The Third Sector's Role in Driving Urban Climate Governance: Evidence from Two Major Small and Medium-Sized Cities in Ghana

Ama Kissiwah Boateng
University of Public Service, Hungary

Doi:10.19044/esipreprint.7.2022.p243

Approved: 12 July 2022
Posted: 14 July 2022

Cite As:
Boateng A.K. (2022). *The Third Sector's Role in Driving Urban Climate Governance: Evidence from Two Major Small and Medium-Sized Cities in Ghana.* ESI Preprints.
https://doi.org/10.19044/esipreprint.7.2022.p243

Abstract

Small, and medium-sized cities house most of the world's population and are essential to delivering climate action. Drawing evidence from Ghana, this paper closes the research gap by exploring how the third sector drives urban climate governance in small and medium-sized cities. The paper found that the two purposively selected NGOs: CIKOD and GAYO in the Wa Municipality and the Cape Coast Metropolis, respectively, are engaged in diverse initiatives focused on climate adaptation. Some identified adaptation actions included local empowerment through capacity building, climate advocacy, and waste management. Because of the adaptation focus, the paper concludes that collaborations and partnerships among state and non-state actors will help generate resilience benefits for local communities.

Keywords: The third sector, climate change, urban climate governance, small and medium-sized cities, Ghana

Introduction

Cities are at the forefront of climate change because they concentrate on people and assets, making them vulnerable to climate change's impacts (Baker et al., 2012; Carter et al., 2015). Though African cities produce fewer

greenhouse gas emissions, the effects result from climatic risks such as floods, droughts, and extreme heatwaves. For instance, flooding in major cities has become a predominant natural hazard that accompanies rapid urbanization. Given that climate change disproportionately affects the vulnerable, towns and urban areas play a significant role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, there is an empirical bias toward studies in developed countries (Klein et al., 2018; Wisner et al., 2015). Even though urban climate governance has been well researched, most scholars have focused on using case studies of developed countries as their units of analysis (Castán Broto & Bulkeley, 2013; van der Heijden, 2019). In addition, while several good examples are available for large and mega cities, few are available for small and medium-sized ones (SMCs) (Boehnke et al., 2019; Hoppe et al., 2016; Simon et al., 2021; Klein et al., 2018). As a result, Birkmann et al. (2016) argue that although we acknowledge the importance of the former, we also want to stress the latter's importance since small and medium-sized cities are the category in which most of the world's population live with less than 500,000 inhabitants. It is also widely recognized that they are more constrained in (fiscal) resources, staffing, 'critical mass', and organizing and leadership capacities within the regions in which they are situated. In line with the Paris Agreement, which emphasizes the role of sub-national climate action, with the increasing participation of non-state actors in urban climate governance, it becomes essential to highlight their contribution in small and medium-sized cities. This is partly because the third sector plays a vital role in building local adaptive capacities, especially among people already living at or close to the margins of survival (Musah-Surugu et al., 2019). Likewise, the 5th Assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasizes the importance of the private sector in urban climate action. Although research into the third sector is a growing academic field, the literature is quite limited regarding what modes of governance are used to steer urban climate action in the third sector. Despite the increasing responsibility of local government actors to address climate change, research on the capacity of the third sector in developing countries remains less researched, leaving knowledge gaps. Drawing evidence from Ghana, this paper closes the inherent gap by exploring how the third sector drives urban climate action in small and medium-sized cities.

Methods

Research design

A qualitative research strategy was considered appropriate for this study because it offers a naturalistic approach to conducting research that relies heavily on context, perception, and lived experiences about a

phenomenon. The study's research design encompasses case studies of two major cities in Ghana. Like most case study research designs, each case was studied in-depth, focusing on a detailed description of phenomena relevant to how Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) drive urban climate action in small and medium-sized cities.

Case study selection

The cases that have been selected are based in Ghana. Within Ghana, the cities are Wa municipality in the Upper West Region and the Cape Coast Metro in the Central Region. Wa Municipality has a population of about 200,672, and the Cape Coast Metropolitan with a population of about 189,925. Wa doubles as the regional capital of the Upper West Region, and the municipality lies in the Savannah high plains. The climate of the Wa Municipality is characterized by a long, windy, and hot, dry season followed by short and stormy wet seasons. The rainfall pattern is erratic and punctuated by spells of prolonged droughts and heavy downpours, and floods. The most predominant means of transport is the use of motorcycles. With its administrative capital as Cape Coast, the Cape Coast Metropolitan Area is one of the oldest districts in Ghana. The Cape Coast Metropolitan is bounded south by the Gulf of Guinea and experiences high temperatures throughout the year. The Metropolis has a double maximal rainfall. The differences in vulnerability to climate change impacts between the two regions justified the decision for the selection (see Ghana's 3rd communication to the UNFCCC). For instance, the northern savannah ecological zone remains poorer than the other regions after years of implementing poverty reduction programs. As a result, the different vulnerability indexes offered a comprehensive view of NGOs' nuanced roles in urban (local) climate governance.

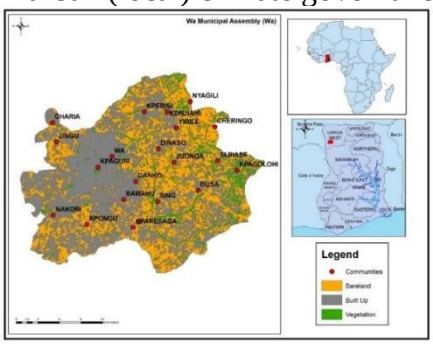

Figure 1: Map showing the Wa Municipality

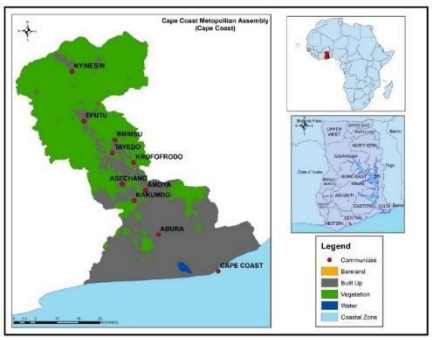

Figure 2:Map showing the Cape Coast Metro

Data collection and analysis

Data used in this study were mainly semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with officials from the two purposively selected

NGOs. Three people were selected and interviewed from each of the two NGOs. The selection involved using criteria on whether the persons could provide informative, in-depth, and reliable information on involvement in climate actions by their respective organizations. In the selection, the professional expert network of the author was used. Each interview lasted for at least 40minutes. To identify any loopholes, recordings of interviews and field notes were immediately reviewed after each interview. In addition to the interviews, online written articles and documents were retrieved by the researcher. These included workshops on climate change, natural resource governance, and waste management organized by the NGOs. Major themes identified were knowledge of climate change relating to the impacts and the role of the third sector in responding to the implications.

Results

Knowledge of climate change impacts

The depth of knowledge of climate change did not differ significantly among research participants from both NGOs. They started by explaining the causes and impacts of climate change. Most of the research participants perceived climate change as the new weather conditions they are currently experiencing. Participants mentioned floods, drought, bush fires, and land degradation as some of the devastating impacts of climate change.

One of them remarked that

"We don't get the rains when we expect it; the rainy and dry seasons were no longer consistent.

Another interviewee added, "we are experiencing extreme dryness in the northern part of Ghana".

Climate change initiatives of the Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD) and the Green Africa Youth Organisation (GAYO)

The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD)

CIKOD is a Ghana-based non-profit organization. Its objective is to transform indigenous institutions and local groups into vibrant grassroots civil society organizations that will improve rural communities' participation in their development processes. CIKOD aims to promote discussion about the role of indigenous knowledge and institutions in contemporary community development and empowerment. CIKOD has been working in many community development areas, focusing on building sustainable food systems, traditional health systems, natural resource management, and traditional women leadership in this environment. Since 2003, CIKOD has

worked to strengthen chiefs and traditional women leaders in Ghana, allowing them to provide leadership at the community level for community development efforts in the different disciplines listed above. In the Wa Municipality, CIKOD has been involved in various training programs aimed at strengthening the capacity of traditional leaders to provide effective leadership for their communities in natural resource management at the local level and the ability to articulate their views on poverty reduction. They collaborate with chiefs in the direction of the environment because they are the custodians of the land. For instance, they plant trees with chiefs and other government officials during festive occasions. Additionally, CIKOD engages with the local government (the Wa Municipality).

One of the interviewees stated,

> *"We advocate for the conservation of natural resources by promoting the use of appropriate indigenous knowledge adaptable to climate change.*

They also provide informal training to strengthen the capacities of traditional authorities, local government agents, grassroots civil society groups, and development facilitators to play more vital roles in the development process at the local level. This is done through workshops, seminars, and public lectures.

One of the interviewees mentioned,

> *"We use these platforms to sensitize the citizens about the impacts of climate change and what they can do to adapt.*

Another added that

> *"We organize training programs for the smallholder farmers agroforestry, seed production, soil water conservation, soil fertility management, and prevention of bush fires".*

Participants also mentioned the construction of irrigation dams for farming and domestic use as an adaptation measure.

The Green Africa Youth Organisation (GAYO)

The Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO) is a youth-led, gender-balanced advocacy group primarily concerned with environmental sustainability and community development. They work directly with local communities to reduce the vulnerability of groups at risk to climate impacts, such as children, youth, and women who have a comparatively less adaptive capacity due to social and structural inequalities. In the Cape Coast Metropolis, the Sustainable Community Project was designed by GAYO to

help manage household waste, especially in urban areas. Through household education on pit composting, the project seeks to eliminate inappropriate disposal of solid organic waste and provide nutritious organic food to families through organic farming. One of the interviewees mentioned that they intend to add more households in the future as the project is still in its early stages. Additionally, GAYO has worked with the Cape Coast Metro and other key stakeholders to render sustainable waste management services, a challenge that has diverse implications in cities and urban areas (beach cleaning exercise).

GAYO recently launched the "campus eco-clubs initiative-University of Cape Coast Chapter," where they seek to educate and empower tertiary students to create public awareness of the need for environmental preservation and protection. Recently, GAYO and the Center for Coastal Management at the University of Cape Coast have hosted a training program to raise public awareness about ocean conservation and resource management. They highlighted the importance of protecting the oceans for survival and the marine ecosystem.

Table 1. Summary of climate change initiatives undertaken by CIKOD and GAYO

Climate change initiatives/programs	CIKOD	GAYO
Nature-based solutions and forest management	Manage the indiscriminate felling of trees Engage in tree planting exercises	Active engagement in tree planting exercises (green Ghana Project)
Awareness and education programmes in local communities, capacity building	organise durbars to sensitise and educate chiefs and the entire community on the need to conserve the environment	Building capacity for youth development
Waste management		Zero waste communities Dumpsite clean-up Plastic-free campus Beach cleanup with the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly

Discussion

Interviews with research participants revealed that the third sector engages in various actions relating to climate change adaptation. Some identified initiatives included local empowerment through capacity building, climate advocacy, and waste management. For example, the capacity-

building training program was evident in both cases. This is because most local communities in developing countries lack the needed capacity to adapt to the changing climate. As a result, the two NGOs under study seek to build adaptive capabilities for vulnerable people. This confirms the findings from the literature that most cities in developing countries focus on adaptation actions. It is also evident from the results that both NGOs have engaged in raising awareness of climate change is an essential step in adapting to climate change in local communities. This resonates with the findings of Musah-Surugu et al. (2019) that NGOs play lead roles in awareness creation at the local level in Ghana. Based on the findings of this study, the third sector can influence climate adaptation in small and medium-sized cities at a broader scale through collaboration and partnerships according to their capacities which will help achieve resilience benefits since many developing countries prioritize development objectives more closely related to livelihoods.

The fragmented initiatives create room for minimal collaboration at the local level. As noted by Adu-Boateng (2015), this results in the duplication of climate change programs at the local level due to the diverse climate change programs within each city. In addition, several studies have reported similar constraints (political, institutional, attitudinal, financial or resources, communication, and awareness.

Conclusion

The analysis of the third sector's role in urban climate governance in the two major small and medium-sized cities has shown that most interviewees were aware of how climate change impacts cities and metropolitan areas and how they have developed a systematic approach to adapt to the impacts. Overall, most of the identified initiatives aimed to reduce the vulnerabilities of climate change. This is primarily because the planned measures undertaken by both NGOs focused on capacity-building programs, indicating the importance of waste and natural resource management. A further potential implication of this finding is that if more small and medium-sized cities worldwide progress on their adaptation processes over time, urban adaptation will increase. Urban climate governance in small and medium-sized cities is still emerging, and therefore, the potential of informal institutions through the engagement of chiefs to enhance collaboration at the local level. That notwithstanding, building relevant partnerships among state and non-state actors could enhance local communities' adaptive capacity, especially in the global south. I posit that an inclusive approach could enhance an integrated and coordinated climate action in local communities.

Acknowledgments

I thank Dr. Marta Olazabal of Basque of Climate Change (BC3) and Dr. Peter Koronvary of the University of Public Service for their guidance and constructive feedback.

Funding

This work was produced with the financial support of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. The contents of this article are solely the author's liability and under no circumstances may be considered a reflection of the position of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the IPCC.

Conflicts of Interests

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

References

1. Adu-Boateng, A. (2015). Barriers to climate change policy responses for urban areas: A study of Tamale Metropolitan Assembly, Ghana. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, *13*, 49–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2015.02.001
2. Baker, I., Peterson, A., Brown, G., & McAlpine, C. (2012). Local government response to the impacts of climate change: An evaluation of local climate adaptation plans. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *107*(2), 127–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2012.05.009
3. Birkmann, J., Welle, T., Solecki, W., Lwasa, S., & Garschagen, M. (2016). Boost resilience of small and mid-sized cities. *Nature*, *537*(7622), 605–608. https://doi.org/10.1038/537605a
4. Boehnke, R. F., Hoppe, T., Brezet, H., & Blok, K. (2019). Good practices in local climate mitigation action by small and medium-sized cities; exploring meaning, implementation and linkage to actual lowering of carbon emissions in thirteen municipalities in The Netherlands. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *207*, 630–644. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.09.264
5. Carter, J. G., Cavan, G., Connelly, A., Guy, S., Handley, J., & Kazmierczak, A. (2015). Climate change and the city: Building capacity for urban adaptation. *Progress in Planning*, *95*, 1–66. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2013.08.001
6. Castán Broto, V., & Bulkeley, H. (2013). A survey of urban climate change experiments in 100 cities. *Global Environmental Change*, *23*(1), 92–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2012.07.005
7. Homsy, G. C. (2018). Unlikely pioneers: Creative climate change policymaking in smaller U.S. cities. *Journal of Environmental*

Studies and Sciences, *8*(2), 121–131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-018-0483-8

8. Hoppe, T., van der Vegt, A., & Stegmaier, P. (2016). Presenting a Framework to Analyze Local Climate Policy and Action in Small and Medium-Sized Cities. *Sustainability*, *8*(9), 847. https://doi.org/10.3390/su8090847
9. Klein, J., Araos, M., Karimo, A., Heikkinen, M., Ylä-Anttila, T., & Juhola, S. (2018). The role of the private sector and citizens in urban climate change adaptation: Evidence from a global assessment of large cities. *Global Environmental Change*, *53*, 127–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.09.012
10. Musah-Surugu, I. J., Bawole, J. N., & Ahenkan, A. (2019). The "Third Sector" and Climate Change Adaptation Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Experience from Ghana. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *30*(2), 312–326. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-9962-5
11. Simon, D., Vora, Y., Sharma, T., & Smit, W. (2021). Responding to Climate Change in Small and Intermediate Cities: Comparative Policy Perspectives from India and South Africa. *Sustainability*, *13*(4), 2382. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13042382
12. van der Heijden, J. (2019). Studying urban climate governance: Where to begin, what to look for, and how to make a meaningful contribution to scholarship and practice. *Earth System Governance*, *1*, 100005. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2019.100005
13. Wisner, B., Pelling, M., Mascarenhas, A., Holloway, A., Ndong, B., Faye, P., Ribot, J., & Simon, D. (2015). Small Cities and Towns in Africa: Insights into Adaptation Challenges and Potentials. In S. Pauleit, A. Coly, S. Fohlmeister, P. Gasparini, G. Jørgensen, S. Kabisch, W. J. Kombe, S. Lindley, I. Simonis, & K. Yeshitela (Eds.), *Urban Vulnerability and Climate Change in Africa* (Vol. 4, pp. 153–196). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03982-4_5