

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND GROWTH IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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## The Priority

The recent trends of increasing global temperatures and incidences of extreme climate events in Africa—mainly droughts and floods—are likely to continue. These severe climate events demonstrate the level and depth of the impact that climate change has on African economies. African policymakers should prioritize climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies in the development agenda of 2014 and beyond in order to continue and sustain its current growth. Furthermore, despite the fact that Africa is the continent most affected by—and perhaps because it is also the smallest contributor to the man-made effects of—climate change, Africa’s voice in international climate change negotiations is very limited. To successfully minimize the effects of climate change, Africans must strategize in order to increase their voice in these negotiations.

## Why Is It Important?

In 2012, 70 percent of major global droughts occurred in Africa. Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Malawi, Angola, Chad and Ethiopia were particularly hit hard, and more than 16 mil-

lion people in those countries were affected (Emergency Events Database [EM-DAT] 2013). In the same year, floods claimed 363 lives in Nigeria (Andrew 2013) and 65 lives in Niger (BBC News 2012). In 2013, heavy rains continued with major flooding in Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique. The macroeconomic impact of these episodes of extreme drought and flooding is significant. For instance, climate-related shocks have reduced Mozambique’s GDP growth by more than 1 percent per year. In Zambia, rainfall variability will lower agricultural growth by 1 percent each year and cost the country \$4.3 billion in GDP over 10 years (ADBG 2013).

Climate change poses a significant and unique challenge to Africa because so much of its economy depends on a climate-sensitive natural resource base like rain-fed, subsistence agriculture. Dependence on such resources exposes the continent to the risks of reduction in agricultural production, municipal water supply for home use and sanitation services, industrial water use and hydroelectric power generation. Unfavorable changes in temperature and rainfall patterns also increase the risk of insect-borne

diseases, create conflict over water and grazing resources, and threaten the lives and property of citizens across the continent. Because of the challenges of climate change and variability, Africa appears ill prepared to adapt to or mitigate the powerful effects of climate change. With no adaptation strategies in place, the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) projects that, by the year 2020, 75 to 250 million people in Africa will be exposed to high water stress conditions with some countries experiencing up to a 50 percent reduction in yields from rain-fed agriculture.

Finally, Africans must play a more prominent role in the global governance of climate change issues. Africa's voice in international climate change negotiations has been very limited and the continent has struggled to influence global policies to tackle its particular challenges. For instance, in the annual Conference of Parties (COP) organized by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), African delegates are often marginalized, underrepresented, uncoordinated and ineffective in influencing policies favoring the continent (Anesu 2013). The implication is that African interests are not adequately taken into account. Moving into 2014 and beyond, effective African voices on matters of climate change are critically important.

### What Should Be Done in 2014

Four major policy areas can help make Africa climate-change resilient in 2014 and beyond.

The first is adaptation. Policymakers in Africa need to prioritize investment on research for the development of improved agronomic practices, agricultural enterprises and enterprise mixes that can thrive under moisture stress, and better water and soil conservation techniques. African governments should also invest more in irrigation facilities and upgrade the skills of native workforces and institutional capacities in climate forecasting, early warning and disaster management. Moreover, policies for developing new infrastructure such as roads, houses, canals and dams should include strategies for climate resilience in the planning and implementation stages.

The second policy area is mitigation. Mitigation in Africa can be achieved through many means. The major alternatives include reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) and promoting green energy. Local

and international financial sources should be tapped to assist with the reclamation of degraded lands, reforestation, afforestation and agro-forestry practices that can play the triple roles of providing adaptation, mitigation and income generation for the poor (Tannis and Henry 2012). Given the potential benefits of REDD+, policymakers should focus on tackling the political, institutional, technical, social and economic challenges associated with its implementation (Cheikh et al. 2012). Moreover, as one of the significant outcomes of COP19 in Warsaw was an agreement on a framework to financially support REDD+ in developing nations, African countries need to be prepared to benefit from this framework. To this effect, African policymakers should prepare national regulations on the delineation of local property rights, convenient governance mechanisms for payments of carbon benefits, and efficient emission accounting systems. Policies that increase technical capacities needed at the community level on effective systems of monitoring, reporting and verifying through education can reduce the challenges associated with implementation of REDD+ in Africa. Moreover, incentives such as tax reductions or soft loans can encourage the participation of the private sector.

The third policy area for improving climate change resiliency is the design of social safety nets and greater empowerment of the poor. African governments and international donors need to devise ways through which the most vulnerable members of society—children, the elderly and women—are better protected from climate change and climate-related disasters. Policymakers should identify the most vulnerable segments of society, coordinate efforts among relevant institutions, and set aside the necessary resources to reach out to these vulnerable groups. So far, little has been done to reduce vulnerability to climate change by increasing the asset holdings of the poor. One way of addressing this challenge is through the integration of the poor into national or regional commodity value chains. This integration enables the poor to take advantage of the increasing demand for agricultural and manufactured products induced by population growth and the expansion of the middle class. To this end, policies that establish pro-poor savings and credit cooperative societies; financial service reforms that enable lending to the poor (e.g., remove entry barriers); tax reductions or subsidies for private banking institutions that reach out to

the poor (especially women); and rural microfinance institutions can empower the poor and reduce their vulnerability to climate change. Moreover, the promotion of bottom-up and participatory community development approaches through local and donor funds can enhance asset building and increase the climate change resilience of the poor.

The fourth policy area is to empower Africa to better position itself in international climate change negotiations. Although the Kyoto Protocol has come to an end and the new framework is expected to take effect after 2015, Africa should be better prepared to set its agenda for the upcoming COP20 meeting in Lima in late 2014 as well as future negotiations to help shape the post-2015 climate change regime. As a first step, Africa needs to invest in increasing the number and capacity of its delegates involved in the negotiations to effectively address and represent African priorities in this important international forum. To this effect, African governments should organize a training and capacity-building forum for the current and potential future delegates/negotiators (Africa group).

At the same time, as Africa strategizes both climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, it is important to balance green energy and other traditional sources to meet the continent's growing energy needs. Africa generates a very low share of global greenhouse gases and therefore should not be unduly criticized by the international community for its choice to exploit all of its abundant resources—including fossil fuels—to help foster its development. In particular, the United States' Power Africa initiative should equally promote the use of fossil fuels as well as focus investment on the region's significant potential to develop clean energy such as geothermal, hydropower, wind and solar. Ultimately, the decisions on how best to define Africa's desired energy mix, development goals and response to climate change should be left in the hands of Africans themselves.

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