

Enhancing Gender Equality in Climate Change Communication Services in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This paper employs the lessons learned, best practices, and policy applications to illustrate the vital need for gender equality and equity justice for effective policy and communication campaign implications of climate change policy in Uganda and practical gender mainstream public communication framework for planning effective national, sub-regional, or regional responses. In addition, it elaborates on the adverse consequences of climate change risks in East Africa, the current efforts are taken by the national, sub-regional, and regional countries, the current barriers to resolving the main problems, and present a coordinated, participatory, and holistic framework for planning the desired gender equality and women empowerment strategies. The negative effects of climate change loss and damage, from the policy, legal, social, economic, political, and environmental perspectives, for Uganda, can be either prosperous or catastrophic. Consequently, there is an urgent need to plan national and regional level measures for climate change mitigation and develop comprehensive plans in response to the current and projected climate-related public communication. The paper attempts to provide strategies for addressing the policy-related risks of climate change, in such a manner that it can be followed by most countries of the region. East African countries are already facing disastrous social, economic, political, and environmental impacts due to climate change impacts. A strategic good practice adaptation framework for climate change effects in the context of public communication has been suggested, focusing on strengthening the evidence base to aid climate change policy, advancing knowledge and training to mitigate climate change, implementing adaptation measures, greenhouse gas reduction, and developing collaborative work. The adaptation communication strategies would help to enhance national, sub-regional, and regional prospects or benefits to East Africa.

Keywords –Uganda, East Africa, climate change, SDG 5, SDG 13, communication

INTRODUCTION

The paper reviews the vital role of effective climate change and variability communication services in public awareness of the critical need for mainstreaming gender equality socio-economic issues for effective community-based climate adaptation (CBA) to climate change and variability effects to achieve sustainable livelihoods and good practice in Uganda. Community-based adaptation strategies promote sustainable awareness, education, information, entertainment, and empowerment for early action (Okaka, 2013, 2021) because it employs a strategy that ensures community participation based on gender equality, women's rights, and human rights observations of persons with disabilities (PWDs), minorities, children, youth, elders, people with disabilities, the poor, and the dominant groups. It disseminates national development plans, policies, and specific national development strategies to achieve the SDGs. The national climate change policy for Uganda considers adaptation; mitigation; research, and observation (including monitoring, detection, attribution and prediction). It derives its priorities from the EAC regional policy, this policy priority emphasises climate change adaptation followed by the mitigation of emissions.

- A flurry of the lessons learned, best practices, and policy applications illustrate the vital need for gender equality and equity justice for effective policy and communication campaign implications of climate change policy in Africa and practical gender mainstreaming in public communication framework for effective local, national, sub-regional, or regional responses.
- Gender analysis is vital for equity in the sharing of key roles, responsibilities, or duties between men and women for the best allocation of human resources for the optimal

transformation of the social, cultural, economic, political, legal or environmentally sustainable development for the transformation of society. Gender equality optimizes a workforce for competitiveness based on strategic gender needs based on gender perspective.

- East Africa has a good variety of community, county, district, national, regional, & international education curricula, policies, interventions, projects, development plans, interventions, innovations, research, international projects, initiatives, and state authorities that have approved the need for gender equality components in climate change as critical cross-cutting issues for sustainable development. However, the practice of gender analysis for gender-responsive policies, have remained elusive in policy practice.

THE INFORMATION APPROACH

In this review, we collated published evidence on climate change gender equality and women empowerment for sustainable development policy using relevant search terms. Information was accessed using internet search engines and libraries. All documents that were obtained during the review process were used to broaden the search for primary information sources. Initially, additional information was sought from the databases of national, regional, and international agencies, and the UN systems. In the searches, we looked for documents referring to gender and women empowerment research and climate change networks, sustainable development, mass media and effective public awareness communication campaigns strategy. Retrieved data were scrutinized, examined for evidence, consolidated into a summary, and crafted which informed the development of the paper. The objectives:

- To elaborate on the adverse consequences of climate change and variability risks and adverse effects on vulnerable communities in Uganda and the rest of East Africa.
- To review the effectiveness of media in national and global agencies on gender issues.
- To state the barriers to resolving the main gender equality deficits in climate services
- To assess the role of communication services participatory framework for planning the desired mainstreaming of gender equality (MGE) for climate adaptation strategies.

GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY

A gender perspective is a precondition for gender analysis of community-based climate adaptation good practice for resilience. The concept of gender (UNDP, 2005) equality is defined as the equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, rights, opportunities and resources that can be achieved, should be the primary ethical issue in the decision on any subject in our day-to-day lifestyle. It is imperative that public awareness of all the practical and strategic gender equality issues are ruthlessly created, raised, developed, and sustained at every doorstep across Africa. Gender equality is best promoted by media awareness campaigns and other public climate policy, research, conventional, and legal services provided by decentralised as well as national climate adaptation policy strategies.

Hence, effective communication services for mainstreaming gender equality (MGE) in community-based climate change and variability responses should be guided by the inputs, process, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of contextual, theoretical, and conceptual tools of gender analysis of a specific community. It is also good to consider the specific SDGs to guide some activities. The current 2030 SDGs are a series of targets and indicators which were approved by the UN in 2015. Climate change services, goods, and processes are the pivot of all the 17 SDGs because the climate is a very influential component of our environment. The proposed SDGs by 192 UN member states contain 17 goals, 169 targets, and 304 indicators covering a wide range of SDGs. These include issues like ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making our cities and human settlements sustainable, gender equality, combating climate change, protecting oceans, and forests.

SALIENET ASPECTS OF UN 2030 AGENDA

In this case, SDGs provide unique opportunities for all the known climate change adaptation and mitigation policy applications. These include curriculum development and reviews, collaborative research projects, clinical trials, community pilot outreaches, training, exchange visits, technology transfer, fundraising, and public awareness communication campaigns. The approved 17 sustainable development goals are summarily presented as shown below:

- SDG1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- SDG2: End hunger, achieve food security, improved nutrition, sustainable agriculture.
- SDG3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- SDG4: Ensure inclusive education to promote lifelong learning or opportunity for all.
- SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- SDG6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- SDG7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
- SDG8: Promote inclusive economic growth, full / productive employment for all.
- SDG9: Build resilient infrastructure and sustainable industrialization, and innovation.
- SDG10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- SDG11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- SDG12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- SDG13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- SDG14: Conserve oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
- SDG15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable management of forests, desertification, land degradation, and biodiversity loss.
- SDG16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice and effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- SDG17: Strengthen the implementation and revitalize the global partnership for SD

While some SDGs specifically promote mainstreaming gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, there are some international conventions that most African states have signed and ratified on the values and rights of promoting gender and development, women in development, women and development, and gender empowerment measure (GEM). At the global and regional levels respectively, the UN's convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women - CEDAW (GoU, 1999) and the African Charter on Women's Rights obligate states to provide for: international representation and participation of women; national laws; education; employment; equality and participation of women; national laws; equality and access to appropriate health care; economic and social benefits; rural women; equality before the law and in a civil matter; and equality in marriage and family life. Most African states have eagerly responded to the CEDAW but public awareness of these gender-responsive political-legal instruments is still too low or nonexistent generally. It is well known that women suffer double or triple jeopardy or punitive climate change or variation effects on the local communities and yet some cultural traditions prevent them from promoting climate-smart activities like education, agriculture, tourism, entrepreneurship, family planning, gainful employment, food security and nutrition. Communication service is a catalyst to promote the right to community communication (BNNRC, 2012). Likewise, community radio can play a specific and crucial role in encouraging (Basnet, 2012):

- Public participation;
- Community-level debates;
- Stronger cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Improved access to information;
- Effective tool for assisting poor communities in agriculture, education, and health
- Building infrastructure, community forestry, environmental conservation, natural disaster preparedness, empowering the marginalized, and

- Establishment of good governance;
- Indigenous knowledge (IK), localized information and messages;
- People for cultural expression, news, and information, dialogue, and development

LOCAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The gender-specific analysis is beginning to gain currency in the community, district, national, and regional climate change activities. For example, district climate change committees for each community for gender parities at all levels to (Okaka, 2007; 2015):

- Coordinate the district council activities on managing climate change resources;
- Ensure that environmental concerns are integrated into all district plans and projects.
- Assist in developing /formulating bye-laws on the management of the environment.
- Promote the dissemination of information, environmental education, and outreach.
- Coordinate with the authority on all issues relating to environmental management.
- Coordinate local environment committees in climate change and variation action plan.
- Review environment reports from district local committees on climate change issues.
- Prepare a district state of the environment report regularly (annually).

Human-induced climate change represents important additional stress, particularly to the many ecological and socio-economic systems already affected by pollution, increasing resource demands, and non-sustainable management practices. The vulnerability of human health and socio-economic systems depends on economic and institutional infrastructure (IPCC / UNFCCC, 2014) and this also justifies the need for MGE into climate management.

In addition, MGE in climate management enhances technological innovations for increased adaptation and mitigation options. Adaptation priorities are for freshwater resources, efficient management of existing supplies, and infrastructure; institutional arrangements to promote conservation; improved monitoring and forecasting systems for floods or droughts; rehabilitation of watersheds, and construction of new reservoir capacity. Likewise, adaptation options for climate-smart agriculture may include effecting changes in the varieties of crops, improved water-management, irrigation systems, and changes in planting schedules and tillage practices (IPCC & UNFCCC, 2014).

At the same time, the national (MNR, 2000; 2015) environment and climate change policies for Uganda stresses the essential need to address the implications of gender roles in developing environment and natural resource management policy. The objective is to integrate gender concerns in environmental policy planning, decision making, and implementation at all levels to ensure sustainable social and economic development in Uganda. Sustainable development is focused on people at the centre. This calls for the infusion of key ethical and gender issues in the following pillars of the human development paradigm based on: productivity, equity, sustainability, cooperation and security. People must be empowered to increase their inputs/outputs for gainful income generation and remuneration employment. Economic growth is a subset of the human development model based on gender mainstreaming in decision-making. In this case, a gender analysis tool like gender assessment matrix (GAM) has proved to be very handy in the Ugandan district decentralisation planning process.

GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

One of the national climate change policy priority directions in Uganda is to mainstream gender issues in climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches to reduce the vulnerability of women and children to the impacts of climate change and recognise their key role in tackling this issue. Uganda's vulnerability and adaptation assessments indicate that the poor (in both urban and rural areas), most being women and children, are most vulnerable to climate change impacts. The greater vulnerability of women is mostly due to gender

inequality (GoU, 2013). There is also a community of interests that is not bound by any physical or geographical barriers. These are equally catered for the communication audience (Okaka, 2013).

Some of the common issues and options for community engagement in gender equality communication strategy include: awareness of gender concepts, issues, concerns, and needs; accessible gender information (e-readiness and ICT diffusion); incentives for gender-sensitive attitudes and behaviour; applicable gender policy and laws (regulations); political, management, and administrative commitment and will; education and functional literacy levels; stable social, economic, legal, political, and natural environment; role models, appeals, credible messages, media (channels); scan and remove environment barriers (constraints), quality of messages and services; message alignments to actors (target audiences); participation of key stakeholders (staff and students); gender equality and equity, empowerment of women; participatory message design and harmonious messages; message – reach to the intended audiences, multimedia approach and strategy; ethical conduct of campaigns process e.g. cultural sensitivity; empowerment to performance, positive messages and encouraging appeals; and access to services and outputs that informs and persuade all.

Mainstreaming gender equality communication outcomes include checking the: number of communications produced, by type, during the reference period; number of communications disseminated, by type, during the reference, period; percentage of the target audience who correctly comprehend a given message; the percentage who express knowledge, attitude and beliefs consistent with the message; the percentage who acquire the skills recommended by the message; the percentage who discuss the message with others, by type of person; and the percentage who do the desired practices. What is needed is for governments, researchers and research institutions, research networks, civil society organizations, communities, external development partners to align urgently and build joint capacity. Community radio broadcasting should clarify the distinctions between state fragility and state resilience as well as their effects and their mitigations at national and community levels. As a result, it is vital to promote: women’s programmes, education of women, access to information, gender-based technologies that ease women’s workload, green technologies like energy-saving stoves or solar driers, the use of sanitary facilities and providing clean and safe drinking water.

Furthermore, for the continent to embrace plausible economic variables, the political indicators for resilience development in Africa should practice gender equality mainstreaming and women in all spheres of policy focus such as (EU, 2012): the degree of national integration and sense of national unity, degree of centralization of political power, the extent of political participation, strength of the labour movement, degree of political and press pluralism, political and social influence of the religious organization, degree of administrative efficiency, the extent of political will and commitment to economic reforms, policy and institutional reforms. On the other hand, a Kenyan study on the policy-makers sources of information; ranked the following sources in their descending order of importance: mass media both electronic and print (led by radio); special groups (NGOs); special media like policy briefs, brochures, pamphlets, newsletters); and internet websites with social media becoming more popular (Wafula, 2012).

GENDER-RESPONSIVE INFORMATION SERVICES

A gender issue involves three main elements: gender discrimination, gender gaps and gender oppression. Gender issues affect access to and control over resources, benefits and opportunities within every sector. Gender issues affect the success and sustainability of development plans and programmes within all sectors. In Africa, key gender issues are: family life, employment, decision making, education, health, and agriculture. Public

communications campaigns should be guided by informed ethical, theoretical and gender concerns. Public (Day, 2000) communications campaigns are varied, multifaceted, highly planned, and strategically assembled media symphonies designed to increase awareness, inform, or change behaviour in the target audiences. The gender analyses matrix (GAM) should take centre stage at each step of the campaign message design.

The goal (Day & Monroe, 2000) of environmental communications campaigns is to instil in learners the knowledge about the environment, positive attitudes toward the environment and natural resources management skills and gender-equity empowerment for sustainable development. So far, climate gender-sensitive policy awareness campaigns challenges are quite vast. These include: constraints in the gender policy awareness communication campaigns strategy such as: lack of awareness and information accessibility and uncoordinated stakeholders; misconceptions and cultural myths, and superstitions and unscientific beliefs in witchcrafts; conflicting campaigns messages, distorted messages, and inaccessible information; wrong or ineffective media and communications (channels), media and audience skepticism; lack of effective communications strategy, and budget constraints.

Climate change and gender equality communication services face several barriers which include: unsynchronized messages and lack of research information dissemination strategy; irregular gender policy messages and environmental constraints such as poverty; disempowerment (lack of skills, knowledge, inequality); discrimination, exclusion, bias, stereotyping, prejudice; unilateral message design, message delivery, and evaluation; unprofessional conduct of the campaigns process, political, management, and administrative interferences, corruption or financial leakages, and unsustainability; low and wrong institutional policy priority to awareness, ignorance, wrong and negative attitudes, and gender inequality behaviour mainly due to a variety of basic community communication gaps.

Likewise, it has also emerged that some of the needs or lessons learned from the effects of climate change interventions call for a variety of coordinated interventions (Okaka, 2012): need to develop effective climate change campaigns strategy: need to coordinate stakeholders and key actors in climate change: need to blend the mass media communication with an interpersonal communication strategy for MGE need to give top priority to the participatory communication process that considers communication as a psychological, cultural, ethical, and courteous issue in climate change policy services. MGE should attract inclusive audience participation in message design, pretesting, articulation, and research evaluation issues.

Today, an effective gender-balanced sustainable community-based development is vital for women empowerment with information database. On its part, community radio can help to fashion institutional corporate functions to enhance the role of effective awareness communication strategy for climate change and environmental sustainability in Africa. In this regard, the AfDB has launched a fund-drive (33 million Euros) to build local capacities in climate information gathering, dissemination for adaptation, and mitigation practices to curb the challenges of climate change (Kofi, 2014). In addition, climate information services will better integrate water, land use, energy, food security, and prospects for women as the vital inputs into Africa's agricultural value chain for prosperity (Denton, 2014).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender analysis is imperative for bridging gender-responsive information service, policy, research, knowledge, and practice gaps. As a result of gender blind: attitudes, behaviour, planning, perceptions, policies, management, budgeting, leadership, education, communication, practice, staffing, methods, values, and strategies experienced by most countries where lip service is the norm. Most climate change adaptation communication and mitigation policy weaknesses, failures, illiteracy, and vulnerabilities to the adverse impacts of

climate change could be attributed to huge information and knowledge gaps, lack of research and adoption of adaptation innovations (new technologies, ideas, practices) by communities, institutions, industries, and governments. A district communication strategy is preferred.

Effective deployment of the community media and interpersonal communication approaches would suffice for maximum audience exposure. All adaptation and resilience media advocacy communication should be coordinated to achieve a faster rate of adoption and diffusion of innovations, capacity building, funding, technology transfer, collaborative research, and global networking. Communication strategy for MGE in climate services should attack:

- Gender blindness in communities, local, and national bureaucracy in decision making;
- Lack of competence in project planning and management; database gaps and weaknesses;
- Institutional capacity weaknesses; national debt crisis; procurement procedures;
- Technology transfer and knowledge sharing; conflicting policies and laws;
- Inherent technical, political and administrative institutional decision-making problems;
- Project delays or budget overruns regularly and gender blindness in budgeting;

A prudent national and international mitigation, adaptation, and knowledge management can reduce the risks of climate change to ecosystems, food security, water resources, human health, natural, and socio-economic systems. Access to climate change policy information is one of the key communication challenges facing most communities in all the five east Africa community (EAC) member states. Awareness levels on the opportunities and benefits of the EAC integration among the citizens are still too low (Eyotaru, 2013). Public awareness of MGE in climate change or variability is the starting point for communication. We need to triangulate MGE theoretical, conceptual, and contextual framework in tandem with gender analysis tools like gender empowerment measure (GEM), gender and development (GAD), women in development (WID), women and development (WAD), as well as gender assessment matrix (GAM). In addition, our gender-specific analysis ought to assess the key socio-economic (including culture, religion, ecological (environmental), legal, and political variables from a gender standpoint or perspective. Effective public awareness communication will enhance gender equality in climate change and variability adaptation for development..

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