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Unraveling the Gendered Effects of Climate Change Policy Frameworks in Climate-Smart Agriculture in Nwoya, Uganda

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Abstract

Achieving long-term gender-sensitive climate change adaptation at local and national level requires supportive climate policy framework, especially in vulnerable and food insecure countries such as Uganda. Intertwined with the multiple climate change related regulatory frameworks and action is the recognition and examination of the differentiated needs, constraints and preferences that men, women and different socio-economic groups have in a changing climate. However, the way gender is understood and articulated in climate change discourses will influence and shape how gender issues are dealt with in policies and interventions. Discourses on gender and climate change will determine which lenses are being used to study social vulnerability and adaptability to climate change and consequently shape what are the perceived problems and potential solution. Differing gender considerations in policy and programs might subsequently ameliorate, perpetuate or exacerbate pre-existing social inequalities. Taking a poststructuralist reflexive approach to narrative policy analysis, this study unfolds different understandings of gender issues in climate change adaptation policies in agriculture and analysing the effects of gender discourses in climate-smart development projects in rural communities of the Nwoya District in Uganda. Throughout the research, narratives are taken as a central object of study by focusing on the diverse ways in which people make sense of their lived experiences. This research examines both narratives originated in non-structured interviews and in more informal accounts such as ordinary conversational exchanges. For the latter, narrative research is combined with observational data and ethnographic methods of data collection. Results reveal serious disconnects among gender issues addressed at national level and the reality in rural communities of Nwoya. Compared to formal policies, customary traditions and laws play a stronger role in everyday lives and in the gendered practices in the rural communities. Notwithstanding gender considerations in national agricultural-related policies, cultural practices ultimately dictate that women can only have access to land through relations with men (husband, father or brother). This lack of access to resources limits women's interest in engaging in new climate-smart agricultural practices and creates conflicts over harvest ownership, which in turn translates into a spike of gender-based violence during the main harvest season (December-January).

Keywords: Climate-smart agriculture, conflict, gender, land ownership, policy, Uganda