

Info Note

Gender and Climate Change in Uganda: Effects of Policy and Institutional Frameworks

Findings from a desk review and two exploratory studies in Rakai and Nwoya Districts

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Key messages

- Gender and climate change issues are generally treated as cross-cutting issues, not given priority or a clear allocated budget in many of the reviewed policies. Gender mainstreaming in most of the reviewed policies is an addendum rather than an integral aspect of the respective policies. While the mainstreaming of gender in all climate change activities and programs can certainly prove beneficial, this should be done with both a comprehensive implementation plan across sectors and a clear budget allocation.
- The way in which gender issues are approached in agriculture-related policies and strategies in Uganda is diverse and not homogenized. There is need for stronger cross-sectoral coordination and accountability since gender mandates for respective interventions fall under different ministries and agencies.
- Climate change related policies have been mostly designed to address practical gender needs thus do not address the structural constraints that hinder women's access to resources. If policies are to tackle the root cause of gender inequalities, greater attention should be paid to gender structural constraints.

The importance of gender considerations in climate change policies

Years of research have shown that achieving long-term gender-sensitive climate change adaptation at the local and national level requires a supportive climate policy framework (Terry, 2009; Johnsson-Latham, 2010). However, intertwined with the multiple climate change related regulatory frameworks and actions is the recognition and examination of the differentiated needs, constraints and preferences that men, women and different socio-economic and cultural groups have in a changing climate (Dankelman and Jansen, 2010). It

seems clear that in order to understand how people's livelihoods, cultural values, local knowledge, etc. interact with a changing climate and environment at different times in history, a close look at the gender-specificities becomes fundamental. This gendered understanding of agriculture and natural resource management will be central for an effective design of policy and development programs, ensuring that they are appropriate and beneficial in the local context.

In order to obtain an enriched understanding of the framing of gender issues in climate change related policies in Uganda and to explore its impacts on climate change adaptation at grassroots, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) analyzed the influence of current policy and institutional frameworks on gender and climate issues. The study evaluated the institutional and political context under which policies related to climate change are developed and implemented in Uganda as well as examined the gender approaches employed at different administrative levels of the government.

Findings are based on a desk review of seven agricultural policies and five national plans (Table 1). The analysis paid special attention to the degree of gender inclusion in decision-making processes, the extent to which policies address women's access to and ownership of resources and the extent to which women are empowered. Additionally, ten focus groups discussions (FGD) with farmers (men and women separately) in Rakai and Nwoya districts and twenty-five semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with policy formulators at the national level, international donors, NGO representatives, district and sub-county officials, parish chiefs and local council I leaders.

Table 1. Policy documents and development plans reviewed

- East African Community Climate Change Policy (EACCP) (2010)	- National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA)
- Uganda National Climate Change Policy (2013)	- Agricultural Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan (2010/11-2014-15)
- The Uganda Gender Policy (1997)	- Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA)
- The Uganda National Environment Management Policy (1994)	- National Development Plan
- The National Land Policy (2013)	- Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) (2004/5-2007/8)
- The National Agriculture Policy (2013)	- The Uganda Forestry Policy 2001

Shortfalls of gender considerations in climate change policy formulation and implementation in Uganda

Even as Uganda progressively engages more earnestly with gender and climate change issues at the policy level, challenges still remain in formulation, regulatory framework and implementation at district and lower governance levels. This research identified four main shortfalls with regard to gender considerations in the formulation and implementation of climate change related policies in Uganda:

■ Use of unclear gender terminology and gender stereotypes

The review revealed that in both the East African Community Climate Change Policy (EACCCP) and the National Climate Change Policy of Uganda, the terms gender and women are interchangeably used. Additionally, consideration of men’s capacity to adapt and vulnerability to climate change and a comparison with that of the women is widely overlooked. This unclear gender terminology is coupled with the portrayal of women as a group vulnerable to climate change. For example, taking the National Climate Change Policy of Uganda as an example, it is remarkable how in six out of the eight sections where the word “women” appears, it does so in association with the word “vulnerability”. This representation of the problem, “women are more vulnerable to climate change” not only creates a simplified vision of the gendered vulnerability to climate change but also brings with it specific discursive effects.

By perceiving women as a homogenous group in respect to the negative effects of a changing climate, the climate change policy of Uganda neglects and radically simplifies the broad spectrum of women and men that exist in society and who will present different degrees of vulnerability to climate change depending on a wide range of socio-economic and cultural factors. With this

narrow approach to gender vulnerability, targeted climate change interventions that take into consideration these differences will likely not be developed and instead simplistic, short-term gendered interventions will be designed. If not causing unintended consequences, the best-case scenario of these simplistic interventions will be that they will not reach their greatest possible potential.

Furthermore, the emphatic portrayal of women as vulnerable and as a target group for interventions throughout both policies closes off considerations towards the root causes of gender inequalities in Uganda. This discursive effect of “what can be thought and said” in gender considerations of climate change policies silences political actions towards addressing existing gender inequalities by greatly turning the focus to practical gender needs. Indeed, including women in climate change interventions might respond to gendered-specific needs in concrete adaptation strategies but does not create action towards addressing the root causes of gender inequality. In this regard, the furthest that the national Climate Change Policy of Uganda goes is to state “*The greater vulnerability of women is mostly due to gender inequality*” but does not provide any clear pathway to action to tackle gender inequality in the country.

Throughout both the EACCCP and the national Climate Change Policy of Uganda, women are also identified as key agents of change and are assumed to have a key role in tackling the effects of climate change. This discourse of women as “saviors” greatly resonates with previous Women, Environment and Development (WED) discourses where women were portrayed as being closer to nature and environmentally conscious (Arora-Jonson, 2011). This particular portrayal of women served in the past as a justification for a greater inclusion in women in processes of participatory management of natural resources. However, there is extensive evidence that the inclusion of women in participatory processes and programs can turn out to be underproductive if women’s interests, pre-existing inequalities and the specifics of the local context are not taken into account (Leach, 2009; O’Reilly 2006). In fact, the inclusion of women in participatory processes might translate into more work for women without any practical benefit for them.



Focus group discussion in Koch Goma Subcounty, Nwoya District (Uganda). Photo credits: Julius Odeke (IITA)

■ No man's land: gender and climate change as cross-cutting issues, and the impact of this formulation on effective implementation

Since the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 - where gender mainstreaming was identified as a tool towards achieving gender equality and empowering women - considerable progress has been made in introducing gender considerations into national policies and international treaties. In Uganda, the 2007 Gender Policy establishes clear directives for the Ministry of Gender, Labour and other Ministries to mainstream gender in all of their sectoral activities and policies. The success of the Gender Policy and its objectives becomes thus linked to, and dependent on, the actions undertaken by all other Ministries. This shared responsibility on gender mainstreaming has in a way become "no man's land", where no clear structures of enforcement or monitoring mechanisms have been established to support the gender mainstreaming activities in the different ministries and district offices. As Pollack and Hafner-Burton (quoted in Sainsbury and Bergwist, 2009) very well put it:

"If gender is everybody's responsibility in general, then it's nobody's responsibility in particular".

Interviews with key informants showed limited enforcement of gender considerations at district level in both Rakai and Nwoya. Even though gender is used as an indicator for the performance reviews of policy officers, it is only in the limited sense of the "number of women invited to programs and activities". Additionally, interviews revealed limited knowledge and skills on gender, with most of the policy officers consulted having received little or no gender-related training.

A similar effect occurs in the mainstreaming of climate change issues in different sectoral policies. Both the EACCP and the Ugandan National Climate Change Policy acknowledge the multi-sectoral aspects of climate change and advocate for mainstreaming of climate change issues in sectoral, national and local policies, strategic plans and budgets. However, climate change seems to be everywhere and nowhere, since even when climate change issues are mainstreamed in the policy, there are no clear guidelines on how to implement the mandates, and additionally, the research found that in most cases there is no budget allocated for it. When it comes to mainstreaming both climate change and gender in the different sector policies, the challenges with effective implementation become exponential.

Additionally, when comparing the approach taken to tackle gender issues in the selected climate change related policies and strategies, several disconnections were found between them. For example, most of the National Development Plan action points on gender equality – the majority of which are being tasked to the

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) – are not articulated in the National Gender Policy. Similarly, the Agricultural Sector Development and Investment Plan fails to articulate how the strategy engages with the MGLSD in achieving the mandate of enhancing agricultural outputs. These disconnections exemplify the lack of harmonization and coordination on approaches used by sectors in the issue of gender, which consequently implies the lack of an implementation plan to comprehensively engage in gender related issues.

■ Insufficient consideration to gender structural constraints in policy

The majority of the reviewed policies and plans fail to comprehensively address gendered power dynamics that exist at different levels (i.e. intra-household, community, sub-county, district) and the structural constraints that underpin women's vulnerability to climate change (e.g. poor decision-making power, low literacy rates, heavy labour burden, their weak ownership and control over resources). Furthermore, customary laws and traditions play a predominant role in the governance dynamics of the rural communities in both Rakai and Nwoya Districts, relegating formal policies and by-laws to the background. A clear example is constituted by land tenure systems established in Uganda. Even though the country has a thorough land policy (2013) by which women and men are granted equal rights to own (and co-own) land, numbers show that as much as 61.3 % of women do not possess ownership of land (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2011) and are only given access to it through their male counterparts and other male family members. Indeed, most of the land in Uganda is effectively maintained under customary arrangements which restrict land ownership by women, ranging from social and cultural constraints to outright prohibitions. The fact that women do not have effective ownership of land implies that they might not be willing to make long-term investment in land that they do not own. Even if they were, they might be denied access to financial services since they lack official land titles as collateral. Worse still, even when women have been granted access to the land through their marriage, they are at risk of losing this should they divorce or become widows.

■ Ineffective decentralization as a key barrier to "walk the talk" for gender sensitive policies in Uganda

Even as Uganda operates with a decentralized structure, the system presents important drawbacks with regard to budget formulation and allocation to districts. Receiving priorities set at National Level with limited consultation in the districts, policy officers are left with very little room to maneuver and allocate funds to the priorities in their districts. Additionally, insufficient budget, training and staffing were consistently mentioned as the main reasons for ineffective implementation of gender and climate

change policies. Apart from the quota system first established in Uganda by the 1995 constitution (by which a third of all representatives and activities needs to be pursued by women), policy officers report to have introduced little or no changes in their activities with regard to gender. However, even as more women are being represented in district programs and meetings, key informants from interviews and FGDs point out that they tend to remain quieter and less participative than men, due to embedded cultural norms and assumptions.

Conclusions and policy implications

- It is clear that climate change related policies in Uganda have with the years become more comprehensive and gender sensitive. It is however also evident that the main challenge remains at the level of policy implementation and coordination between ministries.
- Customary laws and traditions greatly influence the governance systems of rural communities in Rakai and Nwoya, which relegate formal policies and by-laws to the background. This is especially visible in land ownership where despite the land policy stipulating equal ownership, women typically only access land through male relatives.
- The policies reviewed do not address the structural constraints that hinder women's access to resources. There is need for a more rigorous understanding of the social and bio-cultural local relationships in environmental and agricultural policy design and implementation.

Further Reading

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