



AIFE-UGANDA

Men verses Women: Climate Change Deepening Gender Inequality in Amuru

Climate change effects are creating pressure on human livelihoods and more so on women and children who are bearing the consequences to higher degree than men.

Background: Over the years there has been asystematic changing weather conditions in the wider northern Uganda which has culminated into adverse climatic situation. These changes have come with crippling effects all over the north but more so in Amuru district particularly.

The type of climate experienced in Amuru consists of dry and wet seasons. Rain falls throughout the year in Amuru. Normally the wet season extends from April to October with the highest peaks in May, August and October,¹ the month with the most rain is August, with an average rainfall of 5.5 inches. The month with the least rain is January, with an average rainfall of 0.4 inches. The dry season begins in November and extends up to March. The average maximum temperature is 30 degrees centigrade and the minimum being 18 degrees centigrade.²

During wet season Amuru suffers devastating floods, which displaces hundreds of people whenever River Unyama bursts its banks. People become homeless and often get displaced, it is estimated that 20% of farm families have been an able to produce due to displacement and the average household food production reduced³. The floods are mainly caused by a heavy down pour, floods lead to loss of lives,⁴ destroy several semi-permanent structures and properties worth billions of shillings and displace people. The floods also wash away houses and latrines living many people stranded. Gardens get washed away and others submerged in water. During dry season, Amuru experiences prolonged drought that leads to drying up of crop gardens living farmers in panic, burying people's hopes and raising the risk and fears of food insecurity, the wells and boreholes also dry up making locals to trek long distance looking for clean water for domestic use. Women being the ones responsible for fetching water mean that they women have to trek long distances in search for water.

¹ Amuru District: Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Profile

² <https://weatherspark.com/y/96886/Average-Weather-in-Amuru-Uganda-Year-Round>

³ Amuru District: Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Profile

⁴ www.Independent.co.ug/residents-of-elegu-township-petition-ecweru-over-flooding/

Effects: The said changes have come with devastating effects on communities to the extent that women, men, children and girls in particular are living in dire life experiences as captured below;

Women are often responsible for preparing food, collecting water, and fetching firewood for cooking. However, a great number of women find themselves becoming the overall heads of their families due to different unavoidable circumstances such as loss of husband or desertion. Extreme weather events like Floods and drought have a greater impact on poor and vulnerable women⁵. These effects are deeply felt in many areas including agriculture and food security, biodiversity and eco systems, water resources, human health, human settlements, and transport. In many of these contexts, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men.⁶ That is because women are more likely to live in poverty than men, have less access to basic human rights like ability to freely move and acquire land.

Women and young girls who mainly bear the burden of fetching water trek long distances looking for clean water and most times they have to pay money to get water from boreholes whose prices fluctuate, a jerry can goes at highest Ugshs 1000 during scarcity, women compared to men need more water for hygiene most especially during menstruation, failing to get clean water leads to poor hygiene and being seen as an outcast by the men.⁷ Climate change increases child malnutrition and stunting,⁸ they get exposed to malaria during rainy seasons and climate changes have a direct effect on their school attendance.

Men in Amuru are responsible for looking after their families, looking for income to pay school fees for their children, for paying medical bills, and also to put food on the table as well as other family responsibilities. They are able to do all these through agriculture which mostly gets affected by the unfavorable climatic conditions, they end up desperate to have food to feed their families leading to their resignation, hopelessness and cruelty.

⁵ IUCN Issues brief on Gender and Climate Change

⁶ Women and Climate Change fact sheet

⁷ Focus Group Discussion

⁸ Climate related hazards and urbanization: Protecting Uganda's Children

The effects of climate change have exacerbated the domestic violence challenge, increasing violence between husbands and wives, exposure of girls to early marriages and early pregnancies hopelessness among young men and stress.

It is important to note that the same people of Amuru are suffering grave social and economic upheavals orchestrated by tribal rivalries, historical and cultural contradictions and, rather worrying unclear state interests in the land of Amuru. These conditions have only merged to further complicate the difficult climatic conditions and their effects on communities in Amuru.

It is necessary and urgent that particular interventions, either policy or economic or social or all be considered to address the situation described above.

Relevant authorities on the situation

1. Local Government

- Construct irrigation schemes and water dams along the banks of River Unyama to mitigate persistent flooding.
- Enactment and Enforcement of the bye-laws against tree cutting and those on food security.
- Bench marking to areas with favorable climate

2. Nema

- Women should be sensitized more on environment protection
- Promote re-afforestation by providing/distribution of tree seedlings

3. Cabinet

- Food items and other essential household items like bedding would be delivered
- Giving of soft loans with minimum interest rate to women so that they can engage in other business alternatives on addition to agriculture.
- Enforce environment protection acts of parliament like the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003

4. Parliament

- Enact environment friendly laws

5. Local Communities

- Plant drought resistant crops
- Engage in other economic activities on addition to agriculture

On all these it is important that the said responsible entities convene urgently to discuss the situation in Amuru with clear intentions and approaches lest Amuru sinks to unimaginable abyss.