

Greening Ghana's Post-COVID-19 Recovery: Analysing the pre-pandemic policy architecture and critical options

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Key Messages

Ghana has a sound policy framework to facilitate the attainment of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets while recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. However, the need for upgrades and revisions is paramount.

The provision of climate-compatible and resilient infrastructure is essential to enhancing economic opportunities, expanding social protection, and improving the quality of life of all Ghanaians. Thus, the pursuit of robust green-based solutions should be at the centre of the national development strategy.

The willingness of donor agencies and the private sector to partner with the State in its Green Agenda based on the need to overcome the multifaceted global challenges should be leveraged and enhanced through significant capital investments and capacity building effort.

Introduction



A green economy, a low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive form of economic growth, is widely considered the basis for building sustainable development while reducing climate change risks and protecting ecological scarcities. A green economy is also seen as a vehicle to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These goals recognise that ending world poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs, including education, health, social protection, and job creation, while also tackling environmental pollution and climate change. Similarly, a green economy and the UN SDGs are well-aligned with countries commitments under the Paris Agreement and nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

Hence, over the last twelve months, as governments race to address the social and economic impact of Covid-19, the notion of 'green recovery' has been promoted to ensure recovery plans are equitable, resilient and complementary to the SDGs and countries targets to address climate changes (NDCs). It has also been well argued that recovery efforts can play a critical role in cutting emissions and make progress on core social and economic objectives.

Ghana is one of the 195 countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement and signalled its commitment to address climate change by submitting its first NDC in 2015. Ghana is also one of the 193 countries that have adopted the UN SDGs, a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Ghana is also one of the countries that have been severely affected by COVID-19. The pandemic has negatively affected as thousands lost their jobs due to significant shocks to entire industries and sectors and

deepening vulnerability of at-risk and marginalised populations such as female head porters in large cities. The pandemic and subsequent government measures negatively affected workers in the informal economy whose livelihood is intricately linked to mass movements. The pandemic has also revealed infrastructural deficits and the vulnerability of some sectors. Thus, also invoking the need for a critical examination of the core remits of policies and their capacity to provide the needed frameworks for green recovery.

This policy brief seeks to highlight opportunities for integrating green-based solutions into Ghana's economic recovery plans following the COVID-19 pandemic. It draws its information and data from a research activity under the Greening the Recovery in Ghana and Zambia, a project funded by the UKRI. The project objectives include examining policy responses and identify opportunities for integrating economic recovery with climate change in Ghana and Zambia Covid-19 recovery plan.

Methodological approach



Two complementary approaches were used consecutively: policy review and interviews with stakeholders and experts. The policy review, which is limited to the policy areas and sectors identified within Ghana's NDCs, focused on examining the existing policy architecture and its capacity to reinforce the achievement of the GH-NDC and SDGs while also fostering a green recovery in the face of COVID-19. The team applied the content analysis method to review, in total, ten policy areas, including energy, environment, transport, forest, health, gender, housing, social protection, water and agriculture. Interviews were carried out with 22 sectoral experts and stakeholders from different sectors and institutions. Interview questions aimed to capture stakeholders' insights on Ghana's economic development trajectory, the impact of Covid-19 and climate change on Ghana's economy and way of life, and how green recovery can be marshalled.

Interface between national policies, GH-NDC and SDGs



Out of the ten policy areas reviewed, the study found that seven are aligned well with the GH-NDCs and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, thereby demonstrating strong interconnectivity. The other three, namely the Environmental and Sanitation Policy (ESP), the Ghana National Transport Policy (GNTP) and the National Water Policy (NWP), are weakly aligned with Ghana's NDCs and SDGs. Where policies are not aligned with Ghana's international commitments, it was either due to the fact that policies were enacted before Ghana ratified the Paris Agreement and the UN SDGs or due to diverging national development priorities.

Figure 1 depicts the strength of the interconnection between each policy and the GH-NDC and the SDGs as of April 2020. Arrows indicate the level of strength. The policies, represented by

acronyms, are at the top of the hierarchy of boxes. The policies are linked to the larger box in the middle, representing the GH-NDC and the SDGs. The nature of arrows indicates the strength of each policy's linkage (see Legend to Figure 1). The solid arrows indicate a strong connection or linkage; the long dashes indicate a moderate connection or linkage; the short dots indicate a weak linkage. The status of each policy's connection is determined by its goals and objectives.

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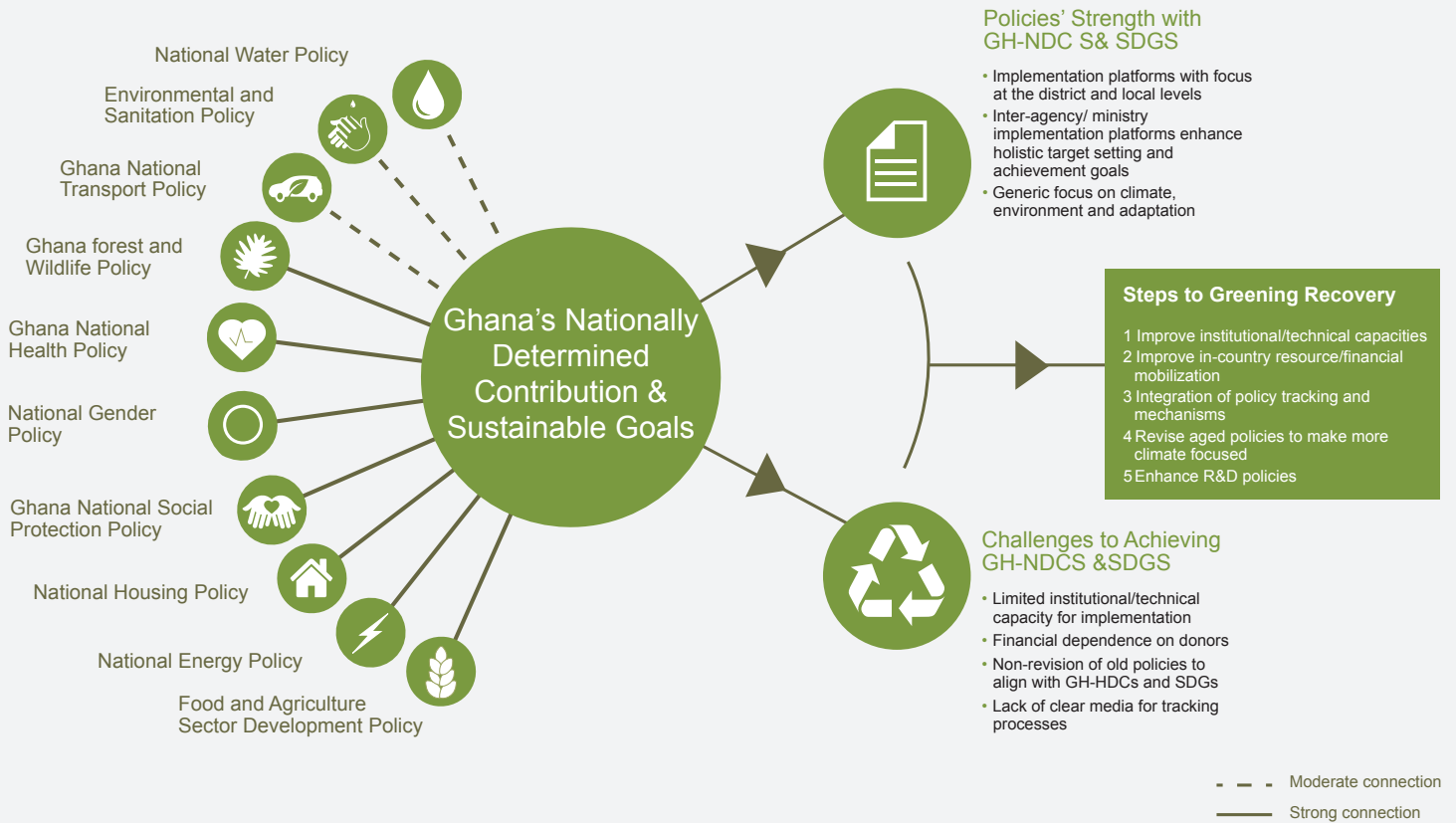


Figure 1. Synthesis and Linkages of Policies with GH-NDC and SGDs

Enabling conditions to leverage green recovery



Green recovery or inducing an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable recovery plan could enhance economic opportunity for all. Boosting green industrial growth can potentially generate green jobs for the youth. A greater commitment to improve infrastructural development such as climate resilient roads, affordable housing, improved health facilities and other forms of social services are important bases for an equitable society where potentials can be developed and harnessed for national growth. Improvement of state responsiveness for the needy and underprivileged is critical. The need to broaden the eligibility criteria for the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) and to improve social justice in general by closing the inequality gap was recognized as

essential for a just society. Allied to this expectation is the need to enhance the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) at the community level to reduce the challenges confronting the scheme.

Improving energy production and supply systems, especially the increased investment in renewable sources is fundamental to fulfil a two-pronged need. Currently, the total installed capacity for existing plants in Ghana is 4,132 Megawatt (MW), consisting of hydro 38%; thermal 61%; and less than 1% solar. The need to increase the share of renewable energy production has been made known by the government, although efforts to implement this goal has been slow. Therefore, ramping up the production of cleaner energy is indispensable. The improvement in efficiency in production, transmission and distribution is expected to lead to increased affordability and reliability of energy supplied to the end users.

However achieving all this also requires for policymakers to make a strong commitment that is demonstrable through policies, programmes as well as national development strategies. Education and public sensitization are also going to be vital to facilitate attitude change.

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Strategies for greening Ghana's post-COVID-19 social and economic recovery



In Ghana, the negative impact of the pandemic demonstrates the need to rethink approaches to economic, social and environmental policies and planning. Interviewees also highlighted the need to improve preparedness to future crisis and emergencies as well as an unambiguous focus on green-based recovery approaches was emphasised.

“The need to go green has therefore become a matter of self-preservation”

Leveraging support from the private sector and the international development community needs to be part of greening

aspects of Ghana's socio-economic development. Experts highlighted projects funded through bilateral and multilateral initiatives such as the clean cookstove initiative, reforestation, and climate-smart agricultural programmes as important strategic pillars. However, as noted by some, harnessing the favourable environment for a green recovery will require greater sensitization and capacity building to improve uptake. Some of the intervention areas include harnessing solar energy to enhance domestic power generation capacity, adopting waste-to-energy technology to address the waste management problem and GHG emission, and developing efficient and clean mass transportation systems in urban centres. Additionally, experts identified green-based solutions (e.g. organic fertilizer and manure) and low carbon technologies (e.g. solar-

powered machinery) as critical, along with the need to strengthen institutions regulatory capacity to improve forest protection and wildlife conservation laws.

Those interviewed also warned against abrupt change from the business-as-usual approach as potentially counter-productive to socio-economic progress. Stakeholders advised for initial steps to take a needs-based, stepwise approach, combining the business-as-usual system with a nature-based solution and modern green technologies as the most prudent.

The authors would like to thank the interviewees in Ghana who contributed to the research summarised in this briefing

Recommendations



The choice between progressing in a business-as-usual paradigm or harnessing technological breakthroughs to embrace a green development pathway in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic took centre stage in the research. While specific approaches to recovering in a manner that takes into account the need to preserve and conserve the natural environment may not be aligned as a consistent and integrative design, they can be complementary.

Increasing focus on green solutions cannot be over-emphasised. The rapidly changing physical and natural environment characterised by increasing rates of natural disasters are stern warnings for the need to change development paradigm. The abundant evidence of climate change events and impacts globally, coupled with the dire consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic reinforces the need for Ghana to be more ambitious with green recovery plans to meet its GH-NDC and SDGs targets.

Promotion of innovative practices

such as waste segregation will facilitate recycling and composting. This could be leveraged to promote organically smart agriculture in urban areas. Additionally, novel regulatory and investment options should focus on boosting the production of solar energy, waste to energy, resilient trees and the development of clean mass transport.

A clear issue of note has been for **policies to be functional and progressive with a greater level of responsiveness.** This could be achieved through **periodic review and assessment to enhance their relevance over time.** Policies and development frameworks must not be left static since the issues they were set up to address may have evolved.

While aligning policies and associated actions should be revived and refined to be proactive and progressive, the needed resources should also be channelled to institutions mandated to handle their implementations, so as not to make them mere paper tigers.

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