

OCTOBER 2012

OVERVIEW

IIED Climate Change Group

Project name:

Parliamentary strengthening on climate change – Ghana

Project leader:

Corinne Schoch

Time frame:

February – July 2012

Cost:

Approximately £60,000

Objective:

To support Ghana's parliament in building its awareness around climate change decision making; and to strengthen the capacity of both members of parliament and parliamentary services to enable more effective action on climate change by the Legislature of Ghana.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Informed and motivated legislators can facilitate 'domestication' of global climate policies into national frameworks. In Ghana, following the publication of a discussion document in 2010 intended to eventually become the overarching national climate policy, the government asked IIED for help in building awareness of climate issues among parliamentarians. Funded by DFID Ghana and working with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, we assessed the knowledge of MPs but also explored the roles of clerks, researchers and librarians in supporting climate policy. In a workshop, Ghanaian members of parliament (MPs) and staff proposed a new dedicated committee for climate change to better integrate climate concerns across all policy areas.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Ghana is already seeing impacts of climate change, and the government must formulate a comprehensive and effective policy response. Parliamentarians are ideally placed to make this happen, but they lack key knowledge. Capacity building will enable MPs to better examine the executive's action on climate change, as well as ensuring the issue is

Helping national legislators take on global climate change

In countries like Ghana, MPs – and their staff – could translate between local, national and global issues.

Among the events around the June Rio+20 conference was one that seemed to remix levels of governance: an international assembly of national parliamentarians. More than 300 parliamentary leaders and senior legislators from 86 countries met at the 1st World Summit of Legislators. "You are ... a link between the global and local," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the group, "bringing local concerns into the global arena, and translating global standards into national action."

Linking local to global is especially crucial for tackling climate change – because any country's greenhouse gas emissions affect the whole planet, and because strategies for slowing those emissions and adapting to their impacts must first be proven locally and nationally. The 'domestication' of climate change into national legislation may be a prerequisite to international action. As more countries build climate policy at home – such as Mexico, South Korea, and soon China – globalised agreements could come within reach.

Ghana is one of many developing countries with a national climate policy framework currently making its way through the government. Having recently climbed from low to lower-middle income, Ghana now sees its ambitions threatened by climate

impacts. At the request of the Ghanaian Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, IIED set out to assess how parliamentarians there could contribute to an effective climate change response.

Making it mainstream

In six months of visits, interviews and desk research, we learnt that although Ghana has institutions in place for effective climate action, there is little evidence of successful mainstreaming of the issue. In the Executive, the National Climate Change Committee is tasked with developing an umbrella climate policy, but has made little progress in harmonising relevant activities across the country.

In parliament, climate issues are handled by the often overworked Committee on Environment, Science and Technology. For other parliamentary committees affected by this cross-cutting threat, climate change has not become a central, unifying focus. And for many individual members of parliament (MPs), frequent floods and droughts are already evident in their districts, but less clear are the rising long-term dangers and the context of global policy.

A delegation of Ghanaian MPs and staff, meeting at a workshop hosted by IIED in London, recognised this fragmentation. To catalyse mainstreaming of climate policy, they envisioned a new

integrated across policy areas. As we found, however, MPs are not the only players; building the capacity of parliamentary services is equally important. These networks of personnel outlast political cycles and can sustain progress on climate policy after MPs move on. Clerks act as informal managers of committees and help drive forward agendas, as well as researching particular issues for committee business. The role of all stakeholders within parliament must be taken into account, not only to integrate climate issues across all committees, but also to build capacity that lasts over the long term.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- Ghana's institutions for forming climate policy remain fragmented. Even though bodies such as the National Climate Change Committee are designed to harmonise activities, the integration of climate change across parliament is patchy at best.
- MPs and parliamentary leadership are key to incorporating climate concerns throughout parliament, but so too are clerks, researchers and library staff. For new knowledge to last, capacity-building efforts must engage staff who steward information through election cycles.
- Capacity-building programmes should also coordinate civil society groups for efficiency, consistency and local leadership.
- The timeline of capacity-building programmes must match parliament's pace: to enable consummate mainstreaming and build staying power requires at least two years, ideally spanning parliamentary cycles.

PARTNERS' VIEW

DFID is committed to national ownership, supporting political governance and development effectiveness as a core part of our approach. That includes support to Ghana's own national climate change policy framework.

Daniel Graymore
Deputy Head of DFID Ghana

IIED CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP

Working in collaboration with partner organisations and individuals in developing countries, the Climate Change Group has been leading the field on adaptation to climate change issues.



Photo: Jonathan Ernst/World Bank

Building the capacity of MPs as well as parliamentary clerks, researchers and library staff is key to incorporating climate concerns throughout Ghana's parliament.

parliamentary institution — a dedicated climate change committee staffed by chairpersons and ranking members of all other committees in parliament. In the next phases of the Ghana project, IIED and partner organisations plan to prepare briefings on climate issues for incoming MPs after elections in December, and then to help move forward the proposed climate committee and coordination on climate change by Ghana's parliament.

Guardians of knowledge

Exploring the parliament's inner workings, we realised that MPs are not the only key players in this process. Whereas most MPs we interviewed had been in parliament for just four years, the tenure of many parliamentary clerks, researchers and library staff spanned multiple parliamentary cycles. These staff can follow the long trajectories of complex programmes. They preserve knowledge through election cycles by briefing new MPs, and spread knowledge by moving between committees over the years. Clerks and researchers not only pool information, but sift it and assess its credibility to provide impartial advice. Clerks also help set committees' agendas, so they can push specific needs or revive marginalised issues.

The clerks of the Food and Agriculture Committee and the Committee on Environment, Science and Technology are sending the proposal for a dedicated climate committee to parliamentary leaders; these clerks can ensure it does not lose traction during post-election reshuffling. Library staff we spoke with, who proactively communicate news to MPs daily, want to know they are reading the right reports on climate change. Likewise, well-informed researchers can

anticipate MPs' needs for climate-related briefings.

Our capacity-building project has to serve all these actors. We also must coordinate across organisations to avoid replicating work — or handing down external advice from a London office. Without a national framework for climate action, Ghana is filled with disparate civil society initiatives. We used leads from interviews to track down related work by STAR-Ghana and the Parliamentary Centre in Canada. Combining efforts, we can present a broader, more consistent programme driven by Ghanaian voices.

A final key ingredient is time. MPs and clerks agree it will take two to four years to move climate change to centre stage in Ghana's parliament. Setting up a new committee and defining its mandate and structure will require time. Then comes the real work: assessing how the committee interacts with other bodies, how MPs engage with the government and hold it to account, how they connect global climate negotiations with local and national concerns, and how they can push forward Ghana's climate legislation.

Efforts around the world to help legislators take on climate change will need similar elements. With coordinated support from civil society, timed to match parliamentary pace and engaging the staff who steward knowledge, parliaments can build the capability to link local and global.

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