

Info Note

Towards gender responsive policy formulation and budgeting in the agricultural sector: Opportunities and challenges in Uganda

Findings from a policy desk review and a gender budget analysis

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Key messages

- Uganda is progressively strengthening the gender component of its agricultural policies and strategic planning documents. However, a sizable proportion of policy documents remain gender blind.
- Gender issues in policies are largely equated to “women’s issues”, with women generally portrayed as vulnerable and marginalized by society. These stereotypical characterizations might reinforce gender inequalities and even become counter-productive. For an improved exercise of gender mainstreaming, gender issues in agricultural policies should incorporate men’s, women’s and youth challenges, opportunities, perceptions and preferences.
- Gender allocations in budgets at sub-county and district level remain low, with fluctuations from year to year and with sharp differences between estimated and actual budgets. This makes planning and implementation of gender mainstreaming activities extremely challenging at both district and sub-county levels. The central government should encourage local gender planning processes and increase allocated budgets.
- Gender activities planned and implemented at district and sub-county level remain largely informative (e.g. celebration of women’s day). There is need for improved gender planning with a focus on gender transformative strategies.

Achieving economic growth while reducing poverty in an equitable manner demands that governments in Sub-Saharan Africa commit actions and resources to address gender inequalities, even more so under a changing climate which is expected to widen social inequalities (Dankelman, 2012). Internationally, the UN asserts that achieving gender equality, development and peace must

be supported by explicit budgetary allocation to targeted activities to ensure gender equality at all scales (OSAGI, 2001).

Over the past two decades, Uganda has advanced gender equality and empowerment of women. Uganda’s commitment to promote gender equality and equity was confirmed by enacting the National Gender Policy (1997, revised in 2007). Other components of the political and legal efforts to tackle gender inequality include (i) the 1995 Constitution of Uganda in articles 32 (3 & 4); (ii) the Equal Opportunities Act (2007); (iii) the Public Finance Management Act (2015); and (iv) the National Development Plan II (2015/16-2019/20). However, despite all these initiatives, effective gender mainstreaming as a strategy for addressing gender inequalities remains a big challenge, as manifested by Uganda’s Gender Inequality Index of 0.538, ranking 122 out of 155 countries in the 2014 index (UNDP, 2015).

By analyzing the degree and nature of the gender integration in different agri-food related policies in Uganda, recent CCAFS research from the Policy Action for Climate Change Adaptation (PACCA) project (Acosta et al., 2015) showed that policies and implementation strategies fall short of addressing gender structural inequalities such as unequal land ownership and access, limited decision-making power, time poverty and low education rates experienced by women in Uganda.

Building on our previous research, this Info Note assesses, through a grading system, the level of gender integration of 83 agri-food policies and strategies at national, district and sub-county levels. The study also draws attention to the way men and women are characterized throughout the policy documents. District and sub-county documents were obtained from the

districts of Mbale (Eastern Region), Nwoya (Northern Region), Luweero and Rakai (Central Region). Since effective implementation of gender mainstreaming requires the allocation of at least some economic resources at the local level, we have analyzed budget allocations for gender activities in District and Sub-county Annual Action Plans.

Gender integration in agri-food policies and implementation strategies

We employed an adapted version of the Gumucio and Tafur-Rueda rubric for the degree of gender integration in climate change, agriculture and food security policies (Gumucio and Tafur-Rueda, 2015) for our assessment of the extent of gender integration within each of the policies. From all 83 reviewed documents, 30% did not have any gender integration (i.e., they were gender blind), 7% had gender only mentioned in the objectives or only identified among cross-cutting issues, 17% had gender referenced throughout the document but without a clear implementation plan and 23% had gender mentioned throughout the document, with an implementation strategy but lacking allocation of resources, and 23% had gender mentioned throughout the document, with an implementation strategy and allocation of resources (Figure 1).

Disaggregating these policy documents by theme and governance level (national, district, sub-county) several interesting patterns emerged. The majority of the national policies reviewed do not present any kind of budgetary allocation, which directly hinders the implementation of any meaningful gender consideration provided by the policy documents. However, it is worth noting that newly

approved national policies in Uganda (e.g. National Fertilizers Policy 2016, National Agricultural Extension Policy 2016 and the National Climate Change Policy 2015) have been developed with an associated strategy and investment plan, in which an allocation for budget is provided. Within these budgets, a provision for the mainstreaming of gender within the activities has been afforded.

While the five-year development plans at district and sub-county levels have a relatively good integration of gender, the majority of the sub-county annual action plans reviewed did not make any references to gender. These annual action plans constitute the key guiding documents for planning. This absence of any planned activity on gender is especially worrisome if we consider that implementation of gender activities mostly happens at this local level. In contrast, the annual budgets for the sub-counties did have a section for gender activities, revealing a mismatch between the main planning document at sub-county level, which was gender blind, and the annual budget plan, which included a budget line for gender. This mismatch partly explains why the gender budget is committed on activities that are not gender transformative.

Characterization of women and men in gender policy issues

From all the documents analyzed, 45% did not characterize women or men in any given way, either because the document was gender-blind or because it described gender in generic terms. From the policy documents that did characterize women or men, women

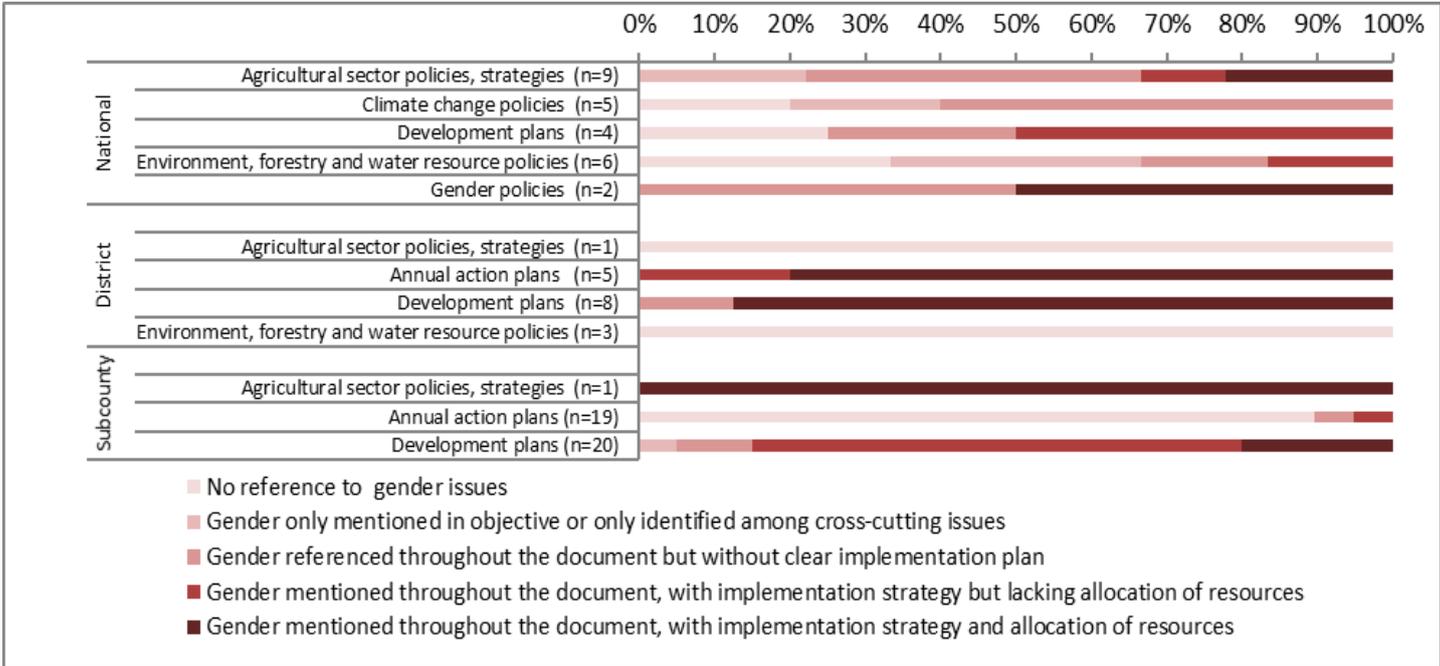


Figure 1. Level of gender integration by theme in National, District and Sub-county level in Uganda. Rubric adapted from Gumucio and Tafur-Rueda, 2015.

were characterized in all documents (100%) while men were only characterized in 30% of them. In these characterizations, women were portrayed as vulnerable (27%), marginalized (29%), time burdened (14%), illiterate (11%), with low income (6%) and other characterizations (13%). In contrast, the men were characterized as being the owners and controllers of productive and financial resources (34%), main decision-makers (21%), alcohol and gambling addicts (18%), receivers of preferential treatment in society (11%), literate (6%) and other characterizations (10%).

The consistently lower consideration given to men in gender issues unveils that gender is generally equated to mean “women’s issues”. The characterization showed that even when men are considered in policies, it is normally to state their advantaged position in society, disregarding their specific needs and constraints within the different sub-sectors. Additionally, this pervasive and dominant characterization of women as vulnerable and victims of a male dominated society is potentially worrisome in that gender stereotypes are reinforced and might even become counter-productive in achieving gender equality (Acosta et al., 2015; Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

Gender budgeting

The gender budget analysis was conducted with the last four financial years (2012/13 to 2015/16) of four different districts and three sub-counties within each of the targeted districts: Nwoya (Purongo, Anaka, Koch Goma sub-counties), Mbale (Busoba, Bufumbo, Namayonyi), Luwero (Kamira, Zilobwe, Makulubita) and Rakai (Kasasa, Dwanilo, Lwanda).

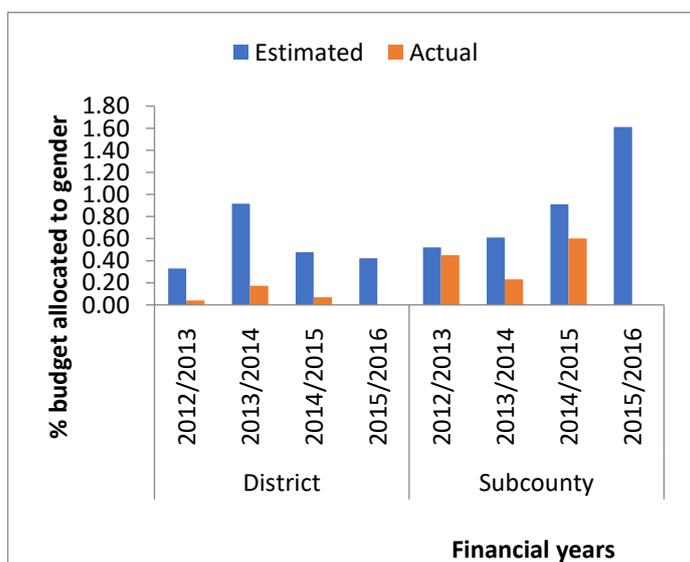


Figure 2. Estimated and actual percentage of budgets allocated to gender

The budget analysis revealed that, on average, gender activities are allocated an actual budget of 0.43% and 0.09% of the annual budget for the sub-county and district

respectively. However, these gender allocations fluctuate considerably from one financial year to another (Figure 2). Additionally, there exists a consistent and striking difference between gender budget estimates and actual budgets. This way, the district actual budget for the financial years 2012-2013; 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 constitutes on average only the 15% of the total estimate for the district and 63% for the sub-counties. However, it is worth noting that in Nwoya this tendency was inverse and the district received incrementally more budget allocations than they estimated between 2012 and 2015.

Analyzing the planned and implemented gender activities at sub-county level, the most common gender activities included: 1) gender mainstreaming; 2) celebrating officially recognized days such as international women’s day; 3) allowances for community development officers; 4) gender support activities such as supporting orphans and other facilities for vulnerable children and; 5) gender awareness creation, for instance through workshops and seminars (Figure 3).

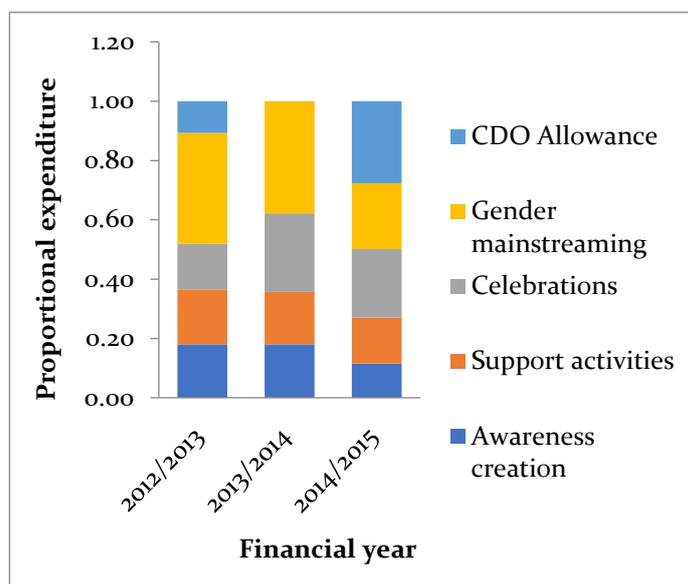


Figure 3. Proportion of gender budget spent on gender activities at sub-county level

The low percentages of budget allocated for gender activities, the fluctuations of gender budgets between consecutive years and the differences between estimated and actual budgets make planning and implementation of gender mainstreaming activities extremely challenging at both district and sub-county levels. Additionally, the planned and implemented gender activities at sub-county level do not present a gender transformative agenda in which the structural constraints of gender inequalities are directly tackled and challenged. Finally, the broad nature of the gender activities planned (i.e. “gender mainstreaming”, “awareness creation”) might make implementation of concrete, meaningful actions abstract for the policy officials at the local level.

Conclusions and recommendations

Uganda is progressively strengthening the gender component of its agri-food policies and strategic planning documents, with the majority of the documents reviewed presenting a certain degree of gender integration. However, almost a third of the documents still remain gender-blind. The analysis revealed that women are characterized as vulnerable and marginalized with victimizing stereotypes dominating the government documentation. Planning and implementation of gender activities is still weak at district and sub county level, which are the units more directly responsible for implementation. The budgets allocated for gender activities are small and principally spent on items that, rather than having a gender transformative nature, remain at the informative level, e.g. celebrating days designated for youths, women and people with disabilities. Resource constraints remain a big challenge to effective realization of gender mainstreaming goals.

The fact that new Ugandan national policies need a strategic implementation document to be passed by the Parliament provides a unique opportunity for future policies to include, from the onset, gender allocations for the different proposed activities. Generally, to increase the effectiveness of implementation of gender and equity programs, the country needs to invest in outcome-oriented planning and implementation with a focus on gender transformative activities. The central government should empower local governments to integrate gender activities and increase budget lines in all sectors. Finally, the central government should ensure that gender activities are prioritized and adequately funded beyond just the celebration of designated days.

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Further Reading

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As part of the Policy Action for Climate Change Adaptation (PACCA) project, this Info Note summarizes the findings of a policy desk review and gender budget analysis in Uganda. The views expressed in this brief are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IITA or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.

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