

Amplifying National Climate Action: Insights from Conference of Parties (COP) Engagements in Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Togo

By:

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IWMI West Africa Country Representative giving her speech at a post COP28 event
(photo: KathyAnn Events)

The annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) serves as the central arena for governments to assess collective progress towards the ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement. This process is instrumental in driving national climate action by producing international agreements and decisions that provide a framework for national policy. The outcomes of COP negotiations outline specific measures agreed upon by all Parties for implementation at the national level. This structured process of target setting, progress assessment, and policy refinement underscores the COP's critical role in guiding and accelerating national climate action.

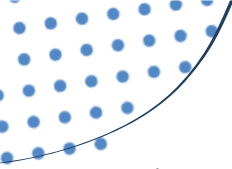
To effectively address the global climate crisis, it is therefore crucial to understand the specific vulnerabilities and priorities of individual nations. This PIN focuses on key lessons and opportunities from IWMI's engagement at UNFCCC COPs with three West African countries facing significant climate vulnerabilities: Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Togo. This PIN will also highlight how IWMI has supported these countries in advancing their climate ambitions within the UNFCCC process.

Climate Contexts of Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Togo

Ghana faces rising temperatures and increasingly erratic rainfall patterns

leading to more frequent and severe floods, droughts, coastal erosion, and heatwaves. These challenges are worsened by existing development pressures such as rural poverty and rapid urbanization. The country's climate priorities reflect a need for comprehensive action, including the development of climate-resilient infrastructure, the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, the enhancement of disaster risk preparedness and response mechanisms, and a transition towards a low-carbon economy. Ghana has shown commitment to addressing climate change by updating its Nationally Determined Contributions with ambitious goals for both mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Burkina Faso has a dry tropical climate characterized by unpredictable rainfall patterns, making it prone to both severe droughts and devastating floods. Key vulnerabilities include widespread deforestation, advancing desertification, increasing water scarcity, and a rise in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves and high winds. Burkina Faso's priorities to addressing these challenges include sustainable land restoration initiatives, the promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices, efforts to improve water resource management, and more robust early warning systems to better prepare for climate-related disasters.



Togo is experiencing a range of climate-related risks such as floods, droughts, extreme heat events, delayed rainy seasons, strong winds, uneven rainfall distribution, and significant coastal erosion. Togo's climate priorities include strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities, establishing robust climate information and early warning systems, promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, and enhancing measures for coastal protection. Togo is currently updating its National Climate Change Adaptation Plan to ensure it remains relevant and effective in addressing the country's adaptation needs.

Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Togo, while demonstrating commitment through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), face considerable challenges in fully achieving their climate ambitions. Ghana aims for significant emissions reductions by 2030 but struggles with enforcement and mobilizing sufficient climate finance. Burkina Faso, highly vulnerable to climate change impacts on its agriculture-dependent economy, has set ambitious mitigation and adaptation targets but requires substantial technical and financial assistance for implementation. Similarly, Togo has updated its NDC with goals for emissions reduction and adaptation across key sectors; however, like its neighbors, it needs robust climate governance and financial support to translate ambitions into tangible results.

IWMI Expertise in Action

IWMI plays a crucial role in addressing the intricate relationship between water resources and climate change impacts in West Africa by providing relevant evidence-based solutions to help these nations mitigate and adapt to climate challenges. IWMI also supports their engagements in global policy forums such as COP by building capacity, advocating for their priorities, and ensuring their voices are heard on the international stage.

For example, IWMI colleagues from Ghana and HQ offices participated in a Pre-SB62 strategic meeting to discuss Africa's key priorities for COP 30, and in preparation for SB62 in June 2025. IWMI played a pivotal role in the discussions, by analyzing COP 29 outcomes to help shape a unified African position on water indicators for GGA as well as subsequent discussions on gender inclusivity. Four IWMI staff are co-authoring an Opinion paper on 'Advancing Global Water Adaptation Indicators by Bridging Global Ambitions and Local Realities in the UAE–Belém Work Program', to support this GGA water indicator work.

IWMI also collaborated with the African Group of Negotiators and Experts Support (AGNES) by contributing scientific insights to climate experts and government officials on climate change-cultural

heritage dynamics, climate resilient building in Africa, and water-food-energy-ecosystem-health-climate nexus through the publication and dissemination of several policy briefs.

Thus, in all the COP engagement processes, IWMI has positioned itself as a knowledge broker, providing much needed information on climate resilience options, water indicators and metrics. IWMI’s expertise in critical areas, including advanced water accounting methodologies, the development and application of digital tools for water management, the promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices, and the establishment of effective early warning systems, is particularly relevant to the climate action agendas of Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Togo.

Further recognizing the importance of policy influence, IWMI actively supports

national negotiation teams and participates in UNFCCC COP processes. This is possible due to years of building trust and long-established relationships with key national ministries and agencies. This strategic engagement allows IWMI to share its valuable research findings, forge crucial partnerships with governments and other stakeholders, and advocate for the integration of sustainable water management principles into both national and international climate agendas.

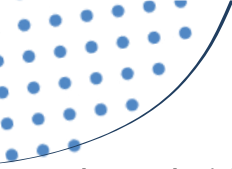
Ghana: Exemplifying IWMI’s Country Engagement Approach at COP

IWMI’s climate-related engagements in Ghana have expanded significantly over the last 5 years (Figure 1). These activities included pre-CoP 28, Post COP 28 and Post COP 29 workshops, experts’ consultations on water and climate nexus, contributions at Pre-Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and

IWMI’s COP-related Engagements with Ghana



Figure 1. Timeline of COP-related engagements in Ghana (Klinsman Amissah, Graphic Designer)



- the Subsidiary Body for Implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (SB) meetings to prepare on agenda items for COPs, and participation in COPs.

During COP 28, staff from the Ghana office participated as observers; however, they hosted a side event at Ghana's Pavilion, in partnership with the Ghana COP 28 Team, CSIR-STEPRI, and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC).

During COP 29, 3 staff members received national accreditations with Party badges. This was due to IWMI's growing relationship with government ministries responsible for climate action as well as recognition of IWMI's value to help connect and amplify messages relating to the water and climate nexus. IWMI also organized and contributed to several side events during COP 29, including one titled: 'Advancing the UAE-Belém Work Programme on indicators for the Global Goal on Adaptation.'

Alongside these engagements, IWMI organized capacity building activities for sub national officers on climate finance, leading to development officers from Sissala East and Sissala West in Ghana, jointly developing a proposal to seek funding for commercialisation of sesame production, to support livelihoods and build climate resilience of communities.

IWMI also provided technical information to national experts and negotiation teams on gender and climate vulnerabilities, and the place of water in the UAE – Belém work programme under the Global Goal of Adaptation.

Through these engagements, IWMI's collaborative partnerships with Ghanaian ministries and agencies such as the Environmental Protection Authority, National Development Planning Commission, Ministry of Water, Ministry of Food and Agriculture and Ministry of Finance, is growing stronger, and effectively driving the global water-climate agenda.

Burkina Faso

At COP 29, IWMI strengthened its collaboration with Burkina Faso's Ministry of Environment, Water and Sanitation (MEEA) through a high-level meeting led by Minister Roger Baro and IWMI's Director General Mark Smith. The discussions focused on enhancing sustainable water management and food security in the context of climate change. The Minister outlined key priority projects requiring financing, including water security for climate change adaptation, the development of water agencies and integrated water resources management, the strengthening of local governance and resilience to climate change, and capacity building of water agencies. This high-level

engagement with MEEA reinforced IWMI's role as a trusted partner in co-developing solutions for IWRM.

IWMI identified opportunities to support Burkina Faso in agricultural water management, natural disaster risk reduction (droughts and floods), invasive aquatic plants, integrated water resources management (IWRM), groundwater assessment, and capacity building. The Minister emphasized the need for innovative, inclusive approaches to mitigate water-related conflicts and requested concrete tools or activities by COP 30. Furthermore, discussions highlighted the demand for digital tools to address national priorities in monitoring water resources and reporting progress on the GGA. IWMI followed up to co-develop a water accounting dashboard for Burkina Faso, with potential implementation by COP 30. IWMI is

working with a focal point and two fellows in the country to facilitate the co-development of the tool and build ownership.

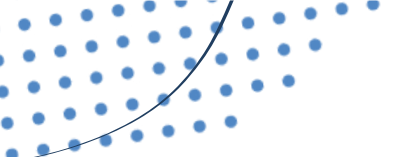
Addressing water resource conflicts is a priority in Burkina Faso's current context, offering IWMI an opportunity to develop community-focused solutions through initiatives like the Fragility, Conflict and Migration program. However, significant budgets for priority projects underscore a persistent financing gap, necessitating IWMI's support in unlocking climate finance for water-related initiatives.

Togo

At COP 29 in Baku, IWMI positioned water at the center of Togo's climate agenda through two well-attended sessions in the Togo Pavilion: (i) "Analysis of water-resource dynamics in Togo:



Figure 2. Meeting between IWMI and MEEA of Burkina Faso at COP29 (photo: DCRP/MEEA)



climate-financing opportunities for sustainable water management” and (ii) “Climate-Resilient Agri-Food Transformation Project in Togo (C-CRAFT).” These engagements showcased new hydrological evidence, highlighted the economic cost of unchecked water risks, and demonstrated how robust analytics can unlock concessional finance. Presenting concrete water-availability metrics with the Togo delegation called for improved hydrometeorological networks and decision-support systems. These sessions were particularly important given the persistent financial gap that remains in Togo: Togo’s updated NDC estimates the cost of its 2020–2030 climate goals at roughly USD 554 million per year, yet water-related projects continue to receive only a small share of the climate finance flowing into West Africa.

A bilateral meeting with the Minister of Environment and Forest Resources (MERF) deepened these dialogues. IWMI briefed the Minister on the C-CRAFT concept note submitted to the Green Climate Fund. The proposed C-CRAFT project—linking water, climate-smart agrifood practices, climate-information services, and gender-responsive value-chain support—was introduced and received positively by the Togo delegation as a promising approach to bridge sectoral silos. The Minister not only welcomed the proposal but also requested IWMI’s

continued technical backstopping on water, environment and agrifood systems to strengthen food security in Togo. Building national capacity and expertise in hydro-climate analytics and information management was highlighted as a critical need to strengthen monitoring systems and accelerate effective climate adaptation.

Key Takeaways

This PIN highlights the critical role of COP engagements in advancing national climate action in Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Togo, and the importance of IWMI’s continued support. These West African nations face significant and distinct climate vulnerabilities, ranging from erratic rainfall and desertification to coastal erosion and extreme heat events. The COP process provides a crucial international framework for addressing these challenges through negotiated international agreements and decisions that guide national policy. IWMI’s engagement in these processes, particularly in Ghana, demonstrates the value of providing technical expertise, fostering collaborative partnerships with national governments, and directly supporting negotiation teams. By helping to amplify and understand specific vulnerabilities and priorities of individual nations, international processes can be more effective in addressing the global climate crisis.

To maximize IWMI's impact on the effectiveness of future COP engagements and support national delegations, the following action areas are proposed:

- **Strengthen Pre-COP Preparations:** Expand pre-COP workshops to include a wider range of national stakeholders from Burkina Faso and Togo, mirroring the successful model in Ghana. These workshops should focus on in-depth analyses of negotiation agendas, identification of national priorities within these agendas, and the development of evidence-based positions informed by the latest scientific research.
- **Enhance Technical Support for Negotiations:** Formalize mechanisms for providing on-demand technical expertise to national negotiation teams during COP sessions. For example, party badges (from Burkina Faso, Ghana and Togo) granted access to negotiation rooms and deliberations, allowing IWMI to equip delegations with timely, evidence-based insights.
- **Support Post-COP Implementation Planning:** Extend post-COP dialogues to Burkina Faso and Togo, focusing on translating COP decisions into actionable national strategies and identifying opportunities for collaboration and support in their implementation.

Opportunities to scale successes

The successful engagement model implemented in Ghana, characterized by consistent pre- and post-COP workshops, strong government partnerships, and direct technical support to negotiators, presents significant opportunities for scaling up in Burkina Faso and Togo. By building trust and formalizing clear pathways of technical assistance, IWMI expertise in the water-climate nexus can promote integrated approaches of water management considerations into broader national climate action plans and NDC updates.

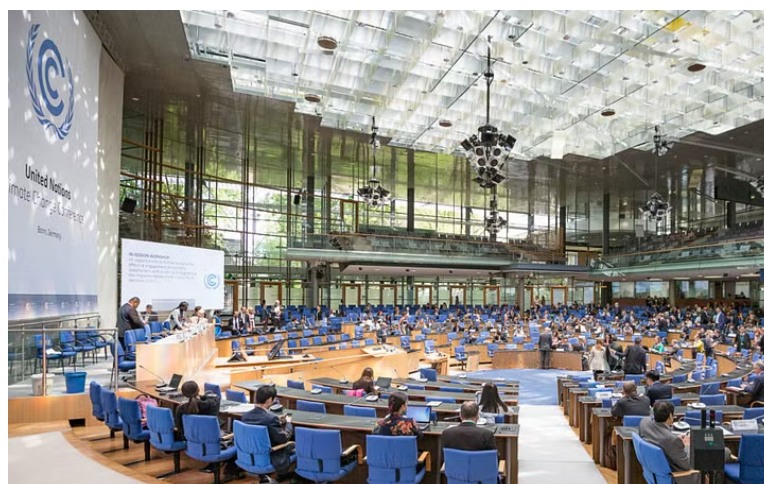


Figure 3. Conference floor at COP (photo: UN Climate Change)

IWMI's engagement with Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Togo provides a valuable model for other IWMI teams to inform their own country engagements at COP. It is important to not only share relevant technical information but also develop relationships and build trust with strategic partners. This PIN underscores the potential for IWMI to replicate and scale these efforts, supporting climate ambitions at COP.

Future engagement strategies to deepen collaboration and expand impact:

- **Establish strategic partnerships and build trust:** Continue to strengthen partnerships with national ministries, agencies, and research institutions in all three countries to co-develop research agendas and policy recommendations.
- **Promote evidence-based advocacy:** Proactively develop and disseminate research findings that address key challenges and opportunities identified through national consultations and COP discussions. For example, IWMI should leverage an MoU with AGNES to develop a proposal and source for funding to conduct the gender and climate vulnerability hotspot mapping for Nigeria, Togo and Burkina Faso, using the example from Ghana.
- **Focus on capacity strengthening:** Implement targeted capacity-building programs for government officials, local communities, and civil society organizations to enhance their understanding of climate change impacts, adaptation strategies, and engagement in climate policy processes. For example, given the COP 29 decision texts for gender and climate, GGA, and NAPs indicate the need for scientific evidence and decision support tools, IWMI should reach out to the country negotiation teams to understand specific needs, then design tailored capacity building interventions. This can start by embedding the activities in existing projects then sourcing funds for further interventions.
- **Leverage digital tools:** Explore the use of digital platforms and tools to facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and knowledge dissemination among national stakeholders and negotiation teams before, during, and after COP meetings.
- **Promote regional collaboration:** Foster stronger regional collaboration on climate action by facilitating dialogue and joint initiatives between Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Togo on shared vulnerabilities and potential solutions.

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Project

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