

## **The Establishment of an “animal market” in Gushegu and its implications for water availability, community livelihoods, and conflicts among competing resource uses/users.**

Osman Alhassan

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the centrality of agriculture, and livestock rearing in particular, as a major livelihood option in the Gushegu Municipality in the Northern region of Ghana. The paper further probes the critical challenges associated with the animal market, which is attracting more traders into the municipality, not the least water availability, community livelihoods, and conflicts over land and water use.

The study approaches the research task by using the mixed method in its data collection and analysis. Interviews and group discussions with relevant stakeholders including community groups (such as traders, food vendors, farmers, butchers, etc.) and the local authority functionaries and heads of decentralised agencies formed the bulk of the interviews. In like manner, social groups such as the youth, women, men, migrants, and opinion leaders participated in the interview sessions. Secondary data from periodic reports of relevant departments and agencies such as agriculture, veterinary services, and the police service among others were reviewed and salient information collected and used in the write-up.

The municipal authority’s focus on the development of an animal market in Gushegu is a long-term strategic objective aimed at improving animal health services, regulating livestock trade through competitive sales, increasing the revenue base of the municipality, and reducing conflicts arising out of cattle theft and illicit meat sales which are currently considered very rampant. This paper contends that the study area already suffers from perennial water shortages posing serious challenges to various livelihoods. Yet no comprehensive thought is accorded water vulnerabilities and the hardships associated with inadequate water supplies during the dry season.

While the desire of the municipal assembly to have a sustainable revenue stream through improved livestock trading is justified, there are other important issues that are overlooked, such as ensuring the provision of better water infrastructure and social services for the population. Indeed, the Gushegu area has witnessed immense demographic changes and resultant pressure on land and water resources, and climate change continues to heighten the water crisis in the area. Though there are some ongoing efforts aimed at making water available to the population to enhance their livelihoods, water scarcity remains one of the most discussed problems confronting Gushegu. This study contributes to existing knowledge of the area through its main findings and recommends viable avenues for reducing water vulnerability through water harvesting and underground water extraction using appropriate technologies at simple scales which can be adopted by households and communities.