



## AIFE-UGANDA INFO NOTE 001/2022

### **THE AMURU CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS: THE GENDERED LENS.**

#### **Introduction:**

Climate change manifests itself in a variety of ways in Amuru District of Northern Uganda; there are rapid-onset events like floods that destroy property, lives, and livelihoods instantly, but also there are slow-onset processes that change the landscape for survival gradually over time. Both rapid onset and slow-onset climate change impacts are occurring at the same time in the Amuru District of Northern Uganda, and these impacts are interrelated, creating a cycle of vulnerability for women. The adverse effects of climate change are felt in a cross-section of sectors including agriculture and food security; biodiversity and ecosystems; water resources; human health; human settlements and migration patterns; and trade. Women are disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of climate change. This is largely due to the preexisting structural disadvantages in society that leads to inequality, discrimination, and the exclusion of women from decision-making. This affects their ability to withstand and climate shocks and stresses and leads to much poorer outcomes as compared to men. This briefing note covers the gendered impacts of a range of manifestations of climate change and how women are disproportionately threatened by these impacts. It also covers ways in which women are already leading mitigation and adaptation efforts and recommendations on what should be done to enhance their mitigation and adaptation capacity.



<sup>1</sup> 2 UN Chief Executives Board (CEB). 2007. Coordinated UN System Action on Climate Change. United Nations [https://www.uneca.org/eca\\_programmes/sdd/events/climate/CEB\\_Climate.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/sdd/events/climate/CEB_Climate.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

<sup>3</sup> Chairperson LC.3 Atiak Sub County.

## **Water Scarcity and Drought**

Climate change negatively impacts water supplies around the world. Climate change has significant impacts on freshwater sources, affecting the availability of water used for domestic and productive tasks. The consequences of the increased frequency of floods and droughts are far-reaching, particularly for vulnerable groups, including women who are responsible for water management at the household level. Changes in temperature patterns, rainfall, solar radiation, and winds are increasing the desertification of land. Prolonged periods without adequate rainfall cause droughts, which then result in a shortage of water. In Amuru district severe water shortage problems have already been identified. The combination of high temperatures and lack of water has led to decreased crop productivity. When there is water scarcity in Amuru, men always leave their homes to search for employment outside of cultivating crops and grazing animals mostly in the neighbouring district of Gulu making Women become the heads of households and assume responsibilities traditionally assigned to men, but often do not have the same authority, decision-making power, or access to community services and land. Droughts cause famine and cause significant changes in the price of food causing hunger and malnutrition hence leaving people physically weak, which reduces productivity. Children are susceptible to malnutrition caused by hunger and must reduce their workload, which is usually spent assisting their mothers with the collection of natural resources i.e., water and firewood. Women assume this burden in addition to their other daily household tasks.

## **Access to Clean Water**

Lack of access to clean drinking water also disproportionately impacts women in Amuru and access to clean water remain a precious commodity mostly during floods and droughts. Women and girls bear the primary burden of finding water in all these cases taking longer distances and many hours reducing women productivity and therefore their economic emancipation compared to men and boys. In sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls collectively spend a total of 40 billion hours per year collecting water for their households. Travelling long distances to search for water, especially in remote also increases the risk of sexual violence for women and girls and this was particularly common during the LRA and it hasn't been wiped out completely even after the war.

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<sup>4</sup> Focused group Discussion Elegu Town Council.

<sup>5</sup> Focused group Discussion Elegu Town Council.

<sup>6</sup> Community meeting Atiak.

<sup>7</sup> Ruti Levitov et al., State of the World's Fathers

<sup>8</sup> Community Meeting Elegu.

<sup>9</sup> Gender, Climate Change and Health (World Health Organization, 2014)

<sup>10</sup> Gender, Water and Sanitation: A Policy Brief

[https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/un\\_water\\_policy\\_brief\\_2\\_gender.pdf](https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/un_water_policy_brief_2_gender.pdf)

Travelling long distances to search for water, especially in remote areas also increases the risk of sexual violence for women and girls and this was particularly common during the LRA and it hasn't been wiped out completely even after the war. Lack of clean water significantly causes water-borne diseases and subsequently, women spend much time caring for sick family members it is also a key factor in maternal and child mortality. Poor women are more likely to bear the brunt of these types of health problems due to their limited access to health facilities, low awareness of risks, and social and cultural norms that make women primary caregivers for family members. Lack of access to clean water for personal hygiene disproportionately affects women and girls, yet they continue to be excluded from the creation and management of WASH programming. Finally, water scarcity compromises hygiene, particularly for women and girls, who may need it for purposes uncommon to men, especially during pregnancy and menstruation.

### **Deforestation**

Deforestation is occurring in Amuru as a result of land-use change and is driven by industrialization, urbanization, infrastructure development, illegal logging, charcoal burning, resources extraction and agricultural production. It's because of deforestation that during the periods of limited rainfall, soil dries out; heavier rainfall results in greater and more rapid runoff, increasing flooding and erosion all these will reduce the productivity of the land, leading to declining food production and crop yields. As forests are cut down, the loss of tree cover increases soil erosion, decreases agricultural productivity, and increases the burden of gathering forest resources and water yet many people in Amuru depend on forests for food, firewood, fibre timber, material for crafts, animal fodder, and medicinal herbs, and it is often women who collect these resources. Women understand that Protection of land and afforestation have the potential to positively impact their lives and help to mitigate the effects of climate change and working through their groups, women in Amuru are working together to grow seedlings and plant trees to bind the soil, store rainwater, and provide food and firewood in a bid to improve their livelihoods. Women are involved in the building of energy-efficient brick stoves which use less firewood as compared to traditional fires in a bid to combat deforestation and prevent the pulmonary problems that result from the use of traditional smoky fires. These women-led solutions support community resilience against climate change and provide financial independence to women hence increasing standards of living growing the local economy.

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<sup>11</sup> Community Meeting Atyak Subcounty

<sup>12</sup> Focused Group Discussions

<sup>13</sup> Amuru District Natural Resource Officer

<sup>14</sup> Interview Amuru District Natural Resource Officer.

<sup>15</sup> Interview Amuru District Natural Resources Officer

## **Flooding**

A warmer climate and the associated increased climate variability will increase the risk of floods. Up to 20 per cent of the world's population lives in river basins that are likely to be affected by increased flood hazards, with the rise of global temperatures, by the 2080s. Amuru district experiences frequent extreme flooding from River Unyama making it hard for populations vulnerable to climate change, these floods have caused significant damage to both human lives and infrastructure including schools. Floods have increased disease, loss or destruction of property, and damage to agricultural production. These effects have increased the vulnerability of the entire population affected, and communities often face food scarcity and an increased likelihood of water-borne diseases, such as diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid, and skin rashes, in the aftermath of a flood. Floods in Amuru also cause unemployment, as people are displaced from their places of residence and employment and destroy trade. Women confront heavier challenges after flooding and face more severe vulnerability because of various circumstantial and structural factors. Women face mental torture, verbal abuse, and domestic violence in the wake of a flood in Elegu. Women are building through their farmer women groups to develop action plans and enhance their resistance against floods.

## **Food Security**

Climate change has serious ramifications in four dimensions of food security: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and food systems stability. Women farmers currently account for 45-80 per cent of all food production in developing countries depending on the region. About two-thirds of the female labour force in developing countries, and more than 90 per cent in many African countries, are engaged in agricultural work. In the face of climate change in Amuru Women face loss of income as well as harvests their sole sources of food and income . These make it harder for women who are more exposed to food insecurity than men and it can affect them differently because of their nutritional needs during pregnancy and lactation. Male-dominated structures in Amuru/Acholi govern land ownership, making it hard for women to access fertile land and resources. For these reasons, women suggest that it is important that the rights of rural women are ensured in regards to food security, non-discriminatory access to resources, and equitable participation in decision-making processes.

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## Health

During disasters like floods, women are affected than men. Women also suffer more from indoor air pollution due to their use of polluting fuels used for cooking. Extreme weather events also increase vector-borne diseases such as malaria, and water-borne diseases after floods combined with unequal care burdens have led to disproportionate pressure on women to support their families.

## Gender-based violence

There are clear links between poverty, which climate change deepens, and sexual and gender-based violence, this is evident in rural Amuru where there are common cases of child and forced marriages that can occur as a mechanism to cope with climate change-related economic stress. Climate change loss and damage has also damaged schools and roads making girl children not access schools and hence opting for early marriages.

## Recommendations

With the actions being taken by women in their bid to mitigate climate change effects in the case study of Amuru, the following recommendations were suggested by the communities as action points to enable women and girls to adapt to climate change to have their resilience enhanced;

1. Stakeholders should promote rights-based climate change mitigation and adaptation action to limit negative impacts with particularly women at the center.
2. Government and NGOs/CSOs should encourage and ensure the meaningful participation of women in climate change mitigation and adaptation at all levels.
3. Support capacity-building for women of diverse backgrounds to engage in climate decision-making.
4. Strengthening women's land rights for Amuru District and Acholi Subregion.
5. Take effective measures to address sexual and gender-based violence in the context of climate change-induced effects like during floods.
6. Facilitate better access to clean water to help fulfil the productive potential of women lost during water collection.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with the Community Development Officer Amuru

<sup>17</sup> Community Meeting Elegu

<sup>18</sup> FAO. Women and Food Security. FAO FOCUS <http://www.fao.org/FOCUS/E/Women/Sustin-e.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Focused Group Discussion