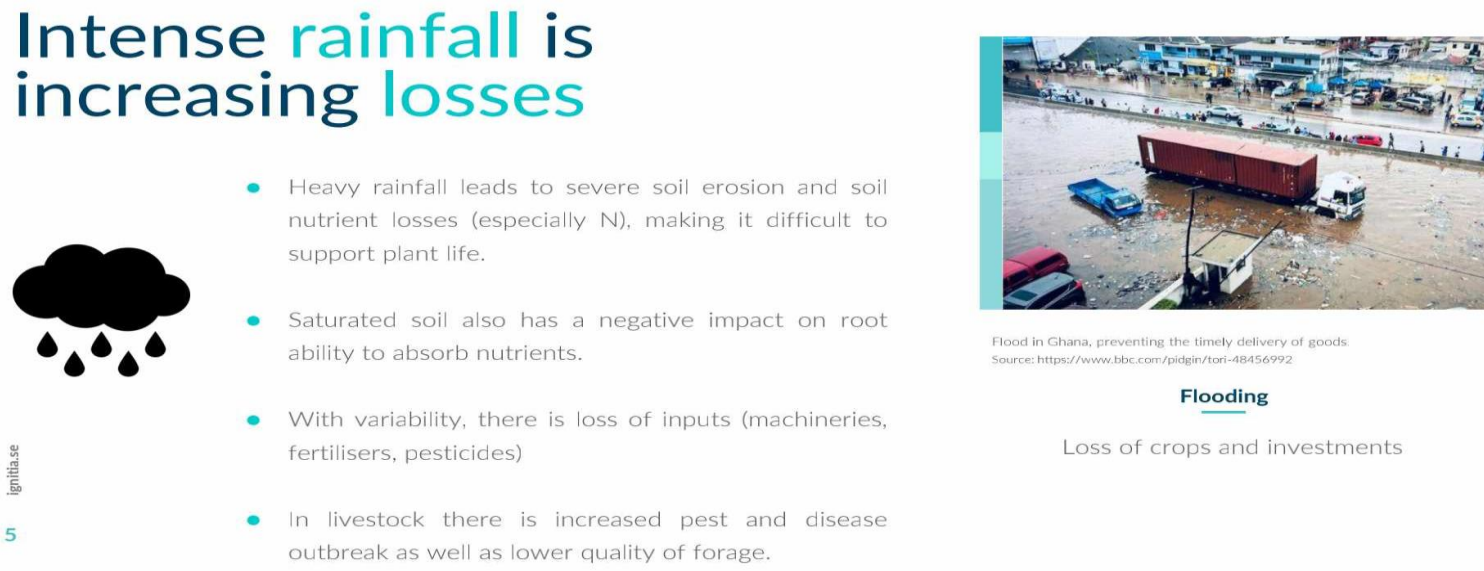

Three Common Myths about Climate Adaptation

The clock is ticking and the impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly severe. It's time to face the hard truth: we must take immediate action to adapt to the changing climate.

U nfortunately, myths and misconceptions are holding us back, hindering our ability to make meaningful progress in this critical area. It's time to debunk these myths and pave the way for a sustainable future.

In this blog, we'll explore some of the most common misconceptions about climate adaptation, and shed light on what we need to do to overcome them.

Myth 1: "Climate adaptation means giving up on mitigation."

For many people, the negative impacts of climate change on society are not an abstract scientific projection, but a reality they are living with today. For these people, **adaptation cannot wait.** In other words, adaptation is not an admission of defeat – it is a necessity.

We therefore cannot afford to consider adaptation only as an afterthought. **Adaptation must be "mainstreamed".** For GCA, mainstreaming adaptation means, among other things, working with multilateral development banks and other partners to ensure that adaptation measures are built into new development projects from the very beginning.

Acting on adaptation and mitigation is also not a zero-sum game because the money we need for adaptation exists without us having to divert funding away from mitigation efforts. Equally, **many adaptation projects have mitigating effects**. For example, planting mangroves simultaneously contributes to protecting coastal areas and to storing carbon.

And perhaps most crucially, scientists have shown that **adaptation is necessary even if we achieve many of our mitigation goals.** According to the IPCC, limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels will still result in increased flood risk, more extreme temperatures, and damage to critical ecosystems. In other words, we can be certain that millions of lives and livelihoods will be at risk, even under best-case mitigation scenarios. This again underscores the urgent need for adaptation action – we cannot afford to see it as a last resort.

Myth 2: "Climate adaptation is too expensive."

Countries need billions of dollars of funding per year to adapt to climate change, but **adaptation is not simply a cost – it is an investment.**

This is because the more governments spend now – ensuring that our houses, infrastructure, agriculture, and supply chains are well-adapted to the changing climate – the less they must spend in the future to react to the damage, migration, and conflict caused by climate change.

The Global Commission on Adaptation quantified this fact in its report, Adapt now: a global call for leadership on climate resilience. It found that investing in improving resilience to climate impacts has benefit-cost ratios ranging from 2:1 to 10:1 – in some cases, the return on investment is even higher.
Given this fact, **adaptation makes business sense too.** Fortunately, many businesses are beginning to realize that it is in their interest to reduce the vulnerability of their operations – and their employees – to the impacts of climate change.

But progress still needs to be made. The Global Center on Adaptation's 2022 State and Trends in Adaptation Report shows that, in Africa, private investment only accounted for two percent of total adaptation finance between 2019 and 2020.

We have an opportunity to mobilize and scale more finance for adaptation. GCA is at the forefront of these efforts. Through the Upstream Financing Facility of the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP), GCA has already influenced US$5 billion in adaptation investments. GCA and the African Development Bank are working to mobilize $25 billion by 2025, through the AAAP, in order to accelerate adaptation action across Africa.

Myth 3: "Adapting to climate change is impossible."

While the climate crisis is indeed a crisis, **there is plenty of cause for optimism.** Innovative people all over the world have proven that adaptation is possible, and GCA is working hard to scale up the most promising solutions.

Often, those most active and innovative in developing adaptation solutions are the people and

communities on the frontlines of climate change. The principles for locally led adaptation (LLA), developed by the Global Commission on Adaptation, are all about shifting power to these communities, without expecting them to shoulder the burden of adaptation. The goal is to unlock, support, and leverage the enormous potential and creativity of local people. To provide these adaptation champions with additional resources and capacity, GCA recently opened a Global Hub on LLA. The Global Hub also aims to ensure that wider development investment is influenced by LLA best practices.

A similar cause for optimism is the increasing engagement of young people in the adaptation agenda. Over the past several years, young people have rightfully demanded to be heard when it comes to climate issues. They have also demonstrated their innovative potential when it comes to adaptation, offering some of the most inspiring solutions.For example, one of the winners of GCA's annual YouthADAPT challenge – a youth-led waste management company – has pioneered an innovative method of reducing flood risk in Cameroon by using drones. Such innovation proves that **empowering young people is not just fair – it's also smart.**

Recognizing this, GCA's Youth Leadership and Education program brought together 4,300 young people through Regional Youth Adaptation Forums and the Dialogues, to ensure that young people are a driving force in all adaptation efforts. GCA's Youth Advisory Panel, which provides strategic advice to the CEO of GCA, Prof. Dr. Patrick Verkooijen, is another avenue through which young people are influencing climate diplomacy.

It is also important to remember that **not all adaptation solutions rely on cutting-edge technology**. GCA is also working to drive investment into nature-based solutions – adaptation solutions based upon protecting, sustainably managing, and restoring natural and modified ecosystems. Similarly, the intergenerational knowledge and practices of Indigenous societies also offer less high-tech but potentially valuable insights into how humans can adapt to a changing environment.

Far from being an insurmountable task, climate adaptation is very much possible**.** But to accelerate progress, we need a combination of serious political will, more dedicated funding, and the empowerment of local communities and young people. If we can begin to achieve these things, we will be well on our way to a climate-secure future.

The ideas presented in this article aim to inspire adaptation action – they are the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Global Center on Adaptation.

A short story...

This is the field of Julde Atiku, a 74-year-old rice farmer in Ardo Kola Local Government Area of Taraba State.

"I took a N1.5m loan from the bank, but it was not enough. I then sold one of my houses for N2.5m. I invested everything in rice farming. I was going to harvest at least 700 bags of rice but couldn't get a grain in the end."

The floods that occurred in 2012, for example, led to the loss of over 600,000 hectares of crops and livestock, with estimated damages worth over $4 billion.