actions have been implemented and well received by the actors while some had not. Local people have been adapting autonomously to the climatic hazards and have therefore developed adaptive strategies that they consider successful. Table 2 summarises the findings of the interviews and FGDs with officials and community members in the study area. Although the NCCP had not yet been implemented, some autonomous adaptations were similar actions within the policy.

The agricultural sector policy focused on improving productivity. Actions were therefore geared towards tackling challenges that tended to reduce productivity. Officials in the sector observed a high dependency on rainfall which is erratic, and coupled with extreme heat, affects the productivity of crops and livestock. Some agriculture policy actions meant to reduce dependency on rainfall, captured as evidence of implementation in Table 2, were rolled out. Records from the agriculture offices indicate about eight and six drought/heat tolerant varieties of maize and rice, respectively, have been introduced. Records from GIDA also indicate over 200 dams/dugouts have been constructed throughout UER. Data from Ghana Water Company (GWC) and the CWSA indicate that nearly all towns/villages are served with water from mechanised boreholes, hand pump boreholes, or wells except Bolgatanga township, which is served with treated water from the Veia dam.

In all the FGDs and IDIs, farmers (who constituted more than 80%¹ of the respondents) confirmed the implementation of these actions. Participants/respondents in 10 out of the 13 surveyed towns/villages pointed to a dam/dugout in their communities that is used for various agricultural activities. Use of groundwater through hand dug wells was also practiced by farmers in river valleys and areas where it is easy to access groundwater. A young male farmer in

¹ Because most professionals in the region also engage in farming.

Table 1 Content analysis of policy documents

Policy	Policy actions	Can enhance adaptation to
<p>Agriculture sector</p> <p>Objective: Food security and emergency preparedness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce improved crop varieties - Increase access to fertiliser - Seed/planting material - Introduce improved livestock breeds - Rehabilitate irrigation dams (Vea and Tono) - Identify sites for micro irrigation systems - Facilitate installation and establishment of pump irrigation systems - Facilitate the formation of water users' associations at the irrigation sites - Promote use of existing small community and small-scale dams - Identify suitable areas for the construction of community small-scale irrigation dams and establish small-scale furrow irrigation systems 	<p>Dry spell</p> <p>Droughts</p> <p>Floods</p>
<p>Health sector</p> <p>Policy result area: Human resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The increase in the production, recruitment, and retention of health workers, focusing on middle-level health professionals - The advocacy for orientation and mobilisation of other professionals, including, but not limited to, teachers and agricultural extension workers, in contributing to the promotion and maintenance of good health practice 	<p>Climate-related health risks (i.e., malaria, CSM, Cholera, etc.)</p>
<p>Policy result area: Health infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investment in the construction of a health service infrastructure - Ensuring of sufficient financing for priority renovations and planned preventive maintenance of existing health service facilities 	<p>Climate-related health risks</p>
<p>Policy result area: Health supplies and logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of local production of supplies and logistics, including pharmaceuticals and traditional medicines for the national and regional/international markets 	<p>Climate-related health risks</p>
<p>Policy result area: Health financing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To pursue equity in health financing, with special emphasis on risk pooling, targeting resources to services for the poor and vulnerable groups 	<p>Climate-related health risks</p>
<p>Water sector</p> <p>Focus area 1: Integrated water resources management</p> <p>Focus area 6: CVC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote partnerships between the public and private sectors for the protection and conservation of water resources - Construct flood protection structures at appropriate locations - Apply appropriate technologies to efficient early warning systems - Establish and enforce appropriate buffer zones along river - Ensure that land-use planning/building regulations are adequate and enforced - Ensure rainwater harvesting techniques are incorporated into the building code and enforced 	<p>Floods</p> <p>Floods</p> <p>Droughts</p> <p>Dry spells</p>
<p>Housing sector</p> <p>Action area 8: Urban safety and security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainstream security and disaster prevention into urban planning and management systems 	<p>Floods</p>

Table 1 continued

Policy	Policy actions	Can enhance adaptation to
Action area 10: Climate change adaptation and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquire ecologically sensitive areas and flood-prone areas, and designate and protect them as nature reserves - Adopt energy conserving systems/technologies in public and private buildings - Introduce or strengthen school curricula awareness on climate change - Intensify public education programmes (including video clips) for awareness creation on climate change, mitigation, and adaptation strategies - Develop structure plans with clear provision for open spaces, green belts, and other amenity values 	Floods Droughts Dry spells High temperatures
<i>The NCCP</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the development of climate proof infrastructure that provide key services to increase resilience of communities during extreme climate events - Ensure safe and constant water supply during times of floods and droughts - Ensure that rural communities have access to all weather roads and reliable access to markets and key services 	All climatic hazards
Programme: Develop climate resilient infrastructures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document and disseminate appropriate community-based indigenous early warning systems on climate-related disasters - Establish effective hazard monitoring and early warning systems with sound scientific and technological basis - Enhance the technical capacity of Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet) and other related institutions such as Water Resources Commission (WRC), the Universities and the Geological Survey Department 	All climatic hazards
Programme: Public education and adaptation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the use of ICT and information systems to enhance access to public information on climate change adaptation - Build capacity of the media and establish clear working relationship and links to ensure the media is well placed to support climate change adaptation - Increase public awareness on climate change adaptation and provide skill training to ensure preparedness on climate change and adaptation strategies 	All climatic hazards
Programme: Rapid response and disaster management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen the institutional framework for disaster risk response and management - Enhance institutional capacity of agencies in disaster risk management especially NADMO - Improve technical capacity and facilities to communities for rapid response to disasters and disaster management - Review, update, adopt, and disseminate National Disaster Management Strategy and Emergency Preparedness/Response Policy and Framework 	All climatic hazards

Source: Government of Ghana policy documents (constructed by Authors)

Table 2 Summary of results from interviews

Sector	Evidence of policy actions implantation	Autonomous adaptive actions	Can enhance adaptation to
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heat and drought-tolerant crops (maize varieties, soya bean) introduced - Seeds sold in markets and agriculture input outlets - Some improved livestock breeds introduced - Rehabilitation of dams started - Some dams/dugouts are used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crop diversification, mixed/inter cropping - Transplanting - Soil moisture conservation measures such as mulching, stone bunds, watering crops in the evening, etc. practiced - Flood recession agriculture practiced in some areas - Early planting and harvesting before floods - Ploughing across slopes to reduce runoff - Dry season gardening/farming using groundwater from wells - Keep different types of livestock and birds with lower water requirements - Keets are raised in pens under shades with the ground watered to control temperature - Some weed only in the morning and evening/late afternoon 	Dry spell Droughts Floods
Health			
Policy result area: Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enrolment increased, more training schools built - Outreach programmes, TV and Radio jingles on food safety and sanitation, provision of sanitation facilities 		Climate-related health risks (i.e., malaria, CSM, Cholera, etc.)
Policy result area: Health infrastructure	Building of health facilities, Presby mobile clinic, ambulances		Climate-related health risks
Policy result area: Health supplies and logistics	- Pharmacy/chemical stores, traditional medicine producers, improved supplies of vaccines, drugs, etc.		Climate-related health risks
Policy result area: Health financing	Health insurance, subsidies on medicines		Climate-related health risks
Water			
Focus area 1: Integrated water resources management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration between GWC, WRC, community water, and sanitation agency and NGOs to construct dams/dugouts, boreholes, wells - Rehabilitation of dams started 	Individuals dig wells by homes and on riverbeds	Floods
Focus area 6: CVC	Buffer zone policy formulated	Some individuals in urban towns harvest rain water for domestic use	Floods Droughts Dry spells

Table 2 continued

Sector	Evidence of policy actions implantation	Autonomous adaptive actions	Can enhance adaptation to
Housing			
Action area 8: Urban safety and security	Flood-prone areas identified		Floods
Action area 10: Climate change adaptation and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitisation on the media, NGOs educate farmers- towns have planning schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of local building materials to control room temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floods Droughts Dry spells High temperatures
The NCCP			
Programme: Develop climate resilient infrastructures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ambulances service available, use of schools and other public places are temporary shelters - Water points constructed at safe places - Gravelling of feeder roads, construction of bridges - Use of mobile vans to sound warnings, radio/TV announcements 		All climatic hazards
Programme: Early warning mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GMet is densifying its weather observatories with modern equipment - Telecommunication services available in almost all communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community announcements, peer to peer communication (i.e., announcement by word of mouth) 	All climatic hazards
Programme: Public education and adaptation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGOs and other institutions educate people on climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use mobile phones 	All climatic hazards
Programme: Rapid response and disaster management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGOs and other institutions educate people on climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radio/TV education programmes - Relatives act as first responders, rescue, treat or send the sick/injured to hospital NADMO and other institutions are very slow 	All climatic hazards

Source: Authors' own construct

Table 3 Barriers to adaptation to climatic hazards in the study area

Barriers	Components	Sector affected
Natural hazards	Dry spells, droughts, high temperatures, heavy rainfall events, flooding	All sectors
Financial	Insufficient budgetary support, poverty, lack of credit, delayed release of funds for projects	All sectors
Cultural	Belief system, taste for traditional food crops, land management practices	Agriculture, health
Political	Political promises and interference, corruption, inadequate institutional capacity	All sectors
Infrastructure	Limited irrigation facilities, inadequate health facilities, poor roads	All sectors
Social	Limited access to land, insecure land tenure system, limited know-how, illiteracy, conflicts	Agriculture, health
Technological	Lack of agricultural inputs, lack of storage/processing facilities, inadequate early warning system, uncertainties in weather	Agriculture, housing, health,

Source: Authors' own construct

Kumpalgoga noted: "I usually dig a shallow well in the riverbed during the dry season to draw water for my crops". All respondents indicated that maize is now the major crop because the new varieties withstand the drought and heat. In relation to water provision and use, all participants in the surveyed towns/villages, except Pwalugu where it is difficult to sink a borehole, indicated there is at least one borehole and/or well that has been constructed by CWSA or an NGO. Most of these water points are fitted with receptacles to collect waste water for animals.

The health sector policy actions largely addressed the general well-being of the people and thus respond to CVC-related health issues. All respondents observed that access to health care has improved greatly due to an increase in health facilities over time and the introduction of mobile clinics and the health insurance scheme. Interviews with health workers supported this, as evidenced by a statement from a Community Health Nurse in charge of one of the Community-based Health Planning Services (CHPS) compounds in Talensi district: "Since I came here, I have managed a lot of minor ailments that could have resulted in severe Cerebrospinal Meningitis (CSM) and malaria cases. In fact, I can say that there is improvement in the health status of the people in my catchment area". Before the introduction of the CHPS, the people in these communities had to walk at least 5 km to the nearest health facility. According to this nurse, the people hitherto relied on self-medication using herbs or drugs (sometimes expired) bought from unprofessional vendors who came to the communities and only reported to a health facility when the case was out of control.

With regard to the housing policy, very little was seen on the ground as houses continued to be built in flood-prone areas. This can be deduced from the sentiments of five participants in the FGD in Navrongo. These participants live in a valley and explained how they now witness more frequent and severe flooding in the area because water courses have been built on. Similar views were expressed in the IDIs in Bolgatanga and Bawku with people living in or

near valleys. According to these people, they still live there because of lower rent and floods last a few hours. Early warning signals from Agriculture Extension Agents, information service vans, and radio were reported to help a lot as people are able to put some safety measures in place to reduce impacts. Family members or neighbours were found to serve as first responders following occurrence of a hazard, particularly in rural communities where aid in terms of food and temporary accommodation for flood victims is urgently/desperately needed. In an IDI with an old lady in Bongo, a victim of rainstorm, she said "I was nearly killed when my room collapsed on me but for the timely intervention of my senior husband's son who rescued me. He accommodated me until my room was reconstructed".

Barriers to Local-Level Adaptation

We found also that the policies and local actions faced challenges. This section presents the challenges to policy implementation, drawing on and extending the types of barriers identified by Antwi-Agyei et al. (2014). First, the climate hazards themselves are considered as they affect all sectors and hinder adaptation to CVC. After that, the analysis is presented sector by sector as summarised in Table 3.

In FGDs and IDIs, everybody saw aridity (dry spells/drought and high temperatures) as a major challenge. These events lead to poor crop growth and yield, affect water availability for agricultural and domestic activities, and increasing illnesses. Flooding often destroyed household properties, and washed away or submerged crops. Injuries resulting from collapsed structures as well as increasing malaria were reported. Both dry and wet events were reported by officials to pose challenges to poverty alleviation efforts, food security, and increased malnutrition and place financial and logistical burdens on the health sector.

Second, according to officials, insufficient budgetary support and delays in release of funds stalled the implementation of most actions in the policies. Overlapping actions in the sectoral policies were also seen as barriers.

Officials stated that in most cases, overlaps led to duplication or non-implementation of interventions. Although the NCCP tried to address this by assigning actions to sectors and institutions, lack of coordination remained problematic. One official, who has read the NCCP, advised that NCCP implementers should constantly engage the other sector ministries, else it will be seen as a policy from another ministry and actions will not be budgeted for. In Navrongo, Tempene, Kubore, and Kumpalgoga participants of both FGDs and IDIs (especially farmers, traders, and food processors) complained of lack of markets and credit facilities. A young farmer in Tempene said: “I do not have money to buy a watering can, so I sprinkle using a bucket and calabash and that wastes a lot of water, my energy and time”. Various other social, cultural, technological, and political barriers were also noted (Table 3). For example, an old farmer in Nangodi said: “I cannot stop farming early millet completely because before harvest, I have to call my ancestors to come and taste the food before I eat. This cannot be done with maize because my ancestors will consider it strange food”. However, we found that the adoption of new varieties and gardening/dry season farming is faster and more widespread among the young and educated because >70% of all respondents below 35 years of age had some form of education and embraced the new technologies.

Discussion

Our analysis indicates that across all sectors, some policy actions have been implemented or initiated and have been embraced by the people. There are also local adaptations taking place, some of which are supported by policy. Some policy actions have achieved successes because they overlap with local practices. Whereas local adaptations have been reactive to climate hazards in combination with other pressures people face, policy actions have been largely concerned with the broader development framework, framed around the MDGs and now the SDGs. For example, people have been practicing crop/livelihood diversification. This is found to serve as a buffer to shocks and stresses from climatic hazards (Mkwambisi 2009), but from a policy perspective such adaptations target multiple MDGs and SDGs. The successes chalked by this particular intervention reinforce Schipper’s (2007) statement that adaptation and sustainable development have to take place simultaneously in order to achieve broader developmental goals. This is starting to be recognised in the growing literature on climate compatible development, where development is pursued together with adaptation and mitigation (see Suckall et al. 2014). This recognition is further strengthened by suggestions that the policy setting in which adaptive decisions are

taken need to be considered in order to avert them constraining adaptation (see Urwin and Jordan 2008). The European Union took a key step to integrate adaptation to climate change into all relevant policies about a decade ago (EU 2006). Such steps remain critical in Africa.

Sectoral policies in our analysis were often developed without reference to other sector policies with similar agendas. This results in interactions between adaptive responses that may undermine some policy actions (Adger et al. 2005). Lack of policy coherence could concentrate projects in certain areas and duplicate results while demanding extra funding, putting a double strain on limited national resources. Another danger is that actions may not be implemented because institutions may think that others may carry out that action. Some of these challenges have also been found to affect adaptation in southern Africa (Stringer et al. 2009) and constitute adverse or negative interactions between policies at the local level (Willows and Connell 2003; Oberthür and Gehring 2006). Despite these problems, policies strive to increase productivity and improve human welfare while maintaining the savannah ecosystem’s integrity. This kind of interaction could be analogous to what Oberthür and Gehring (2006) term synergy or enhanced adaptation.

Most of the policies we analysed took a top-down approach, being formulated at the national level without the involvement of the actors. They were then brought to the local level for implementation. The evidence of this approach from the interviews was the omission of good practices by local actors that could be reinforced by policy if broader consultation or involvement of most stakeholders had taken place. Farmers take a more holistic approach towards adaptation, evaluating and responding to the range of pressures that affect their livelihoods and well-being. This is noted as a key difference between the dominant sector approach of adaptation within policy compared with reality on the ground. We observed that policy actions that supported or stimulated local practices were quickly adopted locally. For example, increasingly, people are using groundwater extracted largely from wells and riverbeds to irrigate their crops (Yiran 2014), an irrigation action stimulated by the agricultural policy. UNECA (2011) has observed that there is abundant groundwater distribution (which is resilient to climate variations) across SSA and therefore tapping it can enhance climate change adaptation. The guinea fowl (*Numida meleagris galeatus*), a drought resistant bird, which has been part of the agricultural system has the potential to increase productivity and income (Teye and Adam 2000; Gono et al. 2013) if given special policy focus. Our FGD participants identified death of keets due to excessive heat and predators and hatching of eggs as major barriers to guinea fowl production, similar to observations by Teye and Adam (2000). However, some farmers have

adopted good practices where keets are kept under the shade of trees with the ground watered to keep the temperature cooler. Policy could help to upscale and roll out such practices for wider beneficial effect.

Another key finding is that even though Ghana has ratified most of the climate change agreements, adaptation is yet to be clearly integrated into most sector policies. This, Urwin and Jordan (2008) revealed, is a result of the top-down approach to policy implementation. Insufficient or lack of consultation with the local people may lead to a lack of local acceptance of some actions, especially due to cultural reasons and/or difficulty in implementing them. For example, maize cultivars were initially rejected because maize was not considered “proper food” for dinner and its flour is not used for sacrifices (Yiran 2014). Amankwah et al. (2012) attributed the unviability of commercialisation of small ruminant production in northern Ghana to cultural value systems. Consultation with people could help to identify ways around these cultural barriers.

The NCCP, which took a much broader consultative and more bottom-up approach in its design, has most of these sectors, particularly agriculture, water and health, as focus areas. However, its implementation may be challenged because of bureaucratic bottlenecks and lack of political will. None of the political parties explicitly include adaptation to CVC in their campaign pledges and therefore concentrate on fulfilling those pledges other than adaptation. However, Sova et al. (2014) noted that building the capacity of political parties to include climate adaptation strategies into their manifestos could put the development agenda of the country on a good trajectory. It is worth noting that some of the pledges in the manifestos may indirectly lead to adaptation, but adaptation has to be given equal priority as CVC affects major sectors that support the livelihoods of the people. With the exception of the NCCP, all the other policies did not have timelines for action or budgets, neither did they identify sources of funding for their policy actions. One of the reasons for the lack of timelines is that the actions were statements of intent that were not clearly expressed. These vague actions together with the insufficient budgetary support contributed largely to delays, which according to Stringer et al. (2010), can increase the cost of implementation of interventions and hence increase the costs of adaptation.

Whereas policies focus largely on the development agenda, people are adapting to current climate change challenges. Studies show that the last three decades (1983–2012) have been the warmest in the last 1400 years (IPCC 2014). This period has recorded very high temperatures and uneven distribution of rainfall in the savanna ecosystem of Ghana leading to frequent occurrence of extreme events such as floods, high temperatures, dry spells/droughts, heavy rainfall, and windstorms (Yiran and

Stringer 2016). The onset, cessation, and cumulated rainfall of the season have also been affected. Our analysis shows that lack of synergy between policy and local action has resulted in ineffective adaptation and the failure of some policy actions to achieve their targets. This calls for strengthening of policy by integrating good local adaptive practices and paying more attention to climatic issues to enhance future adaptations. Research shows that support to local-level adaptation is best achieved by starting with existing local adaptive capacity, and incorporating and building upon present coping strategies and norms, including indigenous practices (Dixon et al. 2014; Bermann et al. 2012). An effective way to ensure that local practices and adaptation to climatic hazards are taken on board in policy development is through the participation of all stakeholders (Stringer et al. 2009). Participatory approaches will also increase awareness of the people of the impacts of climatic hazards and the implications of the use of hazard-prone areas (Yiran et al. 2012). As noted by Urwin and Jordan (2008), it is vital to use both approaches, top-down and bottom-up, in the policy formulation-implementation chain.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We set out to examine current policy objectives, implementation, as well as local adaptations. We found that sector policies are complementary, aimed towards achieving the MDGs and now the SDGs, though with some overlaps and duplication. Some policy actions that were not formulated with adaptation in mind were found to be very relevant for adaptation to climatic hazards. Some policy actions and local practices reinforce each other, though many local concerns and good practices are not taken advantage of and upscaled or outscaled through policy. This is largely explained by the top-down approach to policy development. Thus, the link between policy and local adaptation needs further consideration. Several barriers to the implementation of the policies for adaptation to climatic hazards were noted. As we transition towards the SDGs, adaptation to climate change demands a concerted effort. For policies to achieve their targets and promote sustainable development in the context of climate hazards, they should explicitly consider adaptation and take a participatory approach in their development in order for decision makers to work towards reducing the barriers.

Specifically, the agriculture sector policy should embrace good local practices, refocus to be climate smart, and incorporate continuous education/sensitisation of farmers. Also, irrigation and other rainwater harvesting techniques should be adopted while further research into the sustainability of groundwater for sprinkler irrigation needs to be

explored. The health sector policy needs to be implemented without delay, especially those aspects aiming to increase access and reduce cost of healthcare for the poor. We recommend payment of premiums by instalment and increased focus on health educational campaigns. Enforcing legislation, especially regarding land use and building codes, and public sensitisation, will reduce exposure to some hazards and enhance adaptation, particularly linked to the housing sector. We further recommend that an adaptation desk be set up to oversee to implementation of the NCCP and other relevant policy actions by the sector ministries.

Acknowledgements DR. Gerald A.B. Yiran was sponsored by Commonwealth Scholarship and Periperi-U (USAID) Prof. L.C. Stringer was supported by the ESRC Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy, award ES/K006576/.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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