

Gendered impacts of climate change in agricultural communities in Northern Ghana: An intersectional perspective

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SUPPORTING PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA



- Climate change adaptation in agriculture often concentrates on micro-level, technological interventions
- Social, cultural, economic and political dimensions neglected, esp. gender issues:
 - gendered roles in farming
 - differentiated access to and control over resources
 - differentiated impacts
 - intersectional aspects
- Social dynamics of agricultural systems and technological change influenced by intersectionality → affects development outcomes (Tavenner et al. 2022).

Background

Research Questions

- What are the differentiated impacts of climate change on agricultural communities from a gender and intersectional perspective?
- How do gender differences mediate people's ability to participate in and benefit from innovations to address climate change?



We draw on discourses of intersectionality to highlight how gender interacts with other axes of social differentiation, such as age, asset base, marital status, ethnic identities, etc. and how this influences women's experiences of the impact of climate change.

Methodology



- Northern Ghana, Bunglung community, nearby COINS /DeclaRe project sites
- Qualitative key person and in-depth interviews with 21 female farmers (married, single, widowed, indigenous, settlers) in 2024 and 3 extension and gender experts
- Thematic analysis: inductive (or data-driven) coding, theme development (Naeem et al., 2023)

Naeem et al. 2023: A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research. DOI: [10.1177/16094069231205789](https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789).

Results: Effects of climate change on agricultural communities in Northern Ghana

- Devastating impacts of CC on farms with delayed rain, insufficient quantity, resulting in poor yields
- 2024 being marked by a severe drought & flash floods
- Farming is perceived as a massive gamble:

“And if you are lucky you will get a good harvest”

- High temperatures – reduced ability to do farm work
- Changed rain patterns affect food security (hunger)
- CC increases expenditures on food as before, in lean season, early maturing beans could be sold on market to buy maize → lack of cash for household expenditures, school fees, etc.
- Climate change adds to increasing pressure on land from urbanization, local land grabbing, and declining soil fertility.



Results: Effects from a gendered & intersectional perspective

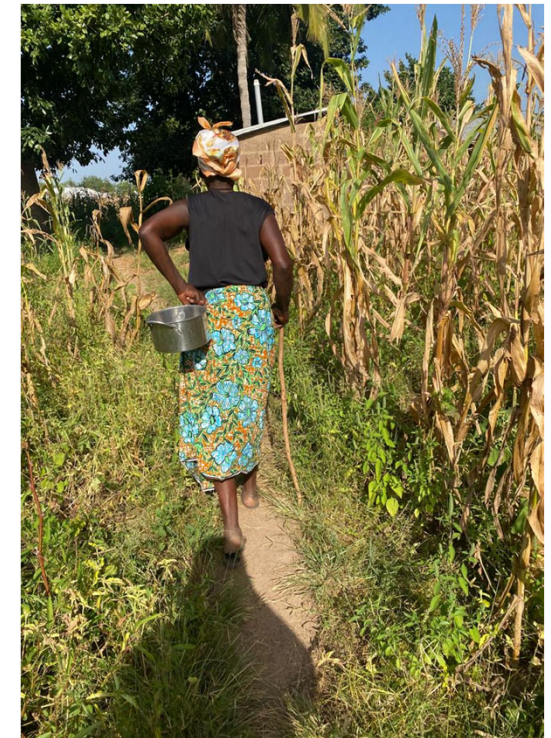
- Shea production decreases – hitting especially women but income was also use to support household needs (and food security)

“the women experience the hardship more because everything within our compounds revolve around us”

- Burden for food security unevenly distributed – it is not a household that runs out of food but women have to find means to provide whatever
- Mental stress for men as role of food provider affected
- The effects of climate change, especially drought, are even harsher for poor older women and widows, disabled as they can only rely to a limited degree on family safety nets

Results: Climate change effects and resource access

- Women's access to land and farming resources
 - Varies based on polygynous (equal distribution amongst wives needed) or monogamous households, age, widowhood
 - Varies between general land availability in communities, increasing land scarcity in many communities, varies between settlers,...
 - Varies between communities trained with gender-transformative approaches, e.g., the Gender Model Family
 - Access to land mainly via husband, father or male family members – possible in some cases also via chiefs



Conclusion and recommendations

- Climate change adds to increasing pressure on land and declining soil fertility → exacerbate gender disparities at different levels.
- Question for which smallholder type agricultural innovations really work (male, better off)? → Climate change adaptation need to be better adapted to heterogeneity within communities.
- Systematic inclusion of gender-transformative, social inclusive approaches in agricultural projects and policies is essential to change discriminatory norms
- Women's lived experiences of climate change impact intersect with various identity markers and contextual dynamics
- Need for sustainable income sources from off-farm activities, especially for women (intersectionality!), to buffer against unpredictable weather conditions



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