

POLICYMAKERS' DIGEST



**Key recommendations for strengthening
national and local capacities to manage
climate and disaster risks**

2022

**THE REPUBLIC OF
GHANA**



In October 2022, a comprehensive diagnosis of national and local capacities to manage climate and disaster risks was conducted in Ghana. The assessment was led by the Government of Ghana, represented by the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), in close collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and with the support of the United Nations System in Ghana and the CADRI Partnership. This document presents the key findings and recommendations of the assessment.

The CADRI Partnership is a global UN led partnership that works towards strengthening countries' capacities to pursue integrated and coherent solutions to reduce disaster and climate risks across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This publication may be used and reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, for educative and for non-commercial use without special permission in writing from the copyright's holder, provided credits are given to the copyright holder. The Organization of the United Nations would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication making use of this document.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Diagnosis of National and Local Capacities to manage Disaster and Climate Risk in Ghana conducted in 2022.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Ghana faces significant exposure to climate and disaster risks, which threaten the development gains achieved in recent decades. These risks, compounded by rapid and unplanned urbanization, result in the creation of slums and informal settlements. Poor land-use planning, inadequate waste management, and a growing population that is increasingly urban, rather than rural, exacerbate vulnerability. The impacts of these hazards can lead to substantial economic and environmental losses. Recent floods in various parts of the country highlight the consequences of this combination of factors.

However, Ghana has demonstrated a strong commitment to disaster risk reduction (DRR) through a series of reforms focused on DRR rather than disaster response. The country has made progress in strengthening its institutional frameworks and implementing policies aimed at improving resilience to both existing and emerging climate and disaster risks.

The 2022 capacity diagnostic revealed that the government has bolstered its institutional architecture, developed and revised policies, and integrated DRR as a cross-cutting theme across various programmes to reduce disaster risks. This framework enables Ghana to produce and disseminate information on climate and disaster risks through an early warning system that covers most areas most at risk. Efforts are being made to reduce disaster risks in key social and economic sectors,

with the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) operating at both the national and district levels. Moreover, the government is working to set up a coordination mechanism to improve preparedness and enhance response capabilities. To support vulnerable populations, various social safety nets have been established in addition to the general capabilities deployed to prepare for and respond to disasters.

Despite these positive steps, significant challenges remain in strengthening critical social and economic sectors such as agriculture, the environment, health, and infrastructure. These sectors need further reinforcement to reduce their vulnerability to climate and disaster risks. Strengthening these sectors will contribute to the establishment of resilient systems and infrastructure in areas such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, and transport. Additionally, these efforts should focus on improving the social protection system to better protect vulnerable groups, including children, women, persons with disabilities, small-scale farmers, and people living in slums.

The primary recommendations in this digest report aim to address key weaknesses identified during the capacity diagnostic, including:

1. Coordination challenges: The current coordination mechanism remains burdensome for NADMO, hindering its ability to ensure the

effective participation of national institutions and hold partners accountable. There is an urgent need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all state institutions involved in reducing climate and disaster risks.

2. Information system gaps:

Harmonizing and centralizing the information system for all hazards, particularly recurrent ones such as meteorological and biological hazards, presents a significant challenge. The situation is further complicated by the lack of technical and logistical capacities within the relevant institutions.

3. Insufficient investment in resilience:

The government lacks adequate funding to invest in the resilience of its economic and social sectors. Consequently, major investments are primarily carried out by external partners, often with limited scope and unsustainable outcomes over time.

4. Decentralized capacity deficits:

Institutions responsible for managing climate change and DRR face severe staffing and technical capacity shortages at the decentralized level. Furthermore, these local-level institutions are more deprived of materials and resources compared to their national counterparts.

UNDERSTANDING DISASTER RISK

The current architecture for producing and managing disaster risk data is well-established, with relevant institutions and laws in place. Each institution is mandated to manage data related to its specific area of expertise or field of work. The country has an early warning system that covers nearly all regions. However, this system does not integrate all climate- and disaster-related risks. It also has limitations, as it does not cover all the most vulnerable regions, being supported by partners with specific geographical

mandates and areas of intervention. As a result, much of the data produced focuses more on geographical scope rather than exposure and vulnerability, and it is often not presented in a user-friendly format. Furthermore, risk assessments are not multi-hazard, and sectors make minimal use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The existing system also lacks centralization, meaning the risk data produced is not efficiently shared or integrated.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

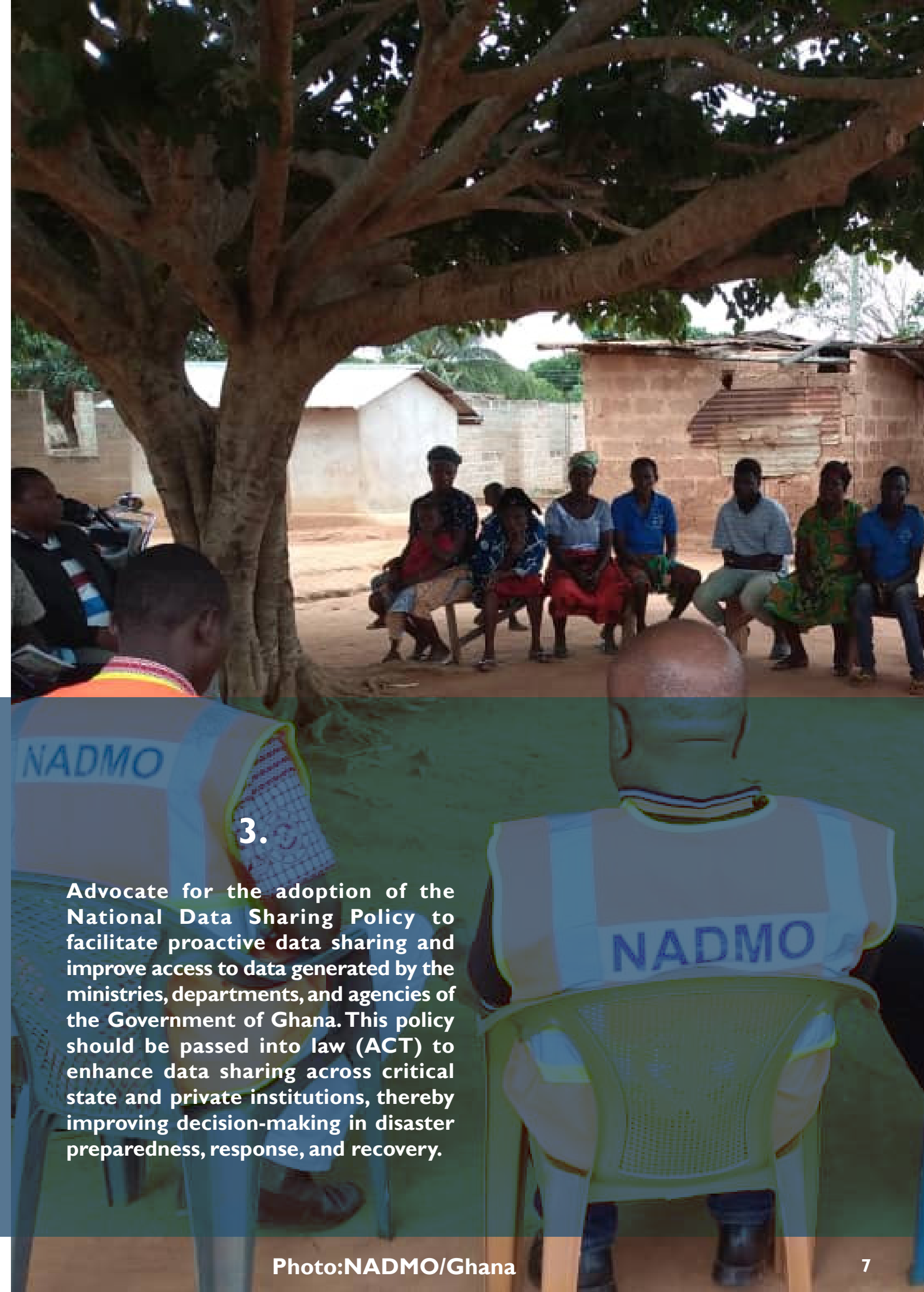
Reinforce the relationship between **NADMO** and other key institutions with expertise in vulnerability analysis, through effective **m e m o r a n d u m s** of understanding among these institutions.

2.

Improve capacity-building for the standardization of data collection and sharing practices among institutions.

3.

Advocate for the adoption of the **National Data Sharing Policy** to facilitate proactive data sharing and improve access to data generated by the ministries, departments, and agencies of the **Government of Ghana**. This policy should be passed into law (**ACT**) to enhance data sharing across critical state and private institutions, thereby improving decision-making in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.



GOVERNANCE TO MANAGE DISASTER RISK

The Republic of Ghana has made significant strides in improving its disaster risk management system at both the national and local levels. At the institutional level, the country can rely on NADMO, which is mandated to reduce disaster risks and coordinate the efforts of actors working in DRR across the country. This mandate is supported by a clear law published in 2016. NADMO, which operates under the Ministry of the Interior, also serves as the secretariat for the National Disaster

Committee, which is led by the Vice-President and brings together all the key ministries involved in disaster management.

However, despite these institutional frameworks, the implementation of laws and policies has been ineffective due to limited capacity and insufficient funding for DRR. Additionally, DRR policies are not updated promptly and lack a clear action plan and a robust funding strategy.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

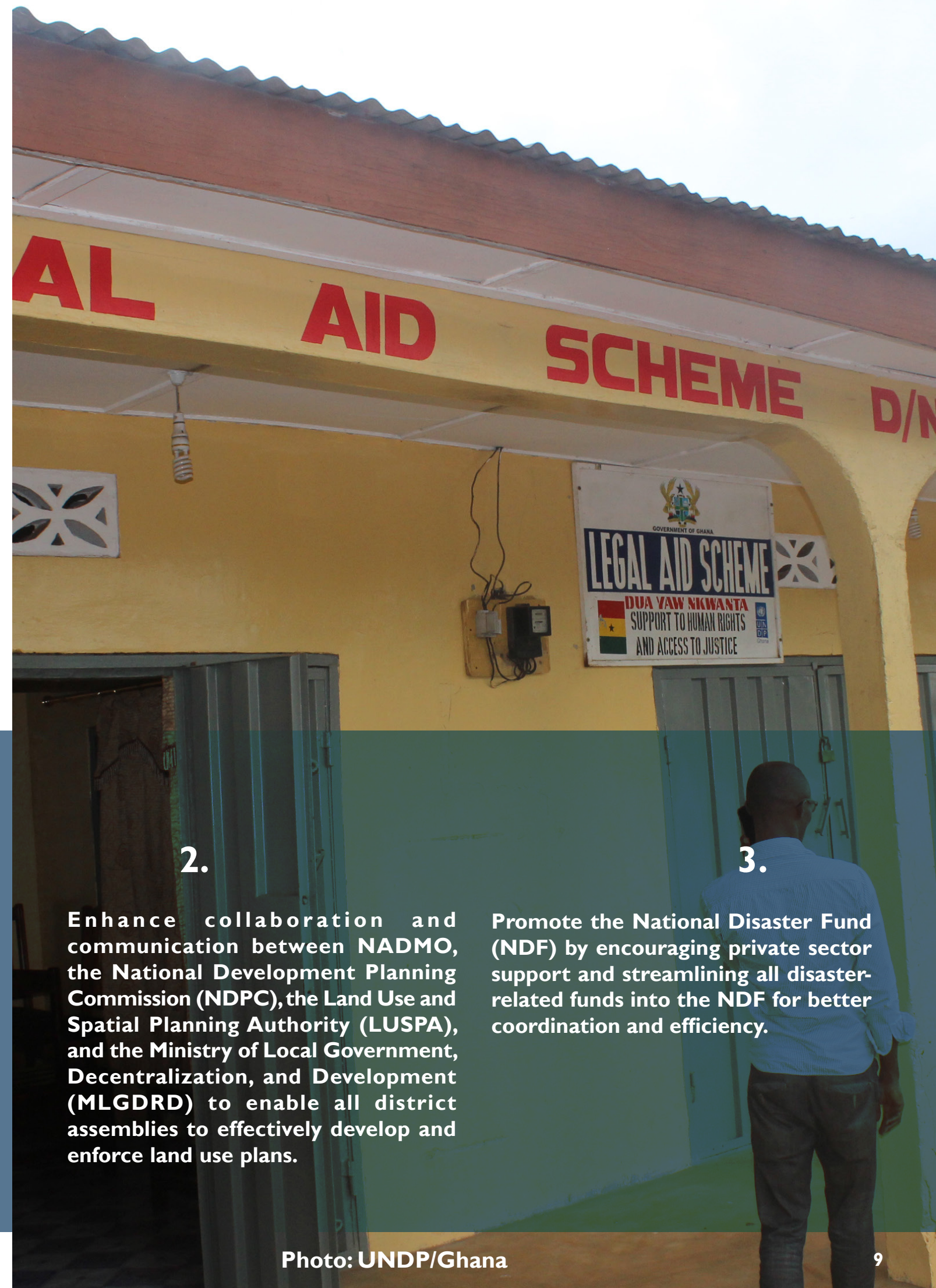
Develop a National Disaster Management Framework to strengthen regulations by clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of each agency and national/local structure involved in the implementation of Act 927.

2.

Enhance collaboration and communication between NADMO, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA), and the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization, and Development (MLGDRD) to enable all district assemblies to effectively develop and enforce land use plans.

3.

Promote the National Disaster Fund (NDF) by encouraging private sector support and streamlining all disaster-related funds into the NDF for better coordination and efficiency.



SPATIAL PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in spatial planning are well defined by acts and laws. These laws assign responsibilities for policy development, guidance, and implementation, although DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA) are only mentioned in spatial planning regulations. LUSPA and the Environmental Management Unit (EMU) within the

Ghana Highways Authority (GHA) are responsible for producing information on land-use planning and road infrastructure respectively, while considering disaster risk. According to legislation, NADMO is responsible for DRR, but its limited technical capacity prevents it from fully integrating DRR into land-use planning.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

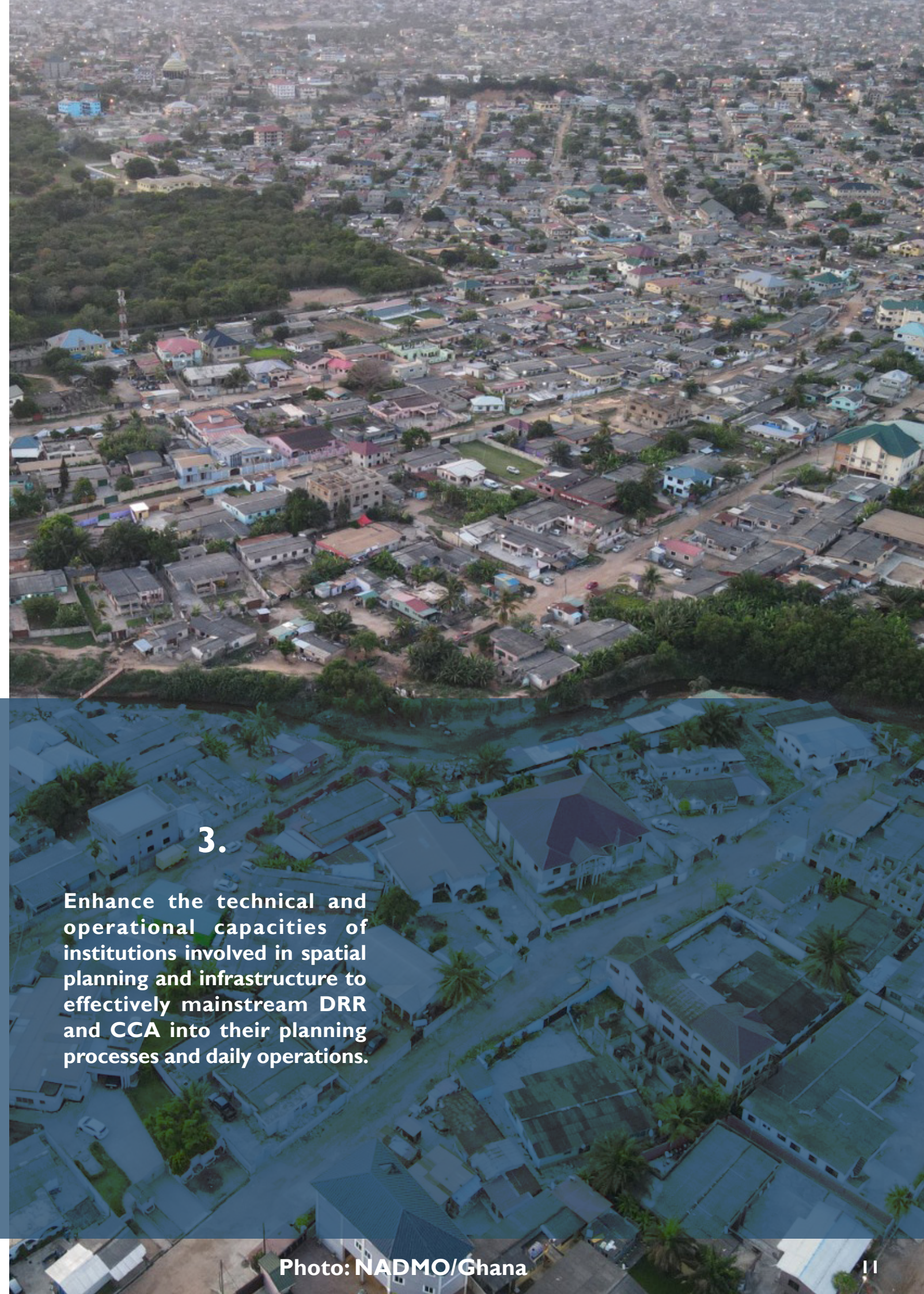
Reinforce the coordination mechanism between LUSPA and other relevant national institutions, particularly in DRR and CCA.

2.

Strengthen monitoring mechanisms for both public and private construction to ensure compliance with existing policies and standards, preventing engineering issues that could lead to disasters at national and local levels.

3.

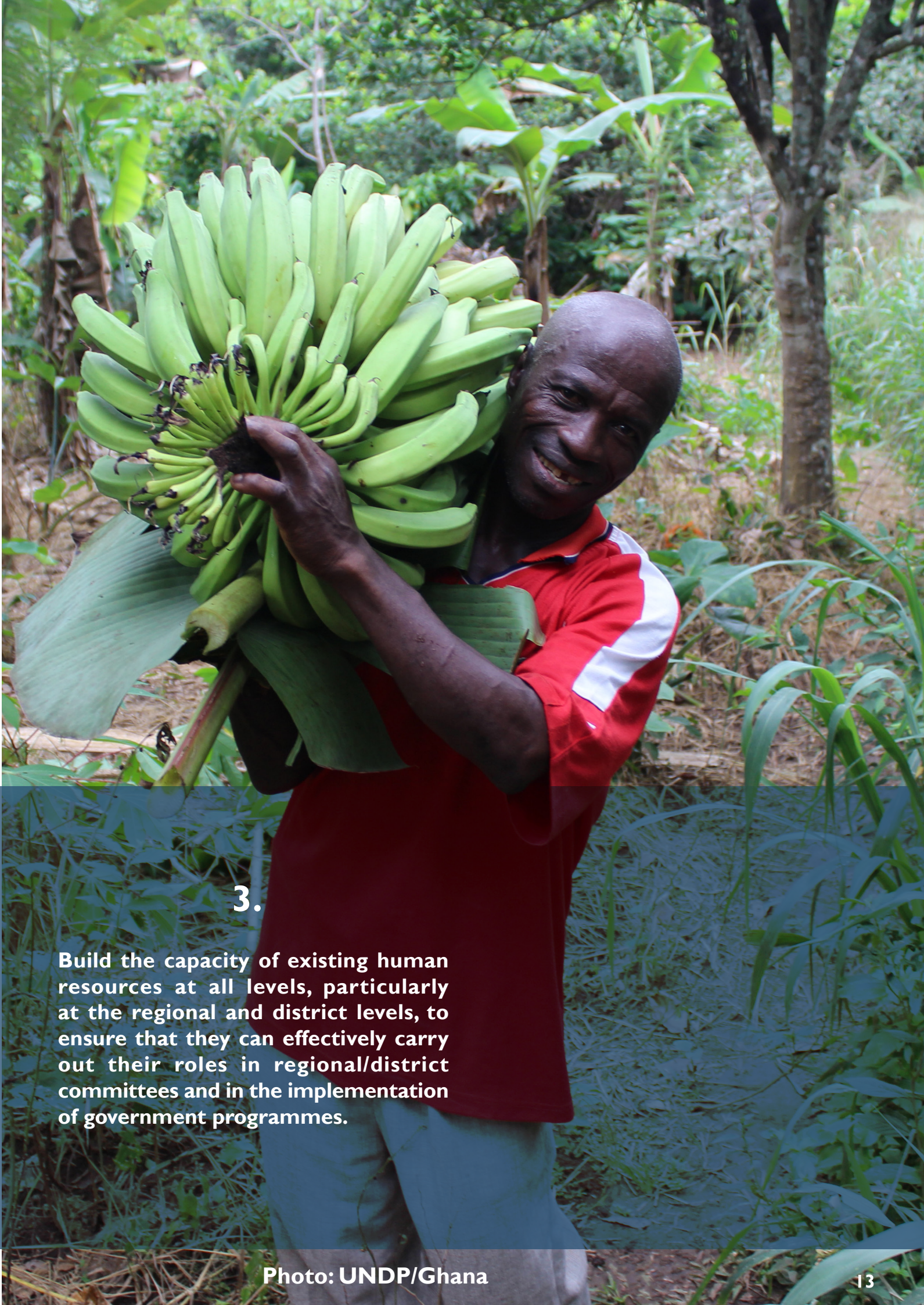
Enhance the technical and operational capacities of institutions involved in spatial planning and infrastructure to effectively mainstream DRR and CCA into their planning processes and daily operations.



AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is a source of livelihood for over 75% of the population and contributes around 21% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Despite its importance to the country's economy and existing policies structuring the sector, the impact of disasters on agriculture and farmers—and the resulting food insecurity—are recurrent. One of the key causes is the low level of investment in building resilience

in the sector, despite the existence of a well-structured early warning system. Smallholder subsistence farmers, who use few improved technologies and have limited access to markets, make up the majority of the population that relies on agriculture for their livelihood. This makes rural communities especially vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Allocate dedicated, flexible, and predictable funding within the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) budget for the implementation of DRR and CCA activities in the agriculture and food sector, to reduce dependence on donor support.

2.

Strengthen coordination mechanisms and institutional arrangements at the regional and district levels with NADMO and other relevant organizations, ensuring effective and efficient communication and coordination across sectors related to agriculture, DRR, and CCA.

3.

Build the capacity of existing human resources at all levels, particularly at the regional and district levels, to ensure that they can effectively carry out their roles in regional/district committees and in the implementation of government programmes.

ENVIRONMENT

The environmental sector is governed by laws and regulations at both national and local levels. Coastal communities have implemented local adaptation strategies to mitigate the impact of environmental risks, such as erosion and marine pollution. Despite the existence of these laws, the roles and responsibilities of public institutions in climate and disaster

risk reduction are not clearly defined. Additionally, the sector lacks a well-coordinated information system, leading to unpredictable and sporadic information production. Moreover, the country does not have specific funding allocated for climate and disaster risk reduction within the environmental sector.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Empower regulatory agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to enforce legal standards and regulations, including conducting Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) where relevant. To achieve this, these agencies must operate independently, free from external interference.

2.

Initiate discussions with the private sector to integrate them into the national disaster management system, particularly in the context of response and recovery plans for the environmental sector.

3.

Review existing policies, strategies, and plans in the environmental sector to mainstream DRR, or ensure the mainstreaming of DRR in implementation plans while awaiting a review of the core documents, and include legal provisions for financing local governments.

4.

Increase investment in nature-based adaptation measures to reduce environmental risks, particularly in green infrastructure, such as mangroves for coastal protection, as well as in other infrastructure such as sea defenses.

WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)

The line ministries and public universities produce evidence-based information on water, sanitation, and hygiene-related disaster risks. However, funding for research in this area remains insufficient. The information generated helps inform preparedness and response plans and activities. Despite this, coordination mechanisms are weak, and the implementation of policies and laws is

hindered by a lack of resources, capacity, and enforcement of regulations. As a result, there is poor coordination between communities and the public institutions responsible for DRR at the national level, even though a community-based early warning system exists. Additionally, strategic plans do not include DRR and CCA, and sectoral planning often overlooks the recovery phase.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

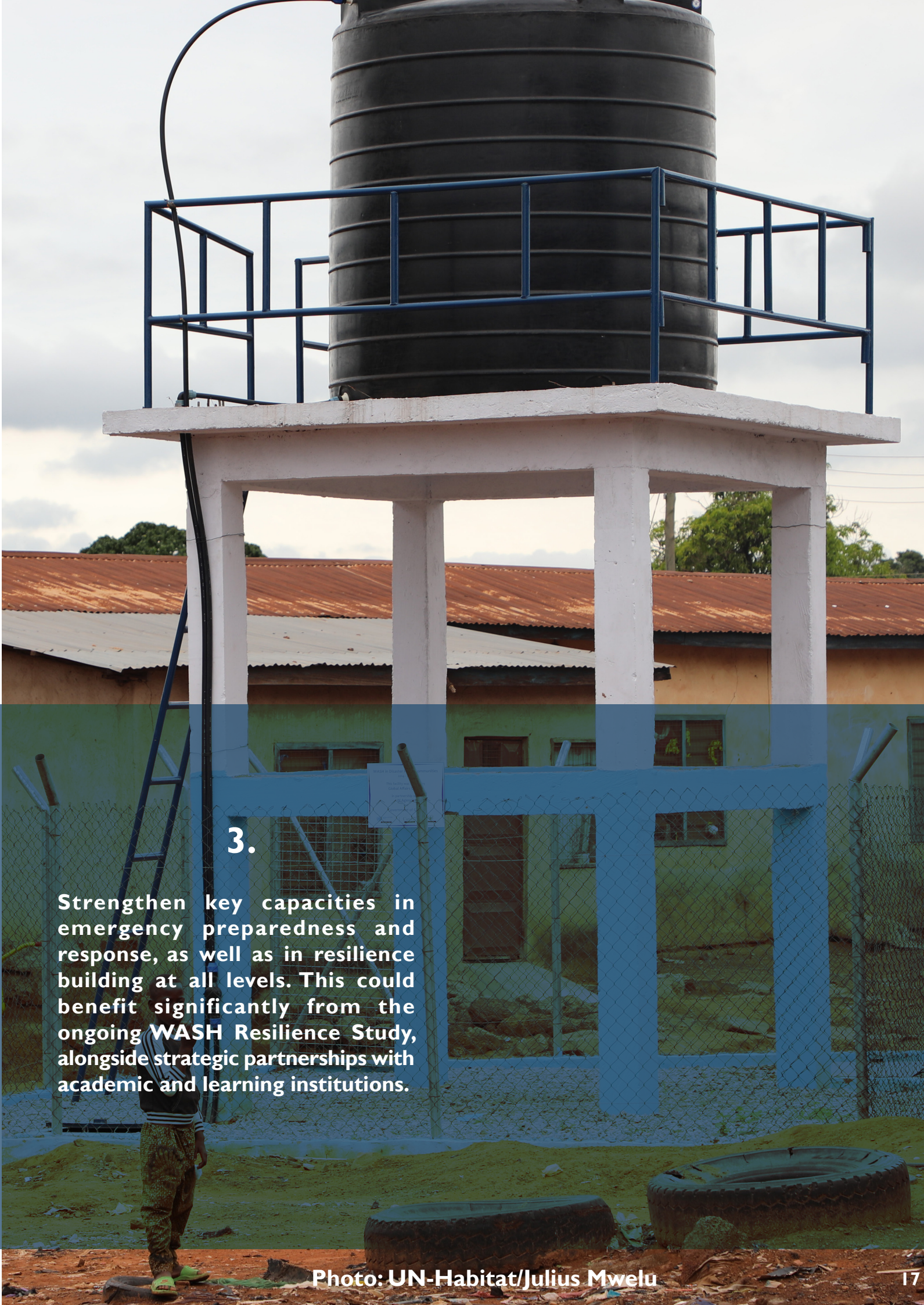
Conduct sustained advocacy to build political will for planning and enforcement of existing laws and regulations.

2.

Integrate community engagement, co-creation, and knowledge harvesting into the operational guidelines for WASH and DRR Ministry Departments and Agencies (MDAs), especially at the decentralized level.

3.

Strengthen key capacities in emergency preparedness and response, as well as in resilience building at all levels. This could benefit significantly from the ongoing WASH Resilience Study, alongside strategic partnerships with academic and learning institutions.



HEALTH

The institutional organization of the health sector, along with existing coordination mechanisms, facilitates the production of information on health-related disaster risks and the dissemination of alerts at all levels through a well-functioning early warning system. The Ghana Health Service (GHS) has specific structures and mechanisms in place for preparing for and responding to health emergencies,

in conjunction with those established by NADMO. Despite these efforts, the existing information system does not include the private sector. Additionally, investment in resilience within the health sector is low, as the focus is more on preparedness and response rather than on DRR or strengthening the resilience of the healthcare system.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Mainstream DRR into health policies to ensure that all actors are well-informed, taking into account all phases of the DRR cycle in their planning and programmes, rather than just disaster response.

2.

Facilitate the full integration of private health facilities into the surveillance system to ensure the timely reception of their data on health issues.

3.

Provide district health directorates with adequate funding and clarify the allocation responsibilities between national and regional levels to ensure accountability.



SOCIAL PROTECTION

The social protection policy aims to safeguard the poorest and most vulnerable populations against crises or shocks. The institutional framework is well-defined in the policy, outlining the roles of institutions responsible for technical and operational coordination as well as those responsible for regulation and guidance. Although DRR is considered within the policy’s objectives, it is not explicitly referenced.

Services exist to support various social groups, including workers, the elderly, women, and children. However, despite the established institutional framework, there is overlap in the roles and responsibilities of the institutions in the field. This overlap causes significant coordination challenges, and the institutions involved lack sufficient and adequately qualified human resources at the district level.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Integrate a “shock-responsive” approach to social protection within DRR and CCA strategies.

2.

Advocate for the Government of Ghana to ratify the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

3.

Build the capacities of institutions involved in social protection related to disasters, particularly the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MoGCF) and NADMO, at national, regional, municipal, and district levels to better prepare for and deliver services tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable populations.



Photo: UNICEF

PREPAREDNESS FOR DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

The country has established an institutional framework supported by a coordination mechanism to prepare for and respond to disasters. As part of this framework, an early warning system has been developed that reaches end-users in nearly all regions and districts. Additionally, emergency plans have been created at various levels, from national to district, although these plans

are not multi-hazard. While the country maintains emergency stocks, they are globally sourced and managed by technical and financial partners. Furthermore, the main national agency responsible for preparedness and response lacks sufficient and qualified human and material resources at the decentralized level.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Integrate both international and internal migrants, as well as internally displaced persons, into the legislative framework.

2.

Review existing contingency plans at the regional, district, and community levels. For areas that do not yet have contingency plans, develop these plans, including specific plans for sectors on disaster risks such as oil spills, earthquakes, etc.

3.

Effectively implement existing insurance options and explore innovative insurance solutions to support the recovery of the most vulnerable populations, particularly the poorest and vulnerable urban communities.





UNITED NATIONS
GHANA



cadri
Partnership
Capacity for Disaster
Reduction Initiative