



Impact of Climate Change on Children and Youth

Policy Brief

August 2024

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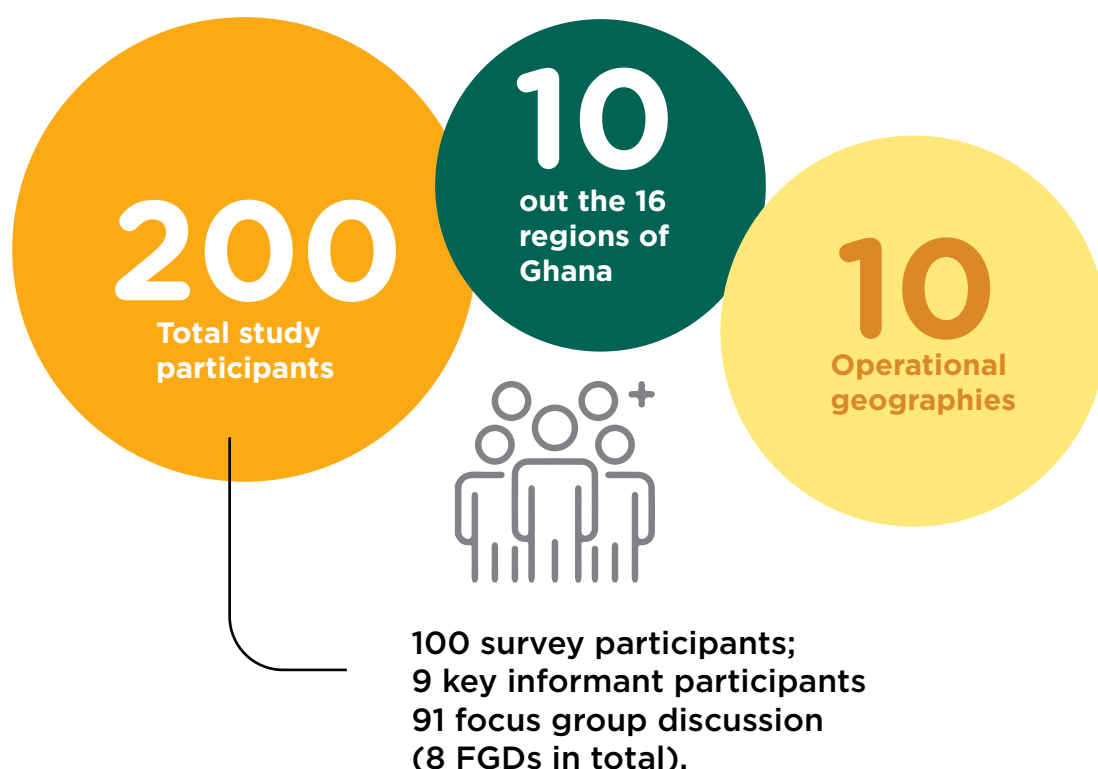
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Overview



This policy brief highlights the findings of a climate change study by Compassion International Ghana which aims to inform academicians, NGOs, and government agencies on the potential of this multidimensional approach. The study is embedded in a mix methods design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches are adopted to address the objectives of the study. The study targeted respondents from all the 4 operational geographies located in 10 out the 16 regions of Ghana. A total of 200 participants makes

up the sample for the study; which included 100 survey participants; 9 key informant interview participants and 91 focus group discussion (8 FGDs in total). The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multidimensional variability index for the quantitative data and content analysis for the qualitative data. This study highlights the need for integrating FBOs into national climate adaptation strategies to enhance child-focused resilience

**Ghana's
average annual
temperature has
increased by**

1°C

surpassing the global
average rate.



Introduction

Climate change is increasingly recognized as a critical global challenge, and Ghana is no exception. Manifesting in erratic rainfall patterns, excessive temperatures, and flooding, these changes exacerbate the vulnerabilities of the nation's most disadvantaged populations. The poor, particularly children and youth, are disproportionately impacted as climate shocks disrupt their access to clean water, nutrition, education, and health care (World Bank, 2023). Over the past five decades, Ghana's average annual temperature has increased by 1°C, surpassing the global average rate. This has led to

significant consequences, including a 20% reduction in agricultural productivity in some areas, further compounding issues of food insecurity and malnutrition (FAO, 2022; UNICEF, 2021).

Children's developmental needs, including their physical growth, cognitive abilities, and behavioral health, make them uniquely susceptible to climate-related challenges. Erratic rainfall and prolonged droughts disrupt farming cycles, forcing children out of school to fetch water or help with family livelihoods (National Disaster Management Organization, 2023). Flooding damages school infrastructure and heightens the spread of waterborne diseases, such as diarrhea and malaria, while soaring temperatures diminish children's energy and cognitive capacity, undermining their ability to learn and thrive (Ministry of Health, Ghana, 2023; UNESCO, 2022).

Amid this crisis, Christian faith-based organizations (FBOs) like Compassion International Ghana (CIGH) are working within vulnerable communities exposed

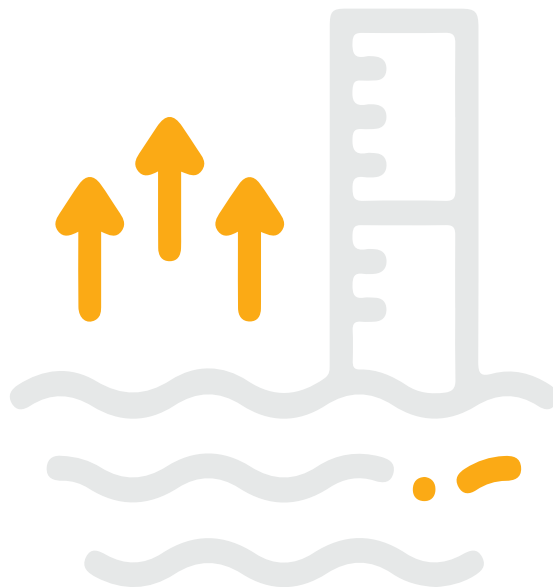
to the dual burdens of poverty and climate change. Compassion International Ghana's mission is to support ecosystems that support every child's and youth's growth and well-being. A major force behind moral direction, social cohesiveness, and resilience in Ghanaian culture is the Christian faith. When equipped with the necessary knowledge and resources, the Frontline Church Partners could mobilise community agents and stakeholders to advance local climate-smart solutions that foster an environment conducive to children's growth. Understanding how Christian



reduction in agricultural productivity resulting from increased temperatures.

communities and organizations are addressing the specific needs of children and youth in the face of climate change is crucial because Christian institutions have extensive networks across Ghana, providing access to communities and resources that can be mobilized for climate action. Also, Christian teachings emphasize environmental stewardship and social responsibility, aligning with the goals of climate adaptation and mitigation. Furthermore, Christian faith-based initiatives can foster agency and leadership skills in children and youth, enabling them to become active participants in climate solutions.

Soaring temperatures diminish children's energy and cognitive capacity.



Aim

This study aimed to foster a coordinated response that includes capacity development, youth engagement, and other strategies to accelerate the mission of releasing children from poverty while equipping communities to adapt and thrive in a changing climate. Hence, the objectives of the study included;

1

Identifying and analysing the impact of climate change on children and youth in the operating context of CIGH;

2

Examining specific strategies employed by Frontline Church Partners (FCPs) and other Christian organisations in Ghana to support children and youth in coping with and adapting to the impacts of climate change;

3

Identifying the capacity gaps among the Frontline Church Partners in climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions;

4

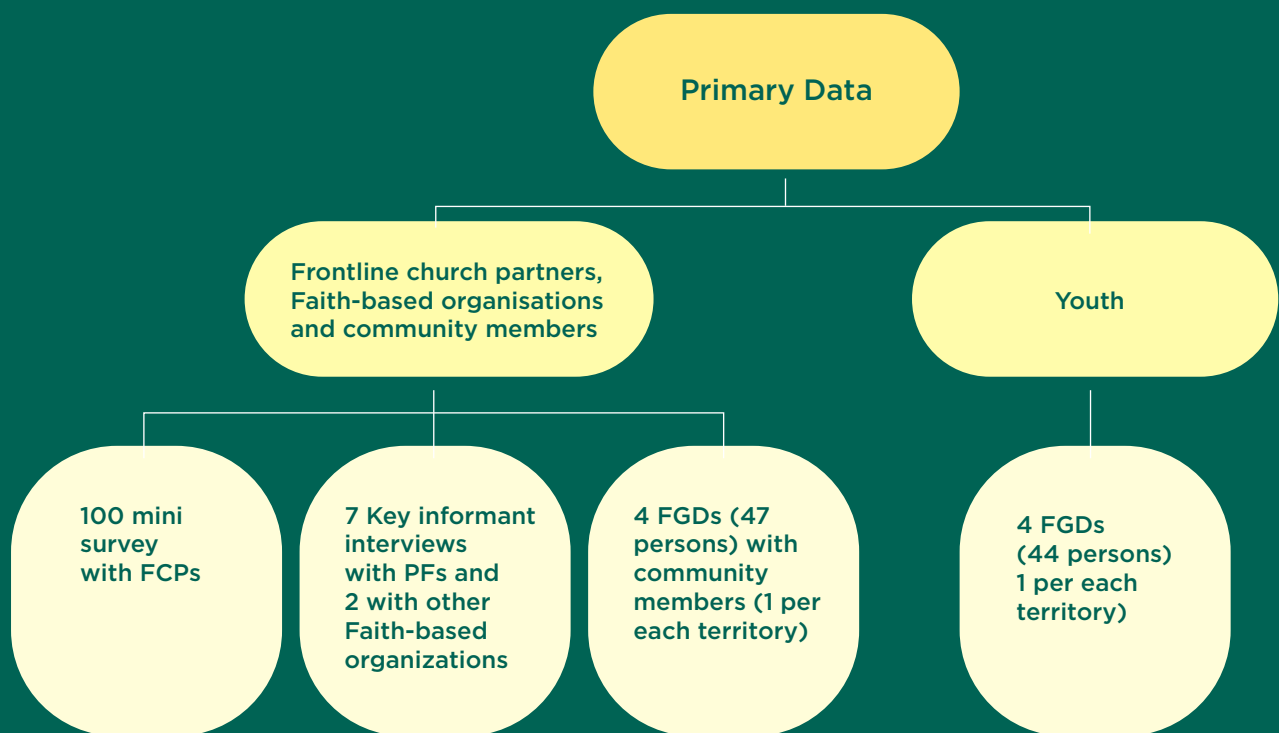
Mapping out opportunities and entry points for FCPs to take ownership and leadership in elevating the voices of children and youth in developing climate smart solutions in their contexts; and

5

Making recommendations for enhancing the impact of existing initiatives and scaling up successful models for wider adoption across Ghana, ensuring sustainable support for children and youth facing climate challenges.

Methodology

A mixed-methods design was adopted, with a balanced focus on quantitative and qualitative data analysis due to the depth of exploration required. Data collection and analysis were conducted through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews and discussions. While a mixed-methods design was used, the research team predominantly relied on qualitative inquiry to delve into scalable initiatives by Frontline Church Partners (FCPs) and other faith-based organisations for climate change adaptation and mitigation concerning children and youth in selected communities. A total of 200 respondents were sampled from all the 4 operational geographies/ territories located in 8 out the 16 regions of Ghana.



The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multidimensional variability index for the quantitative data and content analysis for the qualitative data.

Key Findings

Understanding the Climate Change Concept (Youth and Caregivers)

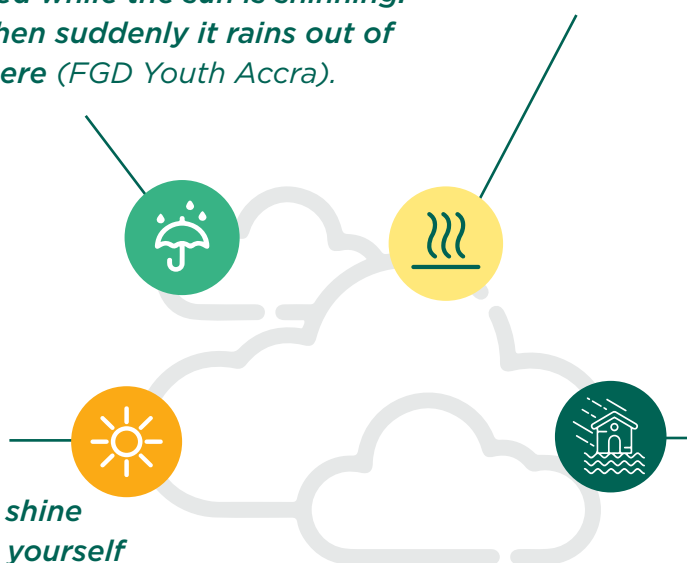
The study gathered thoughts on the climate change concept from caregivers and children/youth at selected FCPs in each of the territories. Whilst some participants of the FGDs attribute climate change to the activities of humans, others attribute it to the fulfilment of scripture as stated in the Bible, that there will be perilous time in the end time and the change in the climate is just one of the signs. The perception of climate events and their causes are hence varied across the various FCP actors.

“...recently the rain has been falling randomly and suddenly and it affects daily activities. Maybe you want to wash or have already washed while the sun is shining. But then suddenly it rains out of nowhere (FGD Youth Accra).

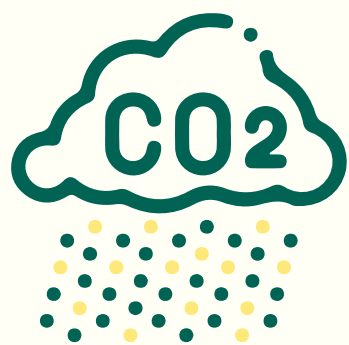
“There is intensive heat so sometimes you have to sleep outside due to the heat. Sometimes the fan can be on but you'll still be feeling hot (FGD Youth Accra).

“The sun can shine and you ask yourself if God is punishing you and why he is doing that to us (FGD participant, Accra)

“Now a days the rainfall is not predictable. The winds are strong and it comes with flooding (FGD Caregivers, Kumasi)
The sun is very hot this year than last year and it is unbearable (FGD Caregivers Kumasi)



The familiarity of the concept of climate change to caregivers and youth participants in the study is presented in Figure XX to show the diverse and yet converging perception of the concept of climate change.



Defining climate change from the perspective of youth and caregivers

Youth

Changes in temperatures. It is hot in January, and cool in June, July.

Changes in rainfall pattern and sometimes low rainfall (Accra FGD participants)

I have heard of climate change and it is the change in the global or local weather patterns.

Sometimes when the forecasters say it will rain, it doesn't rain (Youth FGD participants).

Caregivers

We use to have specific days for raining but now it can rain anytime.
Now a days we cannot tell when it will rain or when it will be sunny (Kumasi FGD Participants)

The calendar days have shifted, nothing is predictable these days

Increased sunshine (Asuogyaman Caregivers FGD participants)

Changes in rainfall pattern (Asuogyaman Caregivers FGD participants)

Source: Field survey (2024)

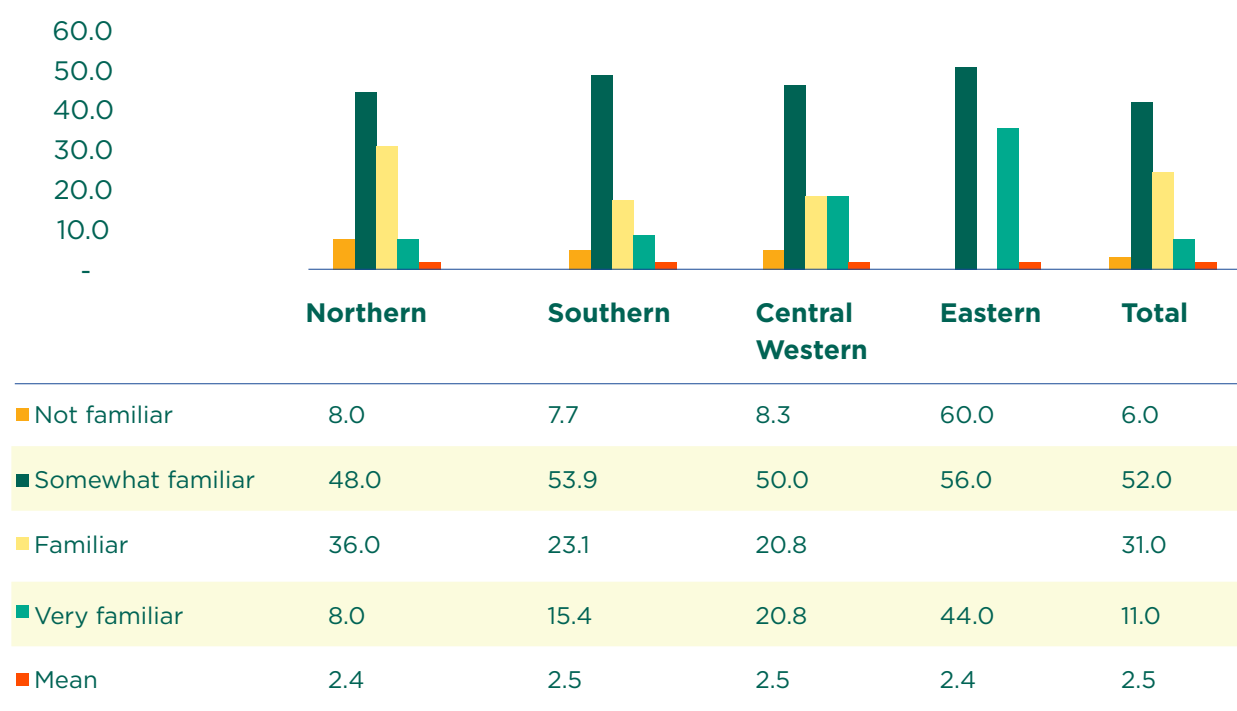
Understanding the Climate Change Concept (FCP staff)

52%

of respondents were somewhat familiar with the concept of climate change

The interviews with the FCP staff conducted reveal that majority of them (52%) are somewhat familiar with the concept of climate change. Their familiarity with the concept of climate change was however based on attributes of the climate they have observed and not the technical definition of the concept of climate change. In as much as there was some level of familiarity among FCP staff on the concept of climate change, about 6% indicated they were not familiar with the concept.

Percentage of response

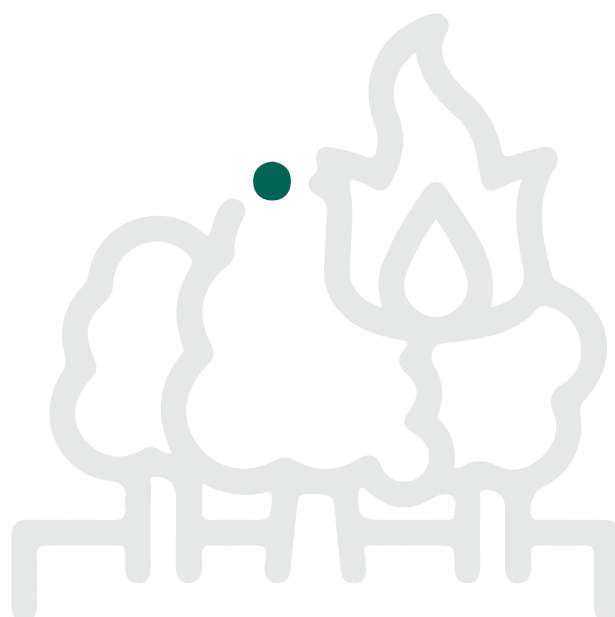


Source: Field survey 2024



Climate Events Reported by FCPs

Event	Northern	Southern	Central-Western	Eastern	Overall
Extreme Weather Events	76%	96%	86.4%	60%	79.4%
Food and Water Scarcity	88%	68%	36.4%	84%	70.1%
Health Issues	64%	60%	59.1%	56%	59.8%
Loss of Income	76%	48%	68.2%	44%	58.8%



Findings Based on Study Objectives



Objective 1

Identifying and Analysing the Impact of Climate Change on Children and Youth in the Operating Context of CIGH.



88%

of respondents in Northern territories reported food insecurity.



20%

Malnutrition rates have risen by 20% in the past decade.



>78%

prominence of respiratory and waterborne illnesses in areas with poor drainage and sanitation.



>50%

reduction in school attendance due to extreme weather events.



9.3%

of respondents observed mental health challenges among children

Climate change significantly impacts children and youth across CIGH territories/ operating context. Vulnerabilities stem from their dependence on agriculture, ecosystem services, and trade. Regions like the Eastern and Northern territories are particularly susceptible, with reduced agricultural productivity, water scarcity, and increased health issues such as respiratory diseases, malaria, and mental health challenges.

- **Food and Water Scarcity:** Up to 88% of respondents in Northern territories reported food insecurity. Malnutrition rates have risen by 20% in the past decade (Study Report, p. 14.)

- **Health Impacts:** Respiratory diseases (48.5%) and waterborne illnesses (29.9%) were prominent in areas with poor drainage and sanitation. Increased flooding in the southern regions had caused outbreaks of



malaria and diarrhea, with children under five disproportionately affected (Study Report, p. 18)

- **Educational Disruptions:** Over 50% of respondents across territories reported reduced school attendance due to extreme weather events like flooding and excessive heat. Climate-induced migration has resulted in higher school dropout rates, especially among girls in rural communities (Study Report, p. 22).

- Poor infrastructure and high unemployment exacerbate these challenges, leaving young populations in these areas vulnerable to climate-related adversities.

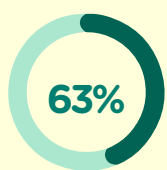
- **Mental Health Effects:** 9.3% of respondents observed mental health challenges among children, linked to food insecurity and livelihood disruptions.





Objective 2

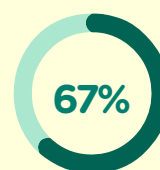
Examining Specific Strategies Employed by Frontline Church Partners (FCPs) and Other Christian Organizations.



of FCPs implemented climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.



of initiatives targeted sensitization campaigns and school-based climate education.



of FCPs reported health screenings and campaigns.

FCPs have facilitated widespread climate education campaigns, raising awareness about sustainable agricultural practices (Study Report, p. 16). The study revealed that 63% of FCPs implemented climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Most common strategies include:

- **Educational Programs:** Sensitization campaigns and school-based climate education were widely implemented, accounting for over 70% of initiatives.

- **Health and Wellness Interventions:** Health screenings and campaigns were reported by 67% of FCPs, especially in Central-Western clusters.

- **Environmental Conservation:** Tree planting activities and clean-up campaigns were conducted in

collaboration with local authorities like the Forestry Commission.

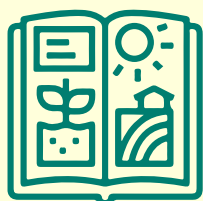
- **Social Safety Nets:** During droughts and floods, FBOs have provided food aid and temporary shelter, reducing immediate impacts on vulnerable families (Study Report, p. 20).

- **Psychosocial Support:** FBOs offer critical emotional and spiritual guidance to families displaced by climate events, fostering community resilience (Study Report, p. 25).



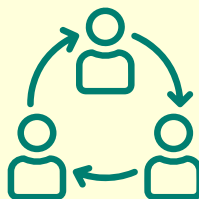
Objective 3

Identifying Capacity Gaps Among FCPs.



44%

of FCPs were “somewhat sufficient” in climate literacy.



46%

of FCPs in Central-Western territories collaborated with external stakeholders.

The study identifies significant capacity gaps among FCPs, particularly in climate science, project planning, and fundraising. These gaps vary by territory, with the Northern territory showing strengths in climate science, while the Southern and Eastern territories excel in project planning and technical skills, respectively. The Central Western territory lags across most capacity areas, highlighting the need for targeted capacity-building efforts. Addressing these disparities is crucial to enabling FCPs to implement effective mitigation and adaptation strategies, improving community resilience.

- **Knowledge Gaps:** Only 44% of FCPs were “somewhat sufficient” in climate literacy.

- **Resource Constraints:** Some FCPs lack the technical (48%) and financial (63%) resources to scale their initiatives effectively.

- **Collaboration Issues:** Only 46% of FCPs in Central-Western territories collaborated with external stakeholders.

- **Limited Integration:** Despite their contributions, FBOs are not formally recognized in national climate adaptation strategies.

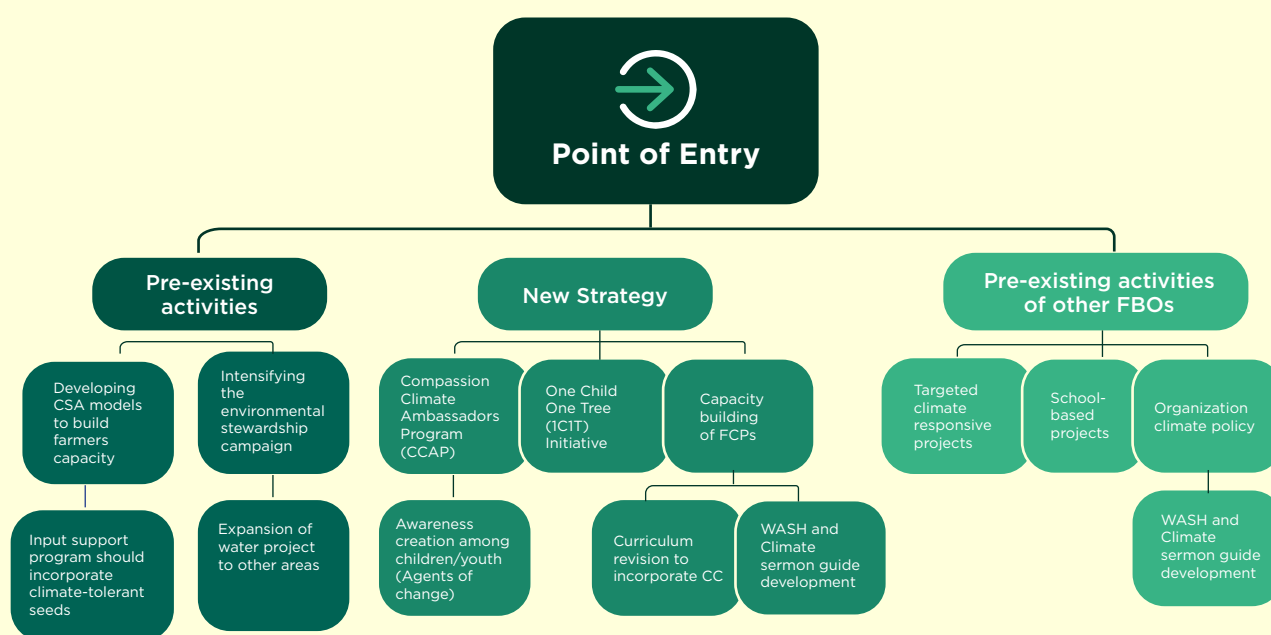
- **Coordination Gaps:** Weak collaboration between FBOs, NGOs, and government agencies limits the reach and impact of their efforts.



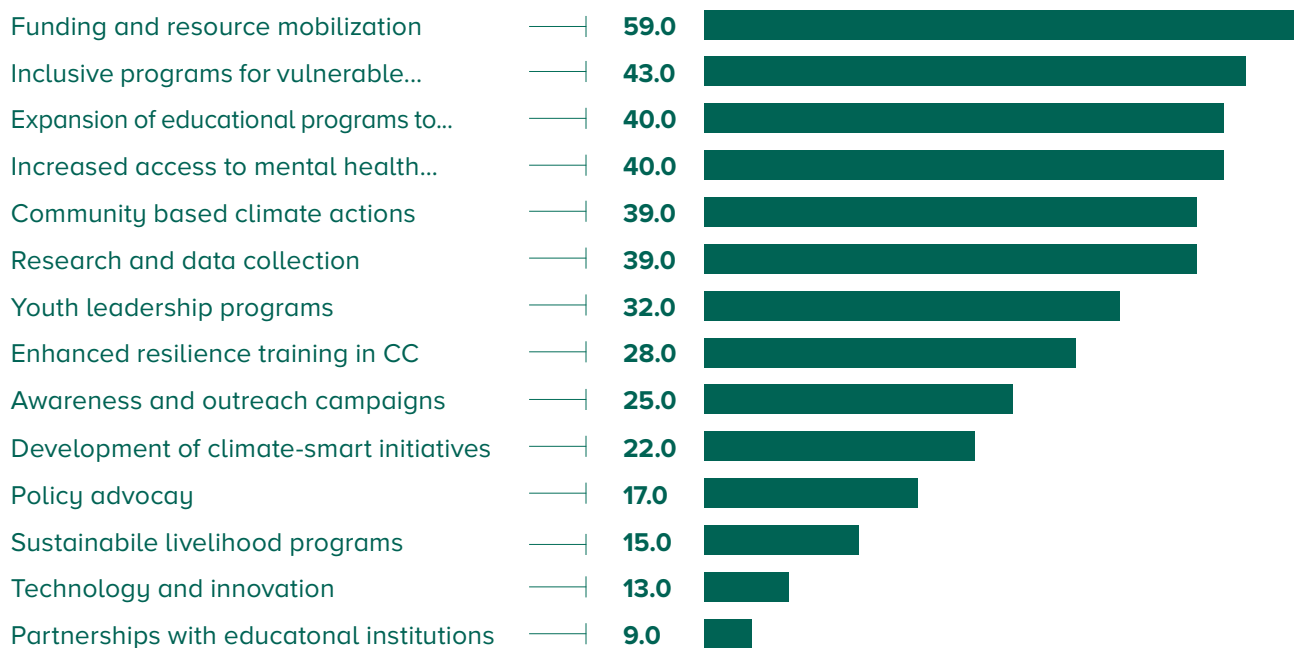
Objective 4

Mapping Opportunities and Entry Points for FCP Leadership

The study identified the potential of FCPs to significantly contribute to the promotion of sustainable practices, climate justice advocacy, and community resilience. Collaboration with other faith-based organizations and leveraging successful initiatives like Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) highlight opportunities to scale up and diversify climate interventions. The figure below provides a mapping of current points of access and opportunities from pre-existing strategies by the FCPs that can be remodelled and upscaled; pre-existing strategies of other faith-based organisations; and newly proposed strategies.



In addition to the above, respondents suggested various future strategies towards FCP activities becoming more climate-responsive.





Objective 5

Recommendations for Scaling Successful Models

1

Develop Targeted Climate Interventions in collaboration with key stakeholders is essential to ensure sustainability and long-term resilience. These should be tailored programs based on community-specific climate vulnerabilities, such as flood management systems.

2

Expand Disaster Preparedness and Agricultural Support: CIGH should implement programs such as early warning systems, emergency training, and climate-resilient agricultural practices. Providing financial and technical support for farmers will bolster food and water security.

3

Leverage Existing Models: Drawing on successful models like Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), as well as facilitating knowledge sharing and providing technical support will accelerate the adoption of effective solutions.

4

Increase Funding and Resources: Enhanced resources through grants, fundraising events, and partnerships will enable FCPs to scale up climate adaptation and mitigation strategies effectively.

5

Enhance Awareness and Advocacy Campaigns: Comprehensive campaigns, toolkits, and workshops will empower FCPs to integrate climate considerations into their activities. Advocacy efforts, supported by partnerships and diverse communication channels, can amplify impact and foster grassroots participation.

6

Build Targeted Capacity-Building Programs: Addressing skill gaps through training in climate science, project planning, and fundraising is critical in partnerships with universities and experts, alongside peer networks.

7

Strengthen “Weak” Territories: Prioritizing regions with significant capacity gaps through mentorship and resource allocation will ensure balanced development and equitable climate resilience across operational areas.

8

Diversify and Deepen Climate Actions: Expanding beyond tree planting to initiatives like sustainable agriculture and renewable energy will address diverse climate challenges. Engaging caregivers and fostering partnerships can enhance program relevance and impact.

9

Sustain Educational Program Impact: Integrating climate education into school curricula and community events, supported by interactive materials and follow-ups, will promote long-term awareness and proactive measures.

10

Expand Food and Water Security Initiatives: Promoting sustainable farming, crop diversification, and efficient water management will help mitigate food and water insecurities caused by climate change.

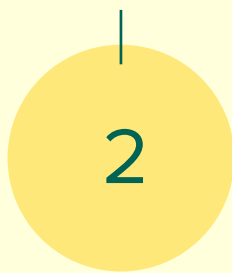
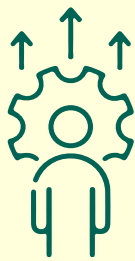
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Develop Youth Climate Programs: Initiatives like the Compassion Climate Ambassador Program (CCAP) and One Child One Tree (1C1T) will engage children and youth in climate leadership and environmental stewardship, fostering a culture of responsibility and resilience.

Policy Implications



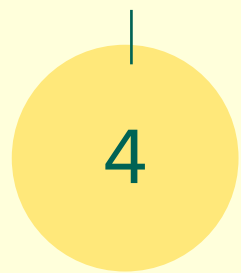
Formal
Integration
into National
Climate
Policies



Capacity
Building
for FBOs



Financial &
Technical
Support

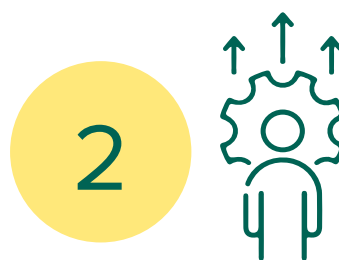


Monitoring
& Evaluation
(M&E)



Formal Integration into National Climate Policies

- Establish a framework to incorporate FBOs into Ghana's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.
- Facilitate partnerships between FBOs, NGOs, and government agencies to ensure alignment and resource-sharing.



Capacity Building for FBOs

- Provide training programs to enhance FBOs' understanding of climate science, adaptation strategies, and child-centered approaches.
- Equip FBOs with tools to implement and monitor climate interventions effectively.



Financial and Technical Support

- Allocate government and donor funding to support FBO-led initiatives.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to provide technology and resources for sustainable farming, education, and health programs.



Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- Develop standardized metrics to assess the impact of FBO-driven climate adaptation initiatives.
- Include FBOs in national data collection and reporting frameworks.

Conclusion

The intersectionality between climate change effect and children/ youth living in more vulnerable conditions is an important concern since vulnerability entrenches and exacerbates the impact of climate change on such youth and children. Ghana's climate challenges demand innovative, inclusive, and community-driven solutions. Faith-Based Organizations such as Compassion International Ghana with their Frontline church Partners are not completely climate-blind. There are existing models of CIGH that could serve as points of entry for designing climate-sensitive interventions. Thus, FBOs are pivotal in addressing the vulnerabilities of children and youth. Formalizing their role, enhancing their capacity, and fostering partnerships can significantly amplify their impact. Policymakers, academicians, and NGOs must act collaboratively to integrate FBOs into national strategies, ensuring a resilient and equitable future for Ghana's children.

Ghana's climate challenges demand innovative, inclusive, and community-driven solutions.




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