

FINDING THE MISSING PIECES

What is ASSAR?

Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR) is a research project being undertaken in the semi-arid regions of Africa and Asia. ASSAR examines the dynamics and drivers of vulnerability, and explores ways to enhance the resilience of people, local organisations and governments. ASSAR aims to promote climate adaptation policies and practices that are effective, widespread and sustainable.

How to get involved!

To make sure our work responds to your needs, we want to hear your voices! As the ASSAR RRP gets underway we will be looking for opportunities to interact with stakeholders to build stronger regional networks and to collaborate on adaptation planning and programming. If you would like to take part in our scenario planning events and workshops, or if you simply want to have a conversation with us and share your needs and knowledge, then please contact our team in Ghana (iess-assarto@staff.ug.edu.gh) and Mali (icrisatml@icrisatml.org).

What we know so far:

For West Africa, a Regional Diagnostic Study (RDS) carried out in Ghana and Mali found that:

- ◇ Climate change policy has to be driven by the reality on the ground.
- ◇ The successful coping strategies that local communities use to respond to climate change need to be given greater consideration.
- ◇ West Africa's dryland region has long and misleadingly been labeled as "the Sahel", perpetuating the image of a relatively homogeneous entity. In reality, there can be no single adaptation strategy for all circumstances; instead, varied and flexible strategies are necessary.
- ◇ To reduce vulnerability, agricultural intensification aimed at meeting increasing food demands will require sustainable natural resource management.
- ◇ Agricultural intensification produces winners and losers. It will be important to address possible inequitable development outcomes by fully examining the processes that increase food security, and taking into consideration how these processes affect different social groups as they work toward greater climate change adaptation.
- ◇ Key barriers and enablers to climate change adaptation centre on issues of development, gender and governance.

Key remaining gaps:

- ◇ How do climate change impacts in West Africa affect **different groups** of people (e.g., age, gender, livelihoods); in what ways, why, and how do these groups respond? How does the trend of increasing agricultural intensification intersect with these responses and what are the implications?
- ◇ What is the role of **governance** in decreasing vulnerabilities and enhancing adaptive capacities?
- ◇ What **ecosystem services** in West Africa contribute most to reducing vulnerabilities of local people and supporting adaptation, and how?
- ◇ How do people learn about climate change and adaptation, and how do they act on that **information** (if at all), and why?



How are different people in West Africa impacted by climate change in different ways and why, and how do they respond?



What is the role of governance in decreasing vulnerabilities and enhancing adaptive capacities?



What ecosystem services in West Africa are most connected with adaptation and how?



How do people learn about climate change and adaptation, and how do they act on that information and why?

How ASSAR is moving forward:

The next step for ASSAR in West Africa is the Regional Research Programme (RRP), which will consist of an in-depth field investigation of key barriers and enablers along with research into the key knowledge gaps highlighted above, examined in the contexts of climate change, climate variability and agricultural intensification. To ensure our work aligns with the needs and realities of people living and working in semi-arid West Africa, and to increase the chances that findings

and recommendations are taken up, we are working to build meaningful and long-lasting relationships with a wide spectrum of stakeholders. By guiding stakeholders through participatory scenario planning processes we aim to build a common understanding of current adaptation needs and past adaptation failings, while promoting the co-production of adaptation responses that can yield appropriate, tangible and lasting benefits. By using stakeholder mapping and

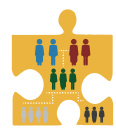
analysis to better understand the power dynamics of different stakeholder groups, by working with and alongside boundary organisations and the private sector, and by engaging in effective communication, capacity building and advocacy campaigns, we seek to inform and promote sustainable development pathways that have the best prospect for enhancing the wellbeing of the most vulnerable and/or marginalised in the coming decades.

Everyone has a role in supporting climate change adaptation!



Farmers

Farmers, with their knowledge of how to adapt to climate change impacts, are crucial for understanding current adaptation challenges and responses. This insight will contribute to the development of suitable, localised adaptation strategies.



Extension workers

Though the time and resources held by extension workers are stretched thin, their knowledge and networks are vital for developing and disseminating new and existing climate information and climate-smart technologies to local farmers.



Media

Radio stations and other media sources are highly important for relaying climate information to farmers, and for helping share stories of lessons learned about adaptation.



NGOs

NGOs have strong knowledge of and connections to local leaders and communities. These ties allow NGOs to help inform relevant and context-specific adaptation planning. In addition, NGOs can assist to implement the recommendations that ASSAR will develop.



Researchers/Academia

In addition to conducting targeted research and being repositories of key information, researchers and academic institutions hold strong networks across scales from local- to national-level stakeholders. Fostering these networks and strengthening transdisciplinary collaboration will help support effective adaptation.



Policy makers

Informed and engaged policy makers are crucial for developing policy and institutional frameworks that support their constituents' abilities to adapt to climate change.



Traditional authorities

Traditional authorities play essential enabling roles for fostering adaptation and increased communication on climate change within their communities and with other local and regional leaders. They are also important lobbyists and facilitate the dissemination of new adaptation strategies.



Private sector

Different private sector stakeholders play unique and important roles for fostering adaptation. For example, financial institutions can provide access to credit and finance that are needed to enhance production. Agro-dealers can provide farm inputs that are in high demand, thereby increasing markets and profits. Processors contribute by adding value to products and therefore acting as a driving force for opening new markets for farmers.

“This work was carried out under the Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions project (ASSAR). ASSAR is one of five research programmes funded under the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA), with financial support from the UK Government’s Department for International Development (DfID) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. The views expressed in this work are those of the creators and do not necessarily represent those of DfID and IDRC or its Board of Governors.”