

Gender Equality Transformation Policy in Uganda Climate Change Action

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Abstract

The current Ugandan national climate change policy promotes gender equality mainstreaming for effective climate change and variation adaptation at local government district and community levels with a focus on mainstreaming gender equality in climate change or variability in their development planning processes. The objectives of the paper are to assess the community perceptions of gender mainstreaming for development, climate change and variability effects on socio-economic household welfare, review the decentralised climate change and gender mainstreaming policy strategies of *Isingiro* district (local government) climate change and variability (variation) adaptation measures for community resilience, appreciate the sector-specific institutional responses to the uncertainty of the impact of climate change in *Isingiro* district with a focus on gender analysis, mainstreaming gender equality, practical gender needs (PGNs), and strategic gender needs in the district. The district has adopted a detailed five-year development plan to mainstream gender equality and climate change and variability for sustainable livelihoods. The South-Western Ugandan district has developed a communication service strategy for an early warning system for participatory implementation of MGE to empower most of the culturally subordinated women for socio-economic sharing of HH and community benefits or opportunities. Gender inequality has been collectively unpacked by both men and women to promote MGE; engage gender transformation for effective adaptive capacity and mitigate climate variation (climate change) impact on energy, transport, eco-tourism, health, education, water, agriculture, and food security for the gender equality transformation.

Keywords: Climate change, variation, gender equality, *Isingiro* District, Uganda

Introduction

Gender Equality in Climate Change and Variation

The policy practice of mainstreaming gender equality in the implementation of the national and decentralised climate change policy in Uganda (GU, 2015), which is gradually beginning to get off the ground with early adoption of the action being taken by the most climate change and variability stressed districts like *Isingiro* district in the Southwestern Uganda region. *Isingiro* district has taken a practical role to mainstream gender equality and mainstream climate change and variability into its five-year development plan ending in the financial year 2020 (GU, 2017). Climate change is the quantitative statistical record of a long term adjustment of regular annual two climatic dry and wet seasons, in Uganda, which occurs in districts or nationally over a long period of over 30 years as a result of natural and human drivers with a focus on human activities (Okaka, 2021)

To clarify, the gender equality (equity) concept aims at ensuring that women achieve their fundamental human rights, social, economic, ecological, and political participation and their welfare (AU, 2015). The gender inequality in the societal, economic and political structures and systems represent gender inequalities (INASP, 2016). To enhance gender equality, it is imperative to recognize the barriers that girls and women face include socially constructed norms because they cause learned attributes, behaviour, or status that largely favour males (GoU, 2012). Gender equality is the natural attitude and practice of sharing benefits, resources, opportunities, or challenges on the fair or equal assessment of abilities or potential of men, women, boys, or girls in all social, economic, environments, legal, administrative, practical, technical, scientific, and political fields (Okaka, 2021)

In addition, gender equality refers to 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 (UNDP, 2005). It is critical to raise awareness of all the practical and strategic gender-specific needs that are created, raised, developed, addressed and sustained at the individual, household (HH), institutional, and community levels in all sectors of socio-economic, political, and environmental development (IDPU, 2014). Household (HH) is a formal social infrastructure unit of human settlement, habitation, or accommodation, which normally hosts or houses individuals, relatives or non-relatives, or members of a nucleus family that may be headed by men, women, or children, as practically experienced in Uganda today (Okaka, 2021)

At the same time, the current perception and uncertainty are that the poor in *the Isingiro* district are highly vulnerable to extreme shocks such as the ravages of droughts to agriculture (crops, livestock, fisheries) vegetation, and homes (IDLG, 2017). The vulnerability of the district to the stressful effects of climate change depends on the magnitude of its impact, gender sensitivity, and adaptive capacity of the vulnerable communities to combat climate hazards and risks. Agriculture is the traditional or scientific farming methods that involve the production of crops or plants, animals, or livestock, as well as fisheries for subsistence or basic livelihood by a small-holder farmer or for large scale investment for big cash or trade by a commercial farmer (Okaka, 2021).

Due to the vagaries of climate variability, food security remains elusive in *the Isingiro* district which records an annual rainfall of 957 mm in its bi-modal climate pattern (IDLG, 2017). Agricultural drought has undermined vital nutrition for socio-economic HH and community welfare development of the district but acute deficiency of dietary intake is largely caused by HH food insecurity, all of which are directly related to lack of or poor accessibility, availability, utilization, and stability of food including humanitarian emergency food relief (IDLG, 2017). Food security is the status of access to sustainable quality and quantity of the personally desired type of predictable supply of nutritious food from anywhere, daily and annually for the present and future needs at the

household, community, district, county, national, regional, and global levels without any level of social, economic, environmental, legal, or political barriers, or restrictions (Okaka, 2021).

Besides, *the Isingiro* district has wakened up to the concept of gender equality and planned to implement MGE interventions in the district community development plan (2016-2020). But it lacks the facilitation capacity to conduct gender analysis (GU, 2017). The emergign policy evidence of awareness is that the district has declared that gender is the socio-cultural constructs of roles, responsibilities, attributes, opportunities, privileges, status, access to and control over resources and benefits between women and men, boys, and girls in *Isingiro* district communities (IDLG, 2016, 2017). *Isingiro* local communities have identified key gender-specific discrimination, exclusion, deprivation, subordination, oppression, domination, vulnerability, and unfavourable inclusion (IDLG, 2017). LMNP is one of Uganda's eco-tourism hotspots of global significance. The famous ecotourism Lake Mburo National Park (LMNP) is popular with local and international guests in its vantage southwestern niche.

Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Change

Mainstream gender equality (MGE) issues have started in *the Isingiro* district with the administrative sector reform whose mandate now is to infuse MGE into all local community programmes (IDLG, 2016-2020). In addition, it will ensure that all sectors will effectively address the causes and effects of gender-specific inequality effectively for all workplaces and improved HH welfare status (IDLG, 2016, 2017, 2018). One of the critical needs for effective MGE is communication service to create, raise, develop, monitor, and sustain public awareness of MGE in climate change and variability services for HH incomes and food security at HH and community levels for sustainable livelihoods. In addition, gender equality assumes equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, rights, opportunities, and resources are achieved, as the primary ethical issue in the decision on any subject in our day-to-day lifestyle (UNDP, GoU, 2012).

Public awareness of both the practical gender needs (PGNs) and strategic gender needs (SGNs) need to be unpacked for all to appreciate (UN, 2018). Awareness should cut across all socio-economic demographics. (Okaka, 2013) to promote effective implementation of the national climate change policy which is based on the following top priority areas (GoU, 2015): adaptation; mitigation; research and observation (including monitoring, detection, attribution, and prediction). This is in line with the East African climate change policy (EAC, 2011) policy that stresses climate change adaptation and mitigation of emissions by members of the sub-regional member states.

At the moment, there is a general public awareness of the concepts of WID, WAD, GAD, GAM, gender equality (parity), and planned commitment to

implement them in the second district development plan (2016-2020). But *Isingiro* district lacks the facilitation capacity to conduct gender analysis (GA) as the starting point for MGE in communities. The district policy asserts that gender is the social and cultural construct of roles, responsibilities, attributes, opportunities, privileges, status, access to and control over resources and benefits between women and men, boys, and girls in *Isingiro* district communities (IDLG, 2016, 2017).

Nevertheless, the district planning unit (IDPU) has taken strides to identify the key local community based strategic and practical gender inequality concerns and issues like gender-specific discrimination, exclusion, deprivation, subordination, oppression, domination, vulnerability, and unfavourable inclusion (IDLG, 2017). The district hopes to achieve greater equality (GE) between women and men by effecting key changes at many levels with a focus on the attitudes and relationships, institutions, legal frameworks, economic welfare, households (HHs) or homes, local community institutions, household (HH), policy decision-making structures, to close the widening gaps in implementing gender mainstreaming (GMS) initiatives for effective climate adaptation (IDLG, 2016-2020).

Likewise, MGE communication services data are collected to measure adaptation performance to provide feedback on system behaviour and policy performance; improve chances of successful adaptations and implementation; and increase accountability (NEMA, 2003, 2014). A range of communication options should be considered, including those largely oriented to print, those that can be delivered through radio and television, internet-based reporting, and the use of alternative communication tools such as posters, discussions, theatre and songs (Okaka, 2017). For example, data that are usually collected to measure climate change service performance are to be desegregated to show gender inputs, benefits, effects, opportunities, needs, or concerns. Gender analysis (GA) examines the differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities, rights, and their effects on men, women, girls, and boys in a given context.

For the past several decades, the local communities in *the Isingiro* district have experienced bi-modal climatic patterns. The climate change phenomenon is still a subject of community perceptions, myths, anxiety, and uncertainty. But climate variability has increased the stressful intensities, frequencies, or ferocities of extreme weather conditions and climatic events like severe deluges flood, hailstorms, windstorms, torrential rains, and all the types of droughts, namely: agricultural droughts, meteorological droughts, hydrological droughts, and socio-economic (political) droughts experienced intermittently by the vast majority of the vulnerable communities around LMNP.

However, *Isingiro* district faces a grave vicious cycle of poverty that has driven some sections of the vulnerable strata of the local communities into decadent activities

of the *black economy* of social deviations in moral decadence like risky sexual promiscuities including child-brides (child-marriages) dubbed early marriages; sex trade (free sex), prostitution (sex work), child-prostitutes, GBV (wife battering), malnutrition, famine, homelessness, demeaning women, illiteracy, lazy males (husbands), gender inequality, and climate-induced inter-ethnic conflicts. Gender roles are the common archaic, illegal, unconstitutional cultural norms, attitudes, or practices, which discriminate against women (girls) on the basis of biological sex, to deny them access to equal opportunity (benefit) of social, economic, environmental, and political rights (Okaka, 2021).

Climate Change Vulnerability Perceptions

Vulnerability to climate change and climate variability will depend on the socio-economic systems in adapting to the impacts of climate change as climate change is projected to devalue the vulnerable community the livelihoods. These include health, access to water, homes, transport, education, agriculture, ecosystem, markets, land, and food security. Most women traditionally depend heavily on climate-sensitive natural resources and agriculture which are vulnerable to climate change and variability. The capacity to adapt to the effects of climate change depends mostly on socio-economic factors like wealth, technology, education, institutions, information, skills, infrastructure, and financial resources or higher incomes.

Now, the district has identified the following MGE challenges in communities: lack of gender mainstreaming in all sectoral development activities, increasing gender-based violence (GBV), lack of strategic planning for gender analysis (GA), SGNs, and PGNs, information services, and behaviour against HIV/AIDS risks. At the same time, GBV such as sexual violence, child brides, and sex trade against women have worsened HIV/AIDS with a focus on Covid-19 pandemic spread. There is women poverty and the disabled increases their vulnerability for both men and women. In response, the district has decided to conduct MGE training, mentor local government staff (LGS), gender analysis to inform planning, community dialogues, meetings, and carry out participatory GA planning meetings to mainstream gender concerns in the local community development process for climate change adaptation for better HH welfare.

The current systematic gender inequality status in the district is affecting all the socio-cultural and economic strata of the society: men, women, boys and girls, rural and urban people, normal and persons with disabilities, youth and adults. In its responses, the district has attributed the prevalence of gender inequality there to several socio-cultural and economic factors. These include low levels of education, society and culture which is discriminative, low levels of income, ignorance and lack of awareness on gender equality, unequal opportunities to education, unequal distribution of social services, limited opportunities to gainful employment, different levels of income, negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities, limited access to social services like education, health etc, lack of infrastructures, unequal access, ownership or

control of basic needs, lack of jobs, inequality in decision making, negative attitudes.

Consequently, the effects of gender inequality in Isingiro local communities, have been well identified. These include low productivity, gender-based violence, 'poor parentage, low participation in development programs, unequal opportunities to gainful employment, high school dropout of girls in upper classes, early marriages, low self-esteem, low participation in leadership roles, high rural-urban migration, increasing poverty gap, high crime rates in town, drug abuse, poor housing conditions in urban areas. The self-denial of PWDs, women with disabilities are impregnated and left to live as single parents, limited education and employment opportunities to PWDs, high levels of poverty among the youth, prostitution among girls (child prostitutes), exploiting the youth and child-labour, unemployment, gender-based sexual violence, child-marriage, and cross generation sex (teenage pregnancies/child-mothers).

Gender Equality at District Community Levels

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. *Isingiro* district (local government) has crafted progressive climate change and variability adaptation policy strategies, in addition to developing gender equality policy.

There is a general awareness of the concepts of WID, WAD, GAD, GAM, and planned commitment to implement them in the second district development plan (2016-2020). But district lacks the vital facilitation capacity to conduct gender analysis (GA) as the starting point for MGE in communities. The district policy asserts that gender is the social and cultural construct of roles, responsibilities, attributes, opportunities, privileges, status, access to and control over resources and benefits between women and men, boys, and girls in Isingiro district communities (IDLG, 2016, 2017).

The district now has identified key gender-specific issues like discrimination, exclusion, deprivation, subordination, oppression, domination, vulnerability, hate speeches, violence, and unfavourable inclusion (IDLG, 2017). The district hopes to achieve greater equality (GE) between women and men by effecting key changes at many levels with a focus on the attitudes and relationships, institutions, legal frameworks, economic welfare, households (HHs) or homes, local community institutions, political decision-making structures, and closing

the gaps in implementing gender mainstreaming (GMS) plan (IDLG, 2016-2020).

At the moment, all the programmes being implemented in the district do not yet effectively mainstream gender concerns such as SGNs, PGNs, or GAD due to lack of gender-disaggregated data for effective programme design and lack of standard gender analysis (GA) tools such as GAM. In addition, the implementation of gender mainstreaming (GMS) activities at this level is still too weak. The capacity of the human resources in various sectors to mainstream gender equality (MGE) is still too limited today (IDLG, 2016-2020).

In GAM analyses, the impact of development on women, men, households, and community focus on these variables put on the vertical GAM matrix (Rani Paker, 1993): women (of all ages who are in the target group in the community), men (of all ages who are in the target group in the community), household (all women, men, and children living together, even if they are not part of one nuclear family), and target community (UNASP, 2016).

Climate Change and Climate Variation Responses

Vulnerability to climate change and climate variability will depend on the socio-economic systems in adapting to the impacts of climate change as climate change is projected to devalue the vulnerable community the livelihoods. These include health, access to water, homes, transport, education, agriculture, ecosystem, markets, land, and food security. Most women traditionally depend heavily on climate-sensitive natural resources and agriculture which are vulnerable to climate change and variability. The capacity to adapt to the effects of climate change depends mostly on socio-economic factors like wealth, technology, education, institutions, information, skills, infrastructure, and financial resources or higher incomes.

The Gender analysis matrix is an analytical tool that uses a participatory methodology to facilitate the definition and analysis of gender issues by the affected local communities. The GAM provides a realistic expression of gender-specific issues and develops bottom-up gender analysis capacity from the grassroots level. Gender-specific issues include gender mainstreaming (GMS), practical gender needs, mainstreaming gender equality, and strategic gender needs, among others (UN, 2018). Accordingly, gender equality which is also known as formal equality is about open equal chances or opportunities for all women and men to access and control social, economic, environmental, political resources, science, arts, processes, or services like laws, health, transport, communication, technology, education, employment, food, human and democratic rights (WHO, 2012).

Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects, opportunities, skills, experience, competence, influence,

resources, and power to shape their own lives to contribute to society (SIDA, 2015). Hence, gender analysis is the starting point to highlight the differences between and among women, men, girls, and boys in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints, and power in a specific context and conducting GA addresses gender-based inequalities (SIDA, 2015).

Uganda relies heavily on climate-vulnerable sectors like agriculture, water, wetlands, forests, and biodiversity for socio-economic development. It is vital to manage climate change risks as part of the current district development plan. The integration of climate change risks and opportunities in development activities will enhance resilience to climate change. Mainstreaming climate change into district plans, programmes, and development projects will reduce vulnerability to climate impacts and variability, and increasing the adaptive capacity of communities and activities facing climate impacts.

Likewise, it will ensure sustainable development and avoid decisions that will generate maladaptation. Experience shows the vital contribution that better environmental management can make to improving health, resilience to environmental risks, economic development, and livelihood opportunities, especially for the poor, and fight poverty and preserving the ecosystems that form the foundation of poor peoples livelihoods, pro-poor economic growth and environmental sustainability are included in the district LGDP. Poverty has heightened anxiety, desperation, and exclusion in segments of the local communities. Livelihood asset is a basic need that supports a normal social, economic, and ecological resource that are essential for human life at individual, household or family, and local community level (Okaka, 2021).

So, the Isingiro district vicious cycle of poverty has driven some sections of the socially excluded vulnerable strata of the local communities into decadent activities of uncontrolled risky sexual promiscuities like child-brides (child-marriages) dubbed early marriages; unsafe sexual attitudes, free-sex; sex trade or prostitution (child-prostitutes), trial marriages, sexual violence, gender-based violence (GBV), and domestic violence (wife battering), famine, homeless people, sleeping rough, illiteracy, lazy males (husbands), gender inequality, human-animal conflicts, migrations, systematic suppression (subordination) of women, and inter-ethnic conflicts. All things considered, these depict grim images of a rich cultural community.

The district administration units have developed an integrated community-based plan to mainstream climate change adaptation into its decentralised policy-making, budgeting, programmes, policy implementation and monitoring processes at all levels. The five-year community-based climate change and climate variability plan were a multi-stakeholders (PPPs) effort to improve socio-economic welfare (well-being), inclusive economic growth, and achieve the 2030 SDGs. The district has identified 14 climate change (variability) issues with specific sectoral interventions from 2016-2020 as stated in the next paragraphs.

Likewise, administrative services support towards climate change adaptation interventions will focus on the appointment key environment and climate change focal persons (ECCFPs) and climate change adaptation funds will be raised to facilitate all the socio-economic development sectors, mobilize budget (financial) resources for mitigating of climate change and climate variability effects on the vulnerable local communities in the district. In addition, Isingiro has made bye-laws and ordinances on climate change adaptation strategies aimed at climate change mitigation activities like devegetation restoration, greening degraded bare-hills, and environment protection.

The following climate change and variability issues were identified and planned for interventions for community-based climate variability adaptation (IDPU, 2014):

- Production sector interventions will cover
- Soil fertility restoration and enhancement management
- Water resources sub-sector
- Educational services
- Health services
- Energy supply and demand management strategies
- Roads, buildings, and transport sub-sector infrastructure
- Planning, monitoring, and evaluation process
- Auditing across all sectors based on a checklist
- Community services

Likewise, the currently planned interventions for community-based services will focus on public awareness campaigns on climate change (climate variability) effects on the district; raising public awareness among the local community members on climate change (variability) socio-economic implications on different sectors, mobilizing, and advocating for community-based climate change adaptation (CBCA) strategies, mobilizing, and advocating climate change and climate variability adaptation interventions in local community mobilization activities. Climate Variability is any unusual adjustment, alteration, deviation, or irregular change from the normal or means or average annual climate record or season of a state or a place over several weeks or months from the usual pattern as experienced by a state or a place within the country (Okaka, 2021).

A gender-specific 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. Today, it has also emerged that some of the needs or lessons learned from the effective climate change interventions call for a variety of coordinated community interventions (Okaka, 2012). The community refers to a specific cluster of human settlement in urban (city, municipality, town, trading centre), peri-urban (suburb), or rural (village) locations that are often inhabited by related or unrelated people with similar or different socio-economic demographic backgrounds (Okaka, 2021)

In this regard, the AfDB has launched a fund-drive 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 the youth and women are key inputs for the African agricultural value chain for prosperity (Denton, 2014). 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).

More crucial, the vulnerability of human health and socio-economic systems depends on economic and institutional infrastructure (IPCC & UNFCCC, 2014). Technological innovations have increased adaptation options for managed systems. Adaptation options for freshwater resources, efficient management of existing supply, 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. The adaptation options for agriculture include changes in varieties of crops, improved water-management, irrigation systems, and changes in planting schedules and tillage practices (IPCC & UNFCCC, 2014). The community vulnerability and adaptation assessments indicate that the poor, mostly women are most affected by climate change and variability especially women, girls, or children who face more gender inequality attitudes (GU, 2013).

Prospects for Implementing Gender Equality

Public communication campaign speeds up the process of informing the community based on gender equality and climate change policy (BNNRC, 2012). Additionally, communication promotes the prospectss of gender equality in specific climate adaptation inputs (Basnet, 2012): public participation; facilitating community-level debates; strengthening cultural and linguistic diversity; providing access to information; the most effective tool for assisting people in poor communities in agriculture, education, health services, building infrastructure, community forestry, environmental conservation, natural disaster preparedness, empowering the marginalized, and establishing good governance; helping to localize information and messages; giving people tools for cultural expression, news, and information, dialogue, and development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Local communities need to be empowered to enable both the men and women participate equally in planning, testing, and rolling out adaptation and mitigation activities in rural and urban areas. There are vital gender inequality and equity information, policy, research, knowledge, and practice gaps across the district due to: poor or wrong: attitudes, behaviour, planning, perceptions, policies, management, politics, budgeting, leadership, education, leadership,

communication, practice, staffing, methods, values, and strategies experienced by most countries where lip service is the norm. Most climate change adaptation and mitigation 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 adaptation activities by the key stakeholders involved.

Accordingly, effective 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. The communication strategy should attack: gender blind 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 problems; project delays or budget overruns. Prudent mitigation, adaptation, and innovation steps 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 a key communication challenge facing most communities in *Isingiro* district local communities.

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