



African Climate Reality Project

**Towards an ambitious and sustainable climate future for Ghana:
African Climate Reality Leaders' position statement on
Ghana's Nationally Determined Contributions.**



Background:

Ghana's current [Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\)](#) represents a critical component of the country's strategy to combat climate change. As a [signatory to the Paris Agreement](#), Ghana is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing resilience to the impacts of climate change. As Ghana prepares to submit its next NDC, it is crucial to address existing gaps and align the commitments with the latest scientific findings and best practices.

Ghana's current [NDC](#) outlines a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 64 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent by 2030. This target includes both unconditional contributions that Ghana can achieve independently and conditional contributions contingent on international support. To achieve the targets set out in the current [NDC](#), Ghana has developed 19 policy actions in 10 priority areas for both mitigation and adaptation, which include social inclusion, early warnings and disaster risk management, resilience building, food and landscape restoration, smart communities, sustainable mobility, sustainable energy transition, and responsible production. The estimated cost of NDC implementation [ranges from USD 9.3 billion to USD 15.5 billion](#).

This position statement examines the key elements of the current [NDC](#) under five focus areas namely; health, agriculture, energy, transport and nature based solutions. The statement also goes on to identify gaps and critiques of the [NDC](#) while offering recommendations for the updated Ghana NDC due in February 2025. These recommendations are focused on enhancing the country's climate ambition through the inclusion of women and young people.



Outlined in the current [NDC](#), these are some of the key commitments made across the five focus areas:

1. Agriculture

The [NDC](#) emphasises and promotes Climate-Smart Agricultural practices to boost productivity while reducing emissions. It aims for 50% of farmers to adopt these practices, contributing to both mitigation and adaptation efforts.

2. Energy

In terms of energy production, the NDC makes mention of renewable energy and sets a goal of increasing the share of renewable energy in the national energy mix to 10% by 2030. In addition, Ghana seeks to improve energy efficiency across all sectors of the economy, aiming for a 15% reduction in energy consumption by 2030 through measures such as energy audits and the promotion of energy-efficient appliances. It also promotes the introduction of waste-energy projects and improved waste management practices to reduce methane emissions.

3. Transportation

The NDC aims to achieve a 20% increase in public transportation usage by 2030, transitioning 50% of the vehicle fleet to electric vehicles (EVs), and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector by 30% through improved fuel efficiency and the promotion of non-motorized transport options, such as cycling and walking.

4. Nature-Based Solutions

In terms of forestry and land usage, the NDC proposes an increase of forest cover through reforestation and afforestation programs, aiming to restore 1.1 million hectares of degraded forests by 2030, while promoting sustainable land management practices across 2 million hectares.

5. Health

As climate change has an impact on the spreading of pathogens and diseases, the NDC highlights the need to strengthen the resilience of health systems to climate impacts by 2030, aiming for a 20% reduction in climate-related diseases, such as malaria, through integrated vector management. In addition, improving access to clean water and sanitation for 10 million people, upgrading water supply systems in climate-vulnerable areas, and reducing waterborne diseases by 30% through enhanced sanitation and hygiene practices are key priorities.



Strengths:

We commend the government of Ghana on the following:

- **Aligned Goals:** Ghana's NDC is aligned with the country's broader development objectives, such as the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (CPESDP). The integration of climate action with national development plans is a significant strength, ensuring that climate policies are not isolated from economic growth strategies.
- **Focus on Adaptation:** Given Ghana's vulnerability to climate impacts and limited contribution to the climate crisis, the NDC's strong emphasis on adaptation in agriculture, water, and health, is critical.
- **Gender:** The development of Ghana's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) demonstrates a comprehensive approach by integrating the perspectives of gender minorities, women, local people, and other vulnerable groups. This commitment is reflected in the establishment of institutional mechanisms aimed at capacity-building on gender and climate change, thereby enhancing effective planning and implementation. The NDC also prioritises the promotion of livelihood opportunities with a particular focus on women and youth, thereby advancing social inclusion and climate justice.



Gaps:

These are some of the gaps we've identified in the Ghana NDC document:

- **Insufficient Literacy and Capacity Building Threaten Climate Adaptation and Mitigation:** The NDC lacks awareness and educational building plans on the adaptation and mitigation strategies. This is a significant challenge as it limits implementation on the ground. Vulnerable communities are at significant risk of being unable to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change due to a lack of emphasis on literacy and capacity building by policymakers.

An example of how the lack of awareness can hinder implementation is the “sustainable charcoal” entrepreneurship programme that the current NDC committed to. This project was supposed to promote the creation of 1200 jobs, by encouraging the production of briquettes made from agricultural waste. However, the project failed to deliver a positive outcome which can be attributed to a number of factors, one the lack of knowledge around the process. While there is a concern with biofuels related to inappropriate and unsustainable land use together with unintended health risks and emissions, this particular process which exclusively makes use of existing agricultural waste is a necessary alternative to traditional black charcoal and gas cooking at the household level. [Less than 50% of people in Ghana have access to electric stoves](#) in their homes, and the majority of households rely on black charcoal and firewood for cooking, which releases harmful smoke that causes health risks over the long term. The NDC lacks a consolidated plan for outreach across the various sectors involved, which is essential for effectively educating communities about the health risks associated with black charcoal briquettes as an alternative. It is important that each sector responsible for the five focused areas develops its own outreach and community engagement strategies to ensure that community members are informed about the necessary skills and knowledge for safe household usage

Without targeted education and capacity-building initiatives that are conducted in traditionally underserved communities and in various local languages, these vulnerable groups remain at a disadvantage, unable to capitalise on opportunities for sustainable development and resilience. The lack of focus on literacy and skill development in policy frameworks exacerbates their vulnerability to climate impacts and limits implementation capacity.

- **Ignoring local knowledge practices and not engaging with vulnerable communities** prioritises western solutions that are not appropriate for the African context. This is particularly true for the NDC in relation to agriculture and land use. The mention of Climate Smart Agriculture is concerning as the concept has come under scrutiny over the last few years by climate justice groups. Some of the criticisms include the lack of clear criteria on what is or is not Climate Smart Agriculture, the lack of social and environmental safeguards, and the undermining of farmer voices and local knowledge. It is also noted that Climate Smart Agriculture is often used by agribusiness corporations to greenwash their practices.



In a country where small scale farmers and growers are the backbone of the food system, it is concerning that the NDC makes little mention of traditional agricultural practices which can enhance resilience and productivity, especially in rural areas where modern technologies are inaccessible. Farmers using indigenous growing methods, which are often better suited and more adaptive to changing climate conditions, frequently lack access to credit, insurance, and markets. However, the NDC fails to address this challenge. Despite the crucial role they play in food production, these farmers are often excluded from key discussions and decision-making processes related to agricultural support and development.

The NDCs highlight nature-based solutions as a means for promoting eco-tourism and enhancing biodiversity through forest conservation and landscape restoration. However, the target to restore 1.1 million hectares of degraded forests does not sufficiently emphasise the role of local communities in forest management and restoration. Forests are intricate systems, and local communities often use forests sustainably in their livelihoods. Without active involvement of these communities who are directly impacted by and possess valuable knowledge about the local ecosystems, the sustainability of forest restoration and conservation projects is at risk.

In addition, the NDC prioritises reforestation and afforestation efforts to restore degraded forests, but it does not adequately emphasise the need to conserve biodiversity in relation to those forests. While planting trees is an important step, it is not enough to protect the diverse ecosystems that exist within these landscapes. A more comprehensive approach is needed; one that integrates landscape management and prioritises the preservation of biodiversity hotspots and critical habitats, which are home to a wide range of species. This would help maintain ecological balance, prevent the loss of biodiversity, and ensure that restoration efforts contribute to both climate resilience and the protection of vital natural resources.

- **Solutions that are not people centred but are aimed at market and industry needs** will not deliver justice outcomes and move people out of challenging socioeconomic circumstances. Given that agriculture is a focus area of the NDC, it is concerning that it does not mention the need for skills transfer and the development of the sector. Limited access to training and development opportunities prevents young farmers from adopting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing efficiency.

Another example of a market based solution is the introduction and planned expansion of Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure in Ghana. In a country where public transport infrastructure needs improvement, and the need for efficient mobility is increasing, the inclusion of EVs in the NDC does not address the needs of people. There is a lack of charging stations, with existing infrastructure primarily concentrated and limited in urban areas. In addition, these stations are often inaccessible to persons with disabilities. This leaves vulnerable groups and those living in rural areas without adequate access to EV infrastructure even if access to the actual vehicles is increased; this limits broader adoption and equitable benefits. Given the current rollout, and the

- devastating impacts of climate change that Ghana is already facing such as intense heat waves, flooding, and coastal erosion, investments in EVs will only serve the elite without improving the transport sector to mitigate emissions or provide better access. While there may be benefits to EVs, given the current immediate needs, it does not seem like an appropriate use of capacity and financing.



- **Plans that take a one sector approach** will not lead to holistic and meaningful implementation. A holistic approach to climate action is essential because it allows for implementation to be lasting, integrated in the process and is supported by a diversity of stakeholders. Plans that are once off or that prioritise one sector are not effective. For example, The Green Ghana initiative focuses on tree planting which aims to preserve vegetation and serve as an adaptation measure against the increasing frequency of extreme weather events in urban areas. However, the initiative mainly focuses on the day of planting without adequate planning or support, and failing to provide proper monitoring or tracking of the seedlings' growth and survival. These initiatives come across as tick box exercises with no real intention to contribute to climate action. Despite substantial government expenditure on the Green Ghana Initiative, there is no comprehensive follow-up to ensure long-term success and impact. . This lack of accountability also hinders the ability to track progress and measure success.

The NDC has several ambitious ideas around land restoration but fails to address the challenge of insecure land tenure and the encroachment of mining activities on agricultural land, which presents significant challenges for farmers in Ghana. The current traditional land tenure system creates uncertainty which discourages farmers from investing in long-term improvements. While the government may be cautious about intervening in cultural practices, there is a lack of strategy to address these issues and ensure land security for farmers, especially those who are young and women, who are particularly vulnerable to these challenges.

- **Without adequate financial planning**, the NDC will not be implemented effectively. Integral to climate action is climate finance which enables ambitious and long lasting action. While we recognise that climate finance is a political matter and African countries must demand accessible grant financing from the Global North for historical inequalities, the country NDC cannot ignore that national financial planning is still necessary. The NDC lacks specific timelines and details on how the government will mobilise funding or the potential role of development finance institutions in supporting its funding.



As we look to the next round of NDC submissions between now and February 2025, and as the world reaches half way through the decisive decade for climate action, we call for a more ambitious, locally led, and sustainable NDC for Ghana. We recommend that the government look into the following:

Provide targeted skills development programmes to young people and women already engaged in promoting local solutions, including briquette production, agroecology, and agro-processing. This support should be an established consortium for youth and women in the green jobs sector, where skills can be learnt and honed in a diversity of green jobs. This intervention has the potential to address the unemployment challenge and contribute to climate action. This kind of learning can facilitate capacity building and foster collaboration and innovation. This consortium would help share knowledge from different knowledge systems, share best practices, and create networking opportunities to enable entrepreneurs to better meet the demand for local adaptation methods. This will have a ripple effect, enabling young people to contribute to various sectors, such as the circular economy and waste management through briquette production, or the food system through agroecology and agro-processing. These targeted development programmes should also be extended to policy spaces, where young people and women are capacitated to engage with policy changes, and are integral to the policy decision.

Adopt traditional agricultural practices, with a focus on agroecology, as an adaptation method in the NDC to enhance resilience and encourage diversity in the food system. Unlike Climate Smart Agriculture, agroecology promotes sustainable food systems by integrating ecological principles and traditional knowledge. This approach supports biodiversity, eliminates dependency on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), and places value on local farmers to ensure a more equitable and sustainable agricultural sector in Ghana. This method of food production works with nature rather than against it minimising emissions, using water responsibly, and integrating agricultural waste back into the system. Building agroecology tackles hunger challenges and creates systems that can readily adapt to a changing climate.

Expand agricultural extension services to ensure they reach more smallholder farmers, particularly those in remote areas. These services involve capacity building, access to information on soil quality and water management, financial support and agricultural insurances. These financial tools would enable farmers to invest in sustainable farming practices, access markets, and build resilience against climate impacts. These tools can also ensure their inclusion in key agricultural support and development discussions.

Prioritise the protection and restoration of critical ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, and mangroves, which are essential for biodiversity and provide crucial ecosystem services. These efforts should be supported by specific conservation targets and legally binding commitments. Effective and lasting restoration requires community-led approaches that leverage local knowledge, provide economic benefits, and foster a sense of ownership and stewardship of the land. Therefore, for these nature-based solutions to be truly effective, the NDC needs to place greater emphasis on community engagement and participatory forest management strategies.



Develop detailed monitoring and evaluation models: It is crucial to explicitly outline the limitations, assumptions, and methodological approaches that will be used to account for the implementation of the NDC. This will enable the government to track success and failure of NDC implementation. These methods should also enable civil society and community oversight where local communities are involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of NDC projects.

The government should partner with Climate Reality Leaders, climate activists, and NGOs to promote awareness of sustainable systemic alternatives. These stakeholders have relationships with communities and experience in implementing local projects. Leveraging these partnerships, in local languages and culturally relevant communication methods can ensure that projects associated with the NDC are effective, long lasting, and relevant to the local communities' experience.



With the updated NDC due in February 2025, it is crucial to assess the last round of the NDC through a critical lens, especially against the backdrop of a rapidly changing climate and evolving policy landscape. Internationally, the NDCs must be ambitious, fit for purpose, and context-specific. Moreover, procedural justice must be at the heart of this process, ensuring that all stakeholders, especially affected communities, have a voice in shaping these commitments. By embedding principles of procedural justice and people-centred solutions into our approach for climate action, we can transform our climate commitments from just statements into impactful actions that truly benefit all people and secure our collective future. The stakes have never been higher, and the opportunity for profound, equitable change has never been greater. People-centred solutions are essential to make Ghana's NDCs not just a tick-box exercise but a sustainable and transformative framework for real change.

