



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Mainstreaming Kenya's National Climate Change Action Plan into the Gender, Youth and Vulnerable Groups Sector

Introduction: Kenya's 2010 Constitution and Vision 2030 recognise the importance of mainstreaming gender, youth and vulnerable groups into the country's socio-economic development agenda. The participation of the diversity of the Kenyan people -- including socio economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, religious faith, age, occupation, learning, persons with disabilities and the disadvantaged -- in environmental matters such as climate change is specifically entrenched in Article 69(1)(e) the Constitution 2010, which states that "the state shall encourage public participation in the management, protection and conservation of the environment."

Risks and Impacts: Climate change disproportionately burdens particular segments of society, with women and children usually being the most vulnerable. The Human Development Report 2007-2008 affirmed that the disadvantages of women, who have historically had limited access to resources, restricted rights and reduced their voice in decision making, make them extremely vulnerable to climate change.¹ The UNDP's Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change reports that women use and manage natural resources differently than men, the degradation of natural resources affects them differently, and women's disadvantages may increase with a change in or loss of natural resources associated with climate change. Women are a major force in the agricultural sector in Kenya and produce the majority of food, yet they earn only a fraction of the income generated and own a nominal percentage of assets. Climate change endangers the food security and livelihoods of women and their children.²

The different socio-economic roles of men and women in a society contribute to women's vulnerability to climate change. In traditional African societies, men are usually responsible for overall financial security and safety of the family, while women play an important role in agriculture, food security, water supply, health care and childcare. However, there are households, even those that are male-headed, where women are responsible for overall security and wellbeing of the family. Thus, when the availability of food, firewood and clean, safe water is threatened by extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, the burden of sustaining the family falls disproportionately on women (and girls). The scarcity of water and firewood increases a woman's workload and the time required to meet these basic needs. This reduces the time available for income-generating activities, education and training, or participation in community decision-making processes. Climate change can intensify existing economic and social gender disparities.³

Many female- and child-headed households are particularly vulnerable to climate change because they are not financially stable and therefore lack coping mechanisms. Lifestyle changes impacted by climate change, such as lack of food or housing because of extreme weather events, mean that some women and girls are forced to adopt unhealthy and unsafe "coping strategies" to sustain their families. Some resort to commercial sex work, which exposes them to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, women are burdened with the care of those who fall sick to the pandemic, further reducing their productivity. Other coping strategies include early, forced or arranged marriage of the girl-child, with the dowry obtained in exchange for the girl used to temporarily meet the family's sustenance. This issue is of particular concern to communities where forced or arranged early marriage of the girl-child is traditionally practised. Climate change-induced stress such as food insecurity during drought episodes can encourage such practices.

Kenya has a large youth population, with 43 per cent of the total population under age 15 in 2009.⁴ Decent jobs will be required for these citizens, with training needed to help future farmers increase productivity in a chang-



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ing climate, and education needed to help young workers take advantage of new jobs and opportunities that emerge in the transition to a green economy.

Climate change has impacted the populations in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), with successive droughts affecting school enrolment and attendance. School feeding programmes – put in place to provide nutritious meals to children in communities affected by drought and poverty – have encouraged increased school enrolment and completion rates. The World Food Programme reports that enrolment rates in Kenyan schools with meals were an average 28% higher than at those without.⁵

Recommended Actions: The National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) does not provide specific recommendations for addressing gender, youth and vulnerable groups. But recommended adaptation actions, if pursued in a manner that is sensitive to these groups can increase their resilience and ability to cope. Specific recommendations in the literature to mainstream climate change in the women, youth and vulnerable groups sectors are listed below:

- *Consider gender in the design of adaptation and mitigation strategies and programmes.* For instance, mitigation strategies targeting household energy usage need to consider that women are the most affected. Energy efficient cook-stoves and solar lamps can help address the challenge of energy poverty experienced by many women, but the benefits of such programs must be directed to women. Similarly, adaptation measures in the agricultural sector should consider the important role played by women in food production, and the need to direct programs toward women farmers.
- *Engage women, youth and other vulnerable groups in climate change decision making and planning.* A key recognition in the 2007 Human Development Report is that women are more vulnerable because of their gender, and that it is important that women participate in planning processes to adapt to climate change.⁶
- *Create an enterprise fund to support the economic activities of women, youth and other vulnerable groups.* This approach could build on the experience of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund. One proposal that has been put forward is to have the two funds provide start-up grants to potential entrepreneurs, and thereafter loans at reduced interest rates for business expansion. In addition, there is the need to consider other vulnerable groups such as physically challenged persons.

Other important actions include:

- Collect and strengthen assessment and information gathering on women, youth and climate change.
- Improve understanding of the additional vulnerability caused by climate change over other poverty-inducing factors, and reorient programmes to account for this improved understanding.
- Add considerations of climate change vulnerability to existing programmes and activities to encourage adaptation that contributes to reducing vulnerability of women and children.⁷

Conclusion: Climate change affects men, women, youth and other vulnerable groups in different ways. Gender inequality is reflected in increased vulnerability, and support is needed to improve women's ability to respond to climate change. Unless the gender aspect is addressed directly in climate policy, climate change has the potential to increase the existing gender gap. It is important that women participate in planning processes of climate change programmes and policy development.



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¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2007. *Human Development Report 2007-2008. Fighting climate change: human solidarity in a divided world*. New York: UNDP.

² UNDP. 2009. *Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change*, New York: UNDP.

³ Rodenberg, B. 2009. *Climate Change Adaptation from a Gender Perspective*. Bonn: German Development Institute.

⁴ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. 2010. *The 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census*. Nairobi: Government of Kenya.

⁵ World Food Programme. 2010. "Kenya: School Meals Graduates Pass Down Rewards." Accessed at: <http://www.wfp.org/stories/kenya-school-meals-grads-pass-down-rewards>.

⁶ UNDP, 2007.

⁷ Eriksen, S.E.H., Klein, R. J.T, Ulsrud, K., Naess, L.O. and O'Brien, K. 2007. *Climate Change Adaption and Poverty Reduction: Key interactions and critical measures*. Report prepared for Norad. Oslo: Global Environmental Change and Human Security.