

POLICY BRIEF 1 TRANSFORM THE POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Policy frameworks for advancing climate action: What needs to be urgently fixed by Government of Uganda?

To make progress on the Paris Agreement while achieving the various goals outlined in the Agenda 2030... It must change the discourse of economic growth and productivity measured in GDP to a degrowth narrative, which acknowledges the limits of the earth's systems to cope with continued growth ... - Menton, M., ET. Al (2020).

Emergence of climate change:

Climate change is already a reality and it is occurring earlier and faster than expected. In response, Government of Uganda (GoU) has put in place various policies, plans, strategies and other interventions to combat it. Unfortunately, the approaches used to design and deliver interventions have not achieved much of their stated goals. A recent study by the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) and three Coalition partners, demonstrates that there is a more appropriate approach that addresses the climate crisis – ecofeminism. The ecofeminist approach is premised on the reality that Climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable social groups, more especially the women and girls. Accordingly, women and girls are not merely victims of climate change: they are also the most important and strategic agents of change and possess solutions to the looming climate crisis.

Climate change situation in Uganda:

In Uganda, about 85% of women depend on the use of land for livelihood and food production for their families.¹ 75% of women are smallholder farmers dependent on rain-

fed agriculture and climate-sensitive resources. Given the gendered nature of poverty², and the various disparities caused by systemic power imbalances, climate change effects are bound to continue causing a bigger crisis for women. Changes in temperature, severe floods, droughts and variations in the weather continue to increase women's economic vulnerability by causing delays or significantly declining agricultural produce, and increasing difficulties to access water and food, among others.

A study was conducted to strengthen the knowledge and evidence-base for and with affected women in Uganda to be used by stakeholders to enhance the women movement to advance the case of climate justice. The study involved a desk review of the PISCCA project documents -project document, advocacy strategy, quarterly and annual reports, among others. It also involved a review of relevant literature including international protocols and reports, scholarly materials and plans. The last part of the study involved interviewing of selected key informants including technical officials at NAPE and the Coalition partners, district officials and staff of like-minded civil society organizations. This approach enabled the

¹ Impact of Extractives on Land, Environment and Women's rights in East Africa, Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action, June 2018.

² Understanding poverty from a gender perspective, Women and Development Unit, June 2004.

consultant to identify the key policy frameworks relevant to climate change at international and national levels; their key propositions regarding women's role in climate action; what is failing and what is missing that should be fixed.

Findings:

There are several international policies, plans and strategies to advance climate action. The key policy frameworks which significantly impact on climate action include: The Paris Agreement; Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

a) *The Paris Agreement:* The Paris Agreement (UN, 2015) is a global and legally binding treaty to fight climate change and advance a low-carbon future by limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C. It established a framework for unifying nations under a common banner: mitigating the potential impacts of climate change on human development and adapting to its effects. In its introductory section, the agreement acknowledges the need for countries to consider their respective obligations to human dignity, emphasizing the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, and persons with disabilities. It reminds each country of its obligation to promote gender equality, the empowerment of Women, and intergenerational equity.

b) *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):* The Paris Agreement is implemented through the NDCs, which are the national action plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts. The NDCs contain policies, activities, and measurements for achieving the Paris Agreement targets. Each country identifies, acts upon, and

reports on its own goals for reducing GHG emissions, according to its national circumstances, needs, and ambition in the areas of mitigation and adaptation to climate change. NDCs determine whether countries are achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement as quickly as possible and needed.

c) *Gender Action Plan (GAP):* The Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and its Gender Action Plan (GAP) are tools established to achieve gender-responsive climate policies, gender equality, and Women's empowerment in the efforts of countries toward the implementation of the Paris Agreement (Decision 3/ CP.25, 2019). The GAP provides a policy framework for supporting gender mainstreaming in the implementation of sustainable, just, and equitable climate actions. The GAP recognizes that the full, meaningful, and equal participation and leadership of Women in national and local-level climate policy creation and action are vital for achieving long-term climate goals; it also states that gender-responsive strategies and implementation of climate policy and action can enable countries to raise ambition.

d) *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):* The seventeen SDGs are defined in the Agenda 2030, a multilateral consensus to implement a development model addressing social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions in order to ensure livelihoods for future generations. The SDGs respond to these dimensions by outlining strategies to end poverty and inequality, achieve peace, as well as improve health, education, sanitation, and employment - all while tackling climate change and working to preserve global oceans and forests. This agenda gives equal priority and recognizes that any strategies for achieving these goals must be

interconnected, as action in one area will affect outcomes in others.

However, several reports³ present an alarming picture pointing to multiple and intersecting crises that threaten achievement of Agenda 2030. Also, the 2022 data report of UN Women on progress towards gender equality across the SDGs states that at the current rate of progress, it could take another 286 years to remove discriminatory laws and close prevailing gaps in protections for women and girls.

What policy frameworks are not working well for climate action?

Whereas the relevance of Agenda 2030 is in doubt, keeping the notion of economic and industrial growth as a crucial element for human development poses a contradiction for the achievement of its objectives.

The SDGs assume the global economy can continue to grow (SDG 8) while emissions decline quickly enough to stay within or below the 2°C, as per the Paris Agreement. However, economic growth, measured through Gross Domestic Product – GDP), cannot be sustained indefinitely. For instance, continued growth leads to an increase in final energy and material use, which will in turn require rising levels of extractivism and spread inequality in poorer nations and communities. In addition, targets and indicators of progress have been enumerated using a top-down approach, making local operationalisation difficult. Thus, Agenda 2030 becomes an instrument for dominating developing countries that are obliged to comply with the same goals and

indicators as industrialised countries, which have the best infrastructure to meet these climate goals.

Further still, in a section of the latest report⁴ on Mitigation of Climate Change, scientists made it clear that accelerating action does not only involve speeding up the rate of change but also addressing the underlying drivers of vulnerability and high emissions, enabling diverse communities, sectors, stakeholders, regions, and cultures to participate in just, equitable, and inclusive processes that improve the health and well-being of people and the planet

Although the Paris Agreement acknowledges countries should follow a gender - responsive approach to adaptation plans and actions, it remains largely gender blind. There is no explicit reference to gender, even in relevant topics such as mitigation (Articles 4, 5, and 6); finance (Article 9); and technology (Article 10). Women are not mentioned in the mitigation section - the omission signaling that Women are neither key actors nor agents of change but merely victims of the climate crisis. Such a belief automatically confines Women to a passive role in crisis management, carries implications for how countries design their climate objectives and activities.

The NDCs have shown progress in gender mainstreaming by considering gender barriers to access to, control, and power over rights, resources, and services in the design and implementation of climate change policies. However, only 6% of the revised NDCs provide funds for Women/gender activities (IUCN, 2021). Thus, many of the

³ See “The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2022 on the effect of COVID 19 pandemic and other violent conflicts on achievement of SDGs.

⁴ See “Accelerating the transition in the context of sustainable development,” Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change report, 2022.

gender aspirations within the NDCs remain theoretical, as commitments do not dedicate resources for applying a gender approach to climate policies. Without a focused budget, achieving the proposed gender equity objectives is impossible.

What critical issues are missing in efforts to advance climate action?

The way out of the climate crisis, and the intersecting injustices it exacerbates, lies in the formulating new policies which tackle and completely eradicate colonial models and structures in all areas of human life.

In the first instance, we acknowledge that current policy frameworks are silent about the root causes of the climate crisis which lie within the multiple phases of production and consumption, whereby humans in power have exploited Earth's resources and abused the rights of colonized communities (Cortés, G., Cardoso, I., Mbungu, G. (2022). Looked at from this lens, conventional development therefore represents a cultural imposition which we inherited from Western knowledge. As a response to the climate change impacts, some communities have tried to explore alternatives to the idea of development. These alternatives focus on principles such as unity, equality, inclusion, dignity, freedom, solidarity, respect, and social and gender equity in participation (Acosta, A., Gudynas E. (2011). Evaluations from such alternatives to development have proved to be successful in mitigating climate change at local and community levels.

extraction of other common goods from our ecosystems. Climate justice recognizes the ecological debt of rich nations and corporations, making a clear demand for them to answer for their historical responsibilities in the face of climate change.

Ecofeminism provides an intersectional framework for understanding how various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other, as well as how social characteristics intersect, leading to unique experiences of discrimination and a better understanding of the structural, historical, and institutional root causes of such discrimination. Intersectionality broadens the reflection and recognition of multiple layers of oppression: gender, race, ethnicity, language, age, socioeconomic power, academic level, geographic location, or nationality. Ecofeminism argues that the climate crisis and oppression of marginalized groups are intimately intertwined and therefore neither issue can be solved independently.

Gender and climate justice advocates, demand actions that respect human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls in all their diversity. Women and girls have a right to effectively participate in and lead efforts to achieve climate justice, as equal rights holders and agents of change. A feminist decolonial approach to climate change ensures the inclusion of Women in decision-making processes related to climate governance, the resolution of conflicts over natural resources, equal access to justice, and the coherent implementation of inclusive and effective

What is also missing in the current regulatory framework are provisions that make a case for climate justice which calls for alternatives that move away from the indiscriminate accumulation of wealth through the burning of fossil fuels and the

See Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), European Environmental Bureau (EEB), 2021).

climate policies, laws, and financing mechanisms⁶.

Different movements are coming together to demand climate and gender justice. From the Global South, there are groups of actors who have come up to challenge the preconceived beliefs and practices of predominantly Eurocentric thinking. There are already visible and concrete alternatives to the dominant development model with real solutions. These community and context-based initiatives stand in contrast with individualistic or commercial climate solutions (e.g. electric cars), which tend to maintain structural inequalities for the benefit of a few. These pluralistic initiatives consciously engage with a diverse set of knowledge and methods to ensure sustainable pathways for addressing the realities of climate change.

National policy frameworks for climate action:

Uganda was the first country in Africa to develop and endorse its Nationally Determined Contribution Partnership Plan (NDC-PP). It made key commitments in this regard, including, reducing national greenhouse gas emissions by 22% by 2030, reducing climate vulnerability of climate sensitive sectors since the economy is natural resource based, and building climate resilience of key sectors and managing disaster risks.⁷ Uganda ranks high in its number of commitments regarding climate change mitigation and environmental protection.⁸

⁶ See International Development Law Organization, 2022.

⁷ [Uganda releases first NDC partnership plan for climate action in Africa](#), NDC, June 2018

⁸ [Ugandan Government Steps Up Efforts to Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change](#), World Bank, May 2018.

Uganda Vision 2040: The Uganda Vision 2040 notes the vulnerability of Uganda to the impacts of climate change.⁹ It notes that development has concentrated on improvement and advancement of economic, social cultural and political conditions and less on preserving the environment which has in turn resulted into global warming and other adverse environmental conditions associated with climate change.¹⁰ Under the same vision, the government proposes the development of appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, and popularisation of guidelines on how to include climate change in sector and local government plans and budgets. It also highlights that policies and organizational structures will be developed to advance climate change efforts, with an emphasis on coordination at the national and local levels.¹¹

However, the Vision 2040 approach is similar to the SDGs and other international protocols discussed in terms of pursuit of development - the thinking that economic and industrial growth are the utmost crucial elements of human development which can only be achieved at the expense of social and ecological justice. The mentality of Uganda's leadership is skewed towards extraction of the earth system; hyper consumption and production irrespective of ecosystem degeneration and depletion. This means that this extractivist orientation can never help the country achieve the social and human aspects of development.

Uganda has responded in form of policies, programmes, projects and interventions to alleviate the impacts of Climate Change. Uganda is signatory to the United Nations

⁹ [Uganda Vision 2040](#), National Planning Authority

¹⁰ Uganda Vision 2040, pg 12

¹¹ Uganda Vision 2040, pp 100- 102

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and ratified the Kyoto protocol, and is privy to a number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that have strong links with climate change. National plans and policies include the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA 2007), National Development Plan (NDP 2010/11 – 2014/15), the Renewable energy Policy (2007), the Disaster Management and Preparedness Policy inter alia (Vision 2040).

However, Gender is still largely seen as an isolated issue that is discussed in a room away from the main debates about mitigation, financing, and technology. In addition, these plans do not receive sufficient resources to implement them across the board. As commitments do not dedicate resources for applying a gender approach to climate policies. Without a focused budget, achieving the proposed gender equity objectives is impossible. At the same time, gender does not appear to be an issue integrated within the intersecting policies of different ministries.

Recommendations:

1. Government should review the current policy frameworks and work towards integrating gender within the intersecting policies of different ministries and commit and dedicate resources for applying a gender approach to climate policies in order to achieve the proposed ecofeminist equity objectives.
2. Government and other like-minded actors should adopt a feminist vision of a well-being economy which aims at systemic transformation of our economic system away from the fixation on GDP growth and material

extraction and towards the goal of social and ecological justice and well-being. This should entail:

- a) a systematic analysis of all forces behind what is produced, how it is produced, and for what uses;
 - b) a broad and deep understanding of our economic and political structures sustain discriminatory practices against women and other vulnerable groups; and
 - c) a scrutiny and articulation of associated factors and forces.
3. Review and revise Vision 2040 and other strategic policies and plans to:
 - a) adopt a decolonial approach that breaks with patterns of hyper consumption, over exploitation, and unequal appropriation of natural and human resources in order to stop ongoing cycles of exclusion, discrimination, and violence;
 - b) address the current structural inequalities—especially in relation to women’s political under-representation and limited participation in decision-making on environmental governance, as well as access to justice and financing - are key to achieving climate and gender justice goals in the long term;
 - c) integrate diverse forms of knowledge, foster respect

for cultural and spiritual identity, and eliminate multiple forms of oppression.

Contact details.

National Association of Professional Environmentalists [NAPE]:

Further information (links, references):

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