

Info Note

Scenario-guided policy planning in Uganda

Lessons learnt from participatory scenario policy reviews of two policies and two strategic plans

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Key messages

- Using socio-economic scenarios in policy formulation allows for an anticipatory approach to governance processes and the formulation of policies/plans that take into account future uncertainty
- To fully benefit from the dividends of scenario planning in the Ugandan context, there is need to build the scenario-guided planning capacity of both public and private sectors.
- There is need for follow up and continuous engagement with government officials responsible after the review process to enable inclusion of recommendations generated into the final policy documents.
- In some cases, the abstract nature of national policy statements limits the level of detail, hence detailed scenario guided recommendations and information may not easily fit in the existing policy formats.
- The approach is new and requires extra awareness creation not only for the government officers who draft policies but also for other major policy actors such as the political leadership who approve the policies.

Dealing with an uncertain future

Everywhere around the world people are trying to deal with the impacts of climate change. This is also the case for farmers in Uganda. The agricultural sector of Uganda has to adapt to less predictable rainfall patterns and increases in temperature. In addition, socio-economic conditions are ever changing, and we live in a complex globalized world wherein developments in one continent influence the others.

Farmers cannot adapt to the impacts of climate change on their own. Actors along the value chain must be proactive and ready for change to successfully maintain and even increase food production for the growing

Ugandan population and regional market needs. The government has to develop policies that take into account the changing climate patterns, and measures to adapt to and mitigate the consequences should be incorporated.

This info note explores how socio-economic scenarios were applied to policy review processes under the Policy Action for Climate Change Adaptation (PACCA) project. The PACCA project is an initiative of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CAAFS) that aims to influence and link policies and institutions for the development and adoption of climate-resilient food systems in Uganda and Tanzania. Scenarios were used to review one approved and one draft policy document and two draft development strategies. In this note we share lessons learnt and draw conclusions and recommendations on the use of scenarios.

Scenarios concept description

The scenarios approach is an attempt to address the “common” assumption for future planning, that is, plans are made as step by step actions to achieve a certain future goal based on present conditions. Scenarios are ‘what if’ stories about the future, told in words, numbers (models), and images or other means (van Notten et al. 2003). Rather than attempting to forecast a single future, scenarios represent multiple plausible directions that future drivers of change may take, thereby taking into account future uncertainty. Scenarios can be used to test robustness of developed policies, plans and investments in the face of future uncertainty. When using a set of scenarios, each scenario offers different future challenges and opportunities. Therefore, for each scenario, planners can ask the questions: ‘How well will our plan work under the specific conditions of this scenario?’ ‘What needs to be changed to make it work?’ When recommendations for improvement from a range of different scenarios are integrated, the plan has a better chance of being effective

– for instance by having strategies that are expected to work under all scenarios, or by including a range of different options that can be used in case of a specific scenario.

CCAFS East Africa scenarios downscaled to the Ugandan context

The CCAFS scenarios for East Africa were developed in 2011 by regional stakeholders from the public and private sector, civil society and academia (Vervoort et al., 2013). The regional stakeholders identified two key drivers for future change that were considered both highly impactful and uncertain: the level of regional integration and the mode of governance. These two drivers were used to frame a set of four possible scenarios named after animals inhabiting the East African savannahs by the stakeholders that developed them. (See Vervoort et al. (2013) for a detailed description of the scenarios.)

In this info note, we describe the scenarios as adapted to the Ugandan context by the stakeholders during three different scenario-guided policy review processes for the following draft strategies and policies: (i) Agricultural policy and Mechanization framework; (ii) National Agriculture Policy of 2013; (iii) Agricultural sector strategic plan (2016-2021); and (iv) National Water Policy. The stakeholders included government officials from the ministries of Agriculture, Environment and Water, National Planning Authority, academia, non-state actors and apex farmer organizations.

Industrious Ants scenario

In the industrious ants scenario, Uganda will experience substantial economic growth up to 2050. The GDP will be fairly high in 2050, and average household incomes have increased significantly during the decades before. Another factor that has led to economic growth and stability in the region is the introduction of a single East African currency. Also, urban infrastructure has been improved considerably. A modern railway system connects the major cities in the country and the main highways have been expanded and broadened, thereby making them safer and faster. Agriculture has been undergoing large-scale modernization, and agricultural production has significantly increased. As a consequence, food security has also increased in terms of calorie availability, but nutrition security has not improved per se. Diseases like obesity and diabetes are abundant, leading to high health costs. Therefore, the country as a whole has seen improvements in terms of food security. However, locally, political insecurity and conflicts may limit food security. In addition, the economic growth has led to less foreign aid and investments. There is increased migration to urban areas, which is already (now, in the 2010s) happening at a rapid and large scale. Urban migration leads to less availability of labour.

Increased agricultural mechanization partly compensates for this, but prices of agricultural products will increase (partly because of increased mechanization). As a consequence, Ugandan farmers are less competitive on the market. This in turn leads to an even bigger increase in rural-urban migration. Problems such as insecurity, unemployment and homelessness in the cities increase, with related problems such as settlements in wetlands (and problems resulting from that) as the government focuses on modern housing which is not affordable for those people.

Herd of Zebras scenario

In this scenario, the government and the private sector in Uganda are dedicated to a push for growth—mainly through industry, services, tourism and agriculture for export. Because the government pays little attention to or disregards food security and the environment, there is an increasing civil discontent, especially among the rural poor. The majority of the people cannot access adequate services as the government's investments in public services are minimal. More and more big plantations are developed and owned by foreign investors, leading to local people being displaced, sometimes by force. Monocultures and high use of fertilizers are increasingly common, causing water bodies to be contaminated and yields of rural poor farmers to go down. This situation is made worse by the fact that the seed sector is centrally controlled by the private sector. Accessing good seeds has become expensive and in addition, food prices have increased. This leads to food insecurity among the rural poor.

Lone Leopards scenario

This scenario portrays a situation in which government agencies, NGOs, CSOs, private sector and individual farmers push for climate change adaptations and other development interventions, albeit in a very uncoordinated way, each driven by individual interests. There is a clear divide between winners and losers caused by selfishness, corruption and lack of coordination. In other words, coordination of climate change adaptation and development efforts exists only on paper. In reality, the government and non-state actors are securing their own interests. In terms of food security, environments and livelihoods, the country initially seems to be heading toward catastrophe. However, after some years many regional state/non-state partnerships become very proactive and, unburdened by tight regulations, are able to achieve some great successes. Unfortunately, this is a hit-and-miss world because of the lack of coordinated efforts and ignoring of key problems.

Sleeping Lions scenario

In this scenario, Uganda is characterized by un-coordinated efforts on climate change mitigation and

adaptation and other development activities leading to independent and fragmented efforts by a range of actors, with minimal real impact at national scale. Additionally, there is a lack of prioritization of climate change issues in governmental plans, which results in a lack of adequate budget. Since climate change is considered a crosscutting issue across different governmental policies and activities, this translates into a lack of clear funds allocation for climate change projects coupled with insufficient complementary policy frameworks to support climate change actions within the government. In this scenario, the education system of Uganda is poorly funded and inadequate. The population is increasing, with climate change causing a further decline in agricultural production that results into acute food insecurity and loss of livelihoods. The socio-economic gap between sectors of the population increases, with a rich minority in the cities and a majority of poor people both in the cities and rural areas. Uganda experiences extreme manifestations of food and nutritional insecurity on the one hand and an increase in obesity related disease on the other hand. The country does not develop its comparative climatic advantage over other neighbouring countries and thus it does not become the food basket for the East African region.

Scenario guided review of strategies and policies

A number of scenario-guided review processes were initiated in Uganda from February 2015 through August 2016. In the very first review of the national agriculture policy and the mechanization framework, the East African scenarios were downscaled to come up with country specific scenarios for Uganda. In each of the processes, selected participants used these country specific scenarios to test the different policy/framework issues in the reviewed documents. This followed the analysis and evaluation of the policy or plan to be reviewed, to create new drafts that include the participants' key concerns. These new drafts of the policies/plans were subsequently reviewed using the four country-specific scenarios. The feasibility of the policies/plans were assessed in each of the scenarios, which yielded recommendations to strengthen the policies/plans in the face of future uncertainty. Recommendations resulting from the scenario-guided multi-level analysis for climate resilient food systems in Uganda have been provided below with a special emphasis on the importance of food security.

National Agricultural Policy and the Agricultural Mechanization framework review

The review was conducted February 2015 and participants were mainly from government ministries, departments and agencies responsible for agriculture and environment. Recommendations from the review

highlighted the urgent need to constitute a learning platform that is coordinated by the office of the prime minister where all the actors for climate change and food security are coordinated. This coordinating body should aim at bridging a gap between national and subnational levels.

It was also recommended that government should allocate more funds to the agricultural sector to allow sufficient planning and execution of initiatives that ensure a food security future in the wake of climate change.

For both the national agriculture policy and mechanization framework, it was recommended that they require knowledge generation and transfer to work effectively thus recommending the reviving of the extension system.

Much as the two documents reviewed in these workshops were 'dormant' documents that were neither actively being formulated or reviewed, participants embraced the review process and resulting recommendations, proposing to use them in the development of strategies to operationalize the Agricultural Policy and Mechanization framework.

Non-state actor consultation on the draft Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan (2016-2021)

This review process mainly involved non-state actors, including representatives from various NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector. Informed by the country specific scenarios, participants formulated recommendations to improve the Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2021 (ASSP) and to make it more robust in the face of future uncertainty. Below, we present some key examples of the scenario-guided recommendations that were generated.

In line with the Herd of Zebra scenario, participants recommended that initiatives to make agriculture more attractive for the youth (e.g. by providing them incentives) should be more pronounced in the ASSP to cater for an aging agricultural sector labour force and massive migration of youth to urban centres. Other proposals included streamlining modalities to involve the private sector in agricultural research and extension planning, which would help to address the likely funding gaps in the scenario.

In the Lone Leopards scenario in reference to the ASSP, technologies are present but uptake and adoption is limited due to poor coordination. Proposals to strengthen the link between research, development and extension were recommended.

Within the Sleeping Lions scenario, participants recommended promotion of agricultural mechanization,

providing government subsidies to enable mechanization, to increase awareness of and access to mechanization services and equipment and to implement a continuous monitoring and evaluation program on mechanization, spearheaded by both the government and the private sector.

Finally, in the Industrious Ants scenario, participants proposed a secretariat to guide and strengthen public-private partnerships in the sector.

This review facilitated non-state actors to develop a position paper with recommendations on the ASSP, which was shared with the Ministry of Agriculture for inclusion in the final plan.

Regional water policy harmonization review

The regional water policy harmonization review workshop conducted in July 2016 from Kigali, Rwanda involved stakeholders from Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania and Kenya during a workshop under the project “Engaging stakeholders in using future scenarios to analyse the potential impacts of agricultural development in the Lake Victoria Basin” organized by the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS). Participants reviewed different policies using future scenarios in the region and also brainstormed on areas to harmonize national policies and plans in the Lake Victoria Basin (LVB).

In the case of Uganda, the draft National Water policy was reviewed and participants answered questions about regional harmonization: What cross-country dynamics are a characteristic of the different scenarios, and how can the recommendations be harmonized to address related problems? How can we ensure that regional policy harmonization will be successful in this scenario?



Figure 1: Perez Muchunguzi of IITA facilitating group discussion during the scenarios review workshop in Uganda. Photo: E. van de Grift

For the draft water policy the prioritized scenario-guided policy recommendations were: a) to develop a water resources data management strategy based on sound scientific and technical information; b) to harmonize data collection methods and tools with a one-stop data centre that is networked across the region; c) to enforce and monitor real time data collection, knowledge generation and awareness with good governance systems; d) to emphasise real time economic data on water resources to guide economically viable use of water for development; and e) to develop a coordinating strategy for the different players (government, CSOs, private sector) clarifying roles and mandates.

In this review, the scenarios approach facilitated participants to identify areas that need harmony in the water policy with other Lake Victoria regional water policies.

Lessons learnt and conclusions

During the four different scenario-based policy review processes, we have learnt valuable lessons. First of all, early involvement of key policy makers responsible is very necessary to create ownership for the scenario review; this makes the process easier and the product easily owned, thus easing implementation.

Secondly, a diverse range of actors, including civil society, the private sector and academia need to be part of the process as well, so as to elicit key stakeholder perspectives and needs as well as utilize their knowledge, to make the process as inclusive and democratic as possible. Moreover, we see that different groups of stakeholders can provide different and complementary insights.

Thirdly, government policy documents are treated as ‘sacred’ by those who are directly responsible to lead the processes of formulating them. In particular, the draft documents are jealously ‘guarded’ from whoever is seen as an ‘intruder’ in government business. Accessing such documents requires one to win trust of the government officials—this takes time and investment to cultivate. Involving ministries and specific persons in policy work at an early stage, even before the review process comes, is one key pathway towards building this trust.

Challenges of the scenario guided review process

The policy development process in Uganda is sometimes a slow and lengthy process with different approval stages; this poses a challenge because achieving an output from the scenario process in a timely fashion is difficult. In most cases experts disengage due to a slow process then the government officials drop the scenarios approach and resort to the status quo.

In addition, participatory scenario processes require sufficient scenario-literacy among policy makers and participating stakeholders. In some cases, the abstract nature of national policy statements might limit the level of detail, hence detailed scenario-guided recommendations and information may not easily fit in the existing policy formats.

Finally, the scenarios-based review is a new approach in the policy formulation process, which requires extra awareness creation not only for the government officers who draft policies but also for other major policy actors like the political leadership who approve the policies.

Recommendation

Rather than using scenarios in specific policies and plans, there is need to have an inbuilt scenarios review mechanism in the policy and plan formulation processes. For example, creating awareness on the scenarios approach and equipping Ministry planning departments, which are central in the review and approval of plans and policies, to use scenario-guided reviews as a criterion in their approval is needed.

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