



Kenya: The prolonged drought highlights the growing importance of soil conservation, biodiversity preservation, and smart water resource management for effective climate change adaptation.

# SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY THROUGH CLIMATE RESILIENCE

## The need for systemic adaptation to climate change and how the UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn must set the course

Climate change threatens the livelihoods of billions of people worldwide and exacerbates hunger, especially in rural areas of the Global South. Neglecting climate change mitigation and adaptation violates the human right to adequate food for present and future generations. Adaptation must therefore focus on sustainable food and nutrition security. Crucial for this are technical adaptation measures and favorable social and institutional frameworks. The measures' viability presupposes **local population groups' participation in planning and implementing adaptation measures**. At the upcoming climate conference in Bonn in June and at COP28 in Dubai in December, the German Federal Government must maintain attention to the issue of climate change adaptation while dealing with the dominant topics of climate finance and phasing out fossil fuels.

### INTERNATIONAL STATE ACTORS ARE PROCEEDING TOO SLOWLY

The 2030 Agenda, including its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Climate Agreement set ambitious goals in terms of hunger reduction and climate protection and adaptation. The German Government has further committed to these goals in its coalition agreement and strategy papers. The strategic guidelines for realizing the human right to adequate food in the context of climate change are thus in place.

Yet there are up to 828 million hungry people worldwide. This number grows while climate change effects amplify, and adaptation is slow and patchy<sup>1</sup>. Indigenous peoples, small farmers, agricultural workers, fishermen and (agro) pastoralists in rural areas of the Global South are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Their livelihoods depend primarily on agriculture. Thus, they are directly dependent on natural resources and already suffer from poverty in many cases<sup>2</sup>. They are at risk of slipping from poverty into hunger due to the consequences of climate change. Women are often more affected than men, as men have more opportunities to diversify their income sources. Once caught in the poverty trap, those affected are usually unable to free themselves, let alone adapt and build resilience against the growing impacts of climate change.

The international community of states, national states and the German Federal Government must implement climate change adaptation measures more quickly, effectively, and, above all, more systemically. To foster the necessary transformation to long-term climate-resilient societies and to make a tangible contribution to achieving the goal of "zero hunger" by 2030, integrated approaches that link adaptation with mitigating climate change, safeguarding biodiversity, protecting soils, and transforming agri-food systems are needed – all as part of the efforts to achieve the SDGs.

<sup>1</sup>IPCC (2022): *Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Working Group II Contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report.*

<sup>2</sup>In Africa alone, more than half of the working population is employed in or dependent on predominantly smallholder agriculture (<https://www.fao.org/news/story/>)

## WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS THAT PREVENT SMALLHOLDER FARMERS FROM ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

- Smallholder farmers currently cope with extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, by working more, using savings, selling their livestock and other assets, eating less or less nutritiously, and going into debt.
  - ⇒ These maladaptive coping strategies further weaken work productivity and health.
  - ⇒ They still lack effective adaptation and will be increasingly more vulnerable to climate change impacts in the future!
- Women are particularly affected: They usually own less land, produce less and have a lower income than men
  - ⇒ Women, children, the elderly, the sick and people with disabilities are more at risk of hunger because of climate change than men.
- Few smallholders take adaptation measures proactively because adaptation requires knowledge and financial resources. Adaptation frequently involves additional risks (e.g., lower harvests, indebtedness) that poor smallholder farmers cannot bear.
  - ⇒ Without targeted support, smallholders will have difficulty adapting to climate change.

## AGRICULTURAL ADAPTATION STRATEGIES REMAIN TOO ONE-SIDED

Agricultural adaptation strategies currently promote technical adaptations that can provide a quick and effective remedy. Many measures start, for example, with the breeding of improved seeds, such as more drought- and heat-tolerant varieties. Furthermore, these strategies successfully promote efficient water and soil management. Most modern adaptation techniques and associated advisory and extension services have a growing reliance on the availability of and access to digital infrastructures. It is important that these measures also reach smallholders in remote areas. To this end, remaining gaps in network and power coverage need to be closed and data costs must be reduced.

## CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN RURAL AREAS DEMANDS SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION

However, without embedded agricultural adaptation strategies, aggravating climate change may overtake productivity improvements – at least in some regions of the world. There is also a need for systemic adaptation of agri-food systems aimed at long-term, transformative change. Strategies for adapting to climate change must consider entire rural areas and initiate sustainable and climate-resilient development through systemic transformations. Important fields of action are:

- Promotion of climate-resilient infrastructure

There should be strategies to adapt physical infrastructure, such as transport routes and storage facilities, to heat and flooding and to establish and expand a climate-resilient energy supply. Renewable energies are the most sustaina-

ble option. In addition, states should expand digital infrastructure.

- Access to social security

Smallholder farmers must have the opportunity to insure themselves against climate risks. To date, very few agricultural insurances against climate risks are suitable and affordable for smallholder farms: Only about 3-6% of African smallholder farmers already have such insurance<sup>3</sup>. Social protection systems need to be adapted to reach highly vulnerable households and communities, e.g. (semi-) nomadic and informally employed people (see also [Policy Brief “Social Protection Systems - Key to Food Security”](#)).

- Access to knowledge

Knowledge about climate change and adaptation options is essential for food and nutrition security. Therefore, climate-resilient development requires improved general education and strengthened access to technical knowledge for producers, especially through education and training in the agricultural sector, the development of local research institutions and opportunities for (digital) knowledge transfer. Traditional knowledge, especially from indigenous communities and women, e.g., about traditional farming practices, must be combined with new scientific findings.

- Access to land and water

Access to land and water plays a key role in climate-resilient rural development and must be enabled in a sustainable, cross-sectoral, and inclusive manner. People need secure land rights to enable them to undertake long

<sup>3</sup>World Resources Institute (2021): [Food Systems at Risk: Transformative Adaptation for Long-term Food Security](#).

<sup>4</sup>The full title is [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security \(VGGT\)](#).

-term or even transformative adaptation. Responsible land governance, as defined in the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT)<sup>4</sup>, must be advanced at all political levels - from local to international - and with the involvement of all stakeholders. Welthungerhilfe (WHH), through its “Land for Life” project, promotes multi-actor partnerships that contribute to the dissemination and implementation of the VGGT in partner countries.

## EFFECTIVE ADAPTATION REQUIRES GOOD GOVERNANCE AND MUST BE LOCALLY LED

Good governance is critical for effective climate adaptation. In some settings, national governance challenges significantly slow progress in implementing climate action and adaptation plans, lead to incoherent and fragmented approaches and hinder achieving ambitious climate goals<sup>5</sup>. They include inadequate structures for managing/allocating climate funds, lack of stakeholder engagement and decentralized institutions, discrimination, elite influence, rigid bureaucracy, and insufficient alignment of development and climate agendas.

### INTEGRATION OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION MEASURES INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN KENYA

As part of the project “Strengthening Rural Governance for the Right to Adequate Food”, WHH and its local partner “Rural Outreach Africa” supported the establishment of the civil society “Lake Region Food System Network,” which raised awareness amongst citizens and government representatives for the right to food and the participation of citizens in decision-making processes. As a result, in Vihiga and Kakamega (population: nearly 2.5 million), representatives from each village were involved in the preparation of the development plans, which identified climate change adaptation as a critical aspect. The new development plans now contain strategies and means for adaptation to climate change, which will soon be concretized - also with the participation of the citizens.

Local participation and ownership are essential for effective and equitable climate adaptation. Adaptation will often work better when managed by local decision-makers through bottom-up participatory processes. Local representatives of the target groups must be involved in the prioritization, planning and implementation of adaptation measures from the outset so that they are demand-driven

and do not work to the detriment of the local population or reinforce existing inequalities (e.g., dam construction must not lead to the eviction of indigenous groups from their land). For stakeholders to be able to represent their interests, states must safeguard principles such as Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) as well as functioning monitoring and grievance mechanisms and compliance with the “Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems”<sup>6</sup>.

Up to now, far too little of the shaping of adaptation measures has been in the hands of local communities. They often need more knowledge, resources, and decision-making power.

To change this, the Global Commission for Adaptation 2021 has identified eight principles to support the transition to “Locally-Led Adaptation” (LLA):

1. shifting decision-making power to the lowest appropriate level,
2. engaging marginalized groups and reducing structural inequalities,
3. easily accessible, long-term financing,
4. strengthening local institutions,
5. building a robust understanding of climate risks,
6. flexible programming and learning,
7. transparency and accountability,
8. collective action and investment.

The LLA principles are attracting growing international attention and have been endorsed by the G7 under the German presidency, among others<sup>7</sup>. The group of “Least Developed Countries” (LDCs) sees them as a positive response to their demands in the UN climate negotiations<sup>8</sup>. The German Government should sign the LLA principles and implement them consistently<sup>9</sup>.

## HOW CAN THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT STRENGTHEN TRANSFORMATIVE ADAPTATION IN THE UN PROCESS?

At the *Bonn Climate Change* Conference in June, UN member states will flesh out the global goal on adaptation in the “Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh Work Pro-

<sup>5</sup>IPCC (2022): *Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Working Group II Contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report.*

<sup>6</sup>FAO Committee on World Food Security (2014): *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems.*

<sup>7</sup>G7 Climate, Energy and Environment Ministers' Communiqué, Berlin, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

<sup>8</sup>The “LDC 2050 Vision” includes demands from LDCs regarding inclusion, participation, equity, and financial support on the path to climate-resilient societies.

<sup>9</sup>Elements of LLA are included, for example, in the strategy on feminist development policy and in the feminist approach to climate policy through the 3Rs (rights, resources, representation).

<sup>10</sup>FAO (2004): *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to food in the context of food security, Rome.*

<sup>11</sup>ACE calls for education and participation in the Paris Climate Agreement (Art. 12) to empower all people to engage in climate issues. The work plan covers (climate) education, training, public access to information, public awareness, participation, and international cooperation.

gramme” (GLaSS). It must become measurable by COP28 in November to understand adaptation needs and progress, enable a “global stocktake” on adaptation, and hold states accountable. In addition, the “Joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security”, initiated at COP27, is due to be elaborated. The German Government should vigorously advance both processes, considering the 2030 Agenda, the “Voluntary

Guidelines on the progressive implementation of the right to food”<sup>10</sup>, and the principles of locally-led adaptation. To enable all people to participate directly in policy processes and decision-making, it should also strengthen the “Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment” (ACE) and implement the “Lima Work Programme on Gender” (LWPG), including the “Gender Action Plan”<sup>11</sup>.

## OUR DEMANDS:

We call on nation states and donors to:

- significantly expand their efforts in adaptation to climate change and focus on food and nutrition security for the people most affected by hunger, malnutrition, and climate change in line with the 2030 Agenda. In doing so, often-neglected population groups must benefit more.
- design adaptation support and programs to go beyond technical solutions and aim at transformation – towards equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient food systems and societies. They can do so through investments in integrated approaches.
- guarantee that local civil society representatives can actively participate in planning and implementing climate protection and adaptation measures. They must pay special attention to women – as vulnerable people and change agents. The lowest possible authority should govern climate adaptation (locally-led adaptation).

We call on the German Federal Government to:

- pursue the issue of adaptation to climate change in the context of the UN climate negotiations. The German Government should advocate for a measurable global goal of adaptation within the framework of the “Glasgow-Sharm-El-Sheikh work programme,” as well as for the concretization of the “Joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security,” especially in terms of content and deadlines.
- sign the principles of locally-led adaptation and implement them consistently in all measures – from support for the preparation and implementation of national adaptation plans to the design of climate finance.

<sup>10</sup>FAO (2004): *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to food in the context of food security*, Rome.

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