



POLICY BRIEF:

Family Farmers Building Resilience for Adaptation to Climate Change



Are We Overlooking Climate Change?

Climate Change is already threatening Uganda's ecosystems and livelihoods that depend on them¹. The annual temperature has increased by 1.3°C since 1960 and projected to reach 3.1°C with an increase in annual rainfall by 2060s². The main impacts are felt on food security, poverty, human diseases, crop and livestock pests and diseases among others.

Vulnerability to climate change in Uganda is high due to reliance on rain-fed agriculture. FAO estimated a 1-7% loss of GDP in 2015 to extreme events, such as droughts³. During the implementation period of the

¹ Hepworth, (2008).

² McSweeney et al., (2010)

³ FAO 2016

MDGs (1993-2013), up to 79% of the poverty reduction enjoyed was attributed to good weather⁴. As the effects of climate change worsened, the same households impoverished again, demonstrating the fragile gains. Climate change is, therefore, a significant challenge to human stay⁵.

Family farmers can no longer wait for the debate to conclude to find adequate responses to climate change, which drastically affects their livelihoods. This policy brief highlights how family farmers are responding to the effects of climate change in Uganda, despite having limited access to resources, knowledge and support from the government.

The Case Study Areas

ESAFF Uganda in partnership with LVC-SEAF and Africa Contact conducted a study in Mukono and Mubende districts in September 2017 on the effects of climate change on livelihoods of peasant communities, realities of small-scale farmers on the ground, the policy environment and position of government about climate change. This policy brief builds on that study.



The Emerging Policy Issues

Although there is some acknowledgement that climate change is occurring, and there are proposals for small-scale piloting of adaptation strategies and a Disaster Preparedness and Management Strategy, the study recognised that;

- 1) There is no comprehensive national strategy for reducing and coping with its impacts. Hence, confused mandates, dysfunctional arrangements for inter-agency working, and weak institutional and professional incentives for pro-active action.
- 2) Outside donors widely dictate public policies and programs related to climate change and a result of a top-down approach, where decision-making power and finance resources remain centralized, whilst the administrative capacity to address climate challenges are located at the local government level, creating an alarming disconnect between the solutions proposed and the reality of peasant farmers and rural communities.
- 3) Indigenous knowledge and practices are not well sufficiently incorporated in the national climate change adaptation programmes and policies. Instead, geared towards transforming the sector to a commercial venture through climate-smart agriculture solutions, reliant on bio-technologies divorced from the realities of the country's family farmers and pastoralists. This creates the development of ineffective adaptation strategies that are not user-friendly and unsustainable, making them cost-ineffective and irrelevant to both peasant farmers and pastoralists.
- 4) Climate change and environmental degradation increased the rural-urban movement of the youths to cities given the disconnect between agroecology and climate change adaptation and resilience for income generation by the youths.
- 5) Climate change related policies and programs are mostly designed to address practical gender need thereby failing to address the structural constraints that hinder family women farmer's access to resources. Hence, how gender issues are dealt with in agriculture-related policies and strategies in Uganda lacks coherence.
- 6) Climate change policies and programs are still far from being implemented. This is due to acknowledged financial limitations by national

⁴ World Bank, (2016)

⁵ FAO, (2015)

and local governments resulting in very few farmers being “assisted” by local government to “adapt” to climate change.

- 7) There is no climate change monitoring and evaluation frameworks, systems and indicators in the country, which curtails Uganda’s ability to track progress on addressing climate change.
- 8) The National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) embraced the local government system as the critical implementation modality. However, the implementation plan does not include a mechanism for the transfer of funds for local government climate change activities. As a consequence, local governments have by and largely remained inactive in fully implementing the NCCP.
- 9) Although the government aims at mainstreaming gender into all agriculture sector programmes, national policy on climate change has failed to adopt a coherent gender approach, which acknowledges and caters for the disproportionate impact of climate change on women to tackle the root causes of gender inequalities. Consideration of men’s capacity to adapt and vulnerability to climate change and a comparison with that of women is widely overlooked.

What Should the Policy Makers Do?

- 1) There is a need to incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices in national climate change-related policy and programs. This means a rigorous consultation of family farmers is called for, so as plan adaptation techniques that are embraced by peasant farmers and the specific support needed.
- 2) Climate research priorities need to be undertaken towards strengthening the resilience of family farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk to the impacts of climate change. More research funding should also be directed towards scaling up of existing, proven agroecological technologies at the local level.
- 3) Local government bodies should be well-placed institutions capable of examining and discussing climate change hazards and creating an enabling environment that allows rural family farmers to adapt to climate change.
- 4) The government have the primary responsibility towards its people and should, therefore, promote climate solutions that work for their citizens. Those that have been time tested and proven to support environmental protection, food security and sustainability. Agroecology does this.
- 5) An analysis that incorporates a gender perspective and the agency of women is needed since most processes in the agrarian political economy are deeply gender-based. Studies should focus strictly on how climate change and its effects influence and affect issues like gender and the sexual division of labour, access to land and other productive resources.
- 6) Climate change stresses not only food production systems, but social systems as well. Resilience-building efforts to create new livelihood opportunities will enable people to avoid outmigration and stay in their communities and prosper. Community seed banks, home-bakeries using local products, and self-help groups are examples of social resilience.
- 7) There is an urgent need for popular education to provide clarification and orientation for the small scale farmers on the key concepts (climate



change, agroecology, adaptation, mitigation as well as seed sovereignty. The current proliferation of hybrid seeds and chemical fertilisers and pesticides as well as the entry of GMOs into the country – pushed by government and private sector - will further blur the farmer's future.

- 8) Implement a comprehensive national mitigation and adaptation plan, including design of strategies to restore the integrity of the ecosystems including land use planning, energy alternatives to reduce impacts on woody vegetation cover, and participatory research to select species and varieties that can adapt to changing temperatures, seasons and extreme events, mixed with local and traditional knowledge with state-of-the-art technologies.
- 9) Create conditions to facilitate access to genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use, for example, recognising the importance of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

About the authors

Ronald Bagaga and David Oming wrote this publication

Selected References

Acosta, Mariola; Ampaire, Edidah; Okolo, Wendy; Twyman, Jennifer (2015). 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.

Bank of Uganda (2016). 2016 Statistical Abstract – Table 3.2a: Exports of Goods (Flows) (US\$ million) - CY. The Research and Policy Directorate, Bank of Uganda, available at https://www.bou.or.ug/bou/about-downloads/publications/Statistical_Abstract/2016/All/2016-Bank-of-Uganda-Statistical-Abstract.pdf

Bird N, et al., (2016). Public spending on climate change in Africa: Experiences from Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda.

ODI Report, London, May 2016, <https://www.odi.org/publications/10419-public-spending-climate-change-Africa-experiences-Ethiopia-Ghana-Tanzania-and-Uganda>.

ESAFF Uganda (2015). Enhancing indigenous practices in climate change adaptation among small scale farmers, Soroti and Mubende district. Study Report (available from: <http://www.esaffuganda.org/publication.html>).

FAO and Government of the Republic of Uganda (2015). Country Programming Framework 2015 - 2019. February 2015. Available at: ftp://ftp.fao.org/OSD/CPF/Countries/Uganda/CPF_Uganda_2015-2019.pdf.

Uganda Climate Action Report for 2015. Resilience Policy Team, November 2015. Of NAPA/NAP in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

Journal of Peasant Studies, 38(1): 161-191 Transparency International (2017). Corruption Perceptions Index 2016.

Report, 25 January 2017, https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/corruption_perceptions_index_2016.

About ESAFF Uganda

The formation of ESAFF in 2002 was a direct response to the need to create a forum where Small Scale Farmers (SSFs) can deliberate on and voice their concerns. The Forum was established to bring together small scale farmers into a social movement to build common aspirations, learning and linkages. ESAFF Uganda is a small scale farmer-led movement formed to facilitate processes through which small scale farmers' development concerns can be solicited, articulated and ultimately addressed through local, national and regional policies and programs. ESAFF Uganda works to enhance the SSFs ability to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in development processes. ESAFF Uganda is having memberships in 30 districts and is part of a bigger network of small scale farmers in other 14 countries in eastern and southern Africa.

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda

P.O BOX 34420 Kampala - Uganda

Email: coordinator@esaffuganda.org

Facebook: ESAFF Uganda | Twitter: @ESAFFUG | YouTube Channel: ESAFF Uganda

www.esaffuganda.org