

POLICY BRIEF:

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND WATER INSECURITY IN UGANDA: THE NEED FOR A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH



#### **Key messages**

- Current policies do not adequately address issues related to water security and climate resilience from a gender transformative perspective.
- There are well-written gender policies in Uganda that should be effectively integrated into broader natural resource policies through revisions or addenda.
- Failing to recognize or address the disproportionate impacts water and climate have on women / girls and men/boys equally can halt or even harm efforts towards gender equality in Uganda.
- Existing gender inequalities could be addressed by enforcing existing gender policies.
- A wide array of stakeholders must be engaged in the gender transformative policy review processes addenda.
- Policies supporting gender and equity responsive budgeting will contribute to gender transformation in the country.

66

A gender transformative approach seeks to address the social norms, attitudes, behaviours and social systems that underlie inequalities faced by marginalised groups, including women. 99

For more information, visit:

https://gwp.org and https://gwp.org/en/GWP-Eastern-Africa/.



While climate change and water insecurity are a concern for communities as a whole, particular aspects of these issues affect men and women differently. Understanding how these gender inequalities manifest in policy is crucial for decision makers and stakeholders. Policies are a key tool in a government's arsenal to signal national priorities and guide development projects. Thus, the exclusion of women and girls from policies has a sizeable impact on the daily lives of marginalised populations.

Uganda has made progress toward becoming a more gender-equal society. This is evident in a wide array of gender policies that have successfully integrated gender equality. However, several water and climate policies remain gender aware at best. The failure to deliberately incorporate gender into these policies, coupled with the general provisions of equality that have no concrete method of application, can halt or even harm efforts towards gender equality in the country.

Uganda has made progress toward becoming a more gender-equal society. This is evident in a wide array of gender policies that have successfully integrated gender equality. However, several water and climate policies remain gender aware at best. The failure to deliberately incorporate gender into these policies, coupled with the general provisions of equality that have no concrete method of application, can halt or even harm efforts towards gender equality in the country.

#### → Approach: Are Policies Gender Transformative?

Policy analysis was conducted to identify gender inequalities and power relations embedded in national and regional policies, with the goal of rectifying gender biases in existing and future policies. Results were derived through a three-stage feminist policy analysis of select water, climate, development and gender related policies. In terms of content, gender transformative policies will

- explore issues facing women and girls
- include sex-disaggregated data consistently
- consult women during policy development
- aim to address specific needs and interests of women and girls, and
- comply with relevant international conventions.

## Gender transformative policies will contain rigorous conclusions that include:

- specific targets or commitments
- specific, measurable gender transformative indicators
- responsibility and accountability for implementation, monitoring, and learning
- steps toward implementation with specific tailored actions and context.

Twelve gender, development, water and climate-related policies in Uganda were assessed based on the criteria for gender transformative approaches in policy content, conclusions and implementation.

Table 1 presents the categorisation and gender-related characteristics from the policy analysis. The criteria used to assess these policies as well as a full review can be found *in the Final Gender analysis report, Uganda, November 2020.* 

Category	Characteristics	Categorisation of policies analysed from Uganda
Gender transformative	Addresses underlying causes of gender-based inequalities; transforms harmful gender norms, roles, or relationships.	The National Policy on Elimination of Gender Based Violence East African Community Gender Policy Min Water and Environment, Water and Sanitation Gender Strategy Environment and Natural Resources sub-sector Gender mainstreaming strategy Nile Basin Initiative Gender Policy and Strategy
Gender mainstreaming	Includes gendered statements throughout the programme; does not focus on gender norms or harmful practices	The Uganda National Gender Policy National Priority Gender Equality Indicators (NPGEI) The National Gender Based Violence Database Constitution of Uganda The National Land Policy
Partial gender mainstreaming	Efforts are made to include women as beneficiaries	National Climate Change Policy
Gender aware	Acknowledges gender differences but does not address gender inequalities	The National Water Policy
Gender neutral	Vague, erratic or minimal effort made to address gender inequalities	No policies qualified for this category
Gender blind	No attempt to address gender inequalities, may perpetuate gender inequalities or make them worse	No policies qualified for this category

McPhail, B. A. (2003) A feminist policy analysis framework: through a gendered lens. Social Policy Journal, 2(2-3), 39-61. Available from: doi: https://doi.org/10.1300/J185v02n02\_04

## First Things First: Legislating Gender Equality

### **National Gender Policies**

National gender policies represent government's understanding of the social, political, and economic inequalities facing women and girls; and signal national priorities in efforts to alleviate these inequalities. The Gender Policy (2007) confirms the country's unequivocal commitment to gender equality and women and girl's empowerment as integral to Uganda's socio-economic development. It focuses on gender mainstreaming in government and non-state spheres. Despite existence of the policy, cultural values and norms are also still the root cause of barriers to gender equality.

Out of 8 gender policies reviewed in Uganda, 6 have successfully mainstreamed gender while 2 have partially done so. Most notably, the Water and Sanitation Gender Strategy WSGS III (2018–2022) focuses on empowering the marginalised to access and manage water resources in an integrated, equitable and sustainable manner. While this policy considers women's and men's specific needs when it comes to water and sanitation, it fails to address the underlying causes of gender inequality by transforming the harmful gender norms, roles and relationships that make it hard to achieve full gender equality. Additional efforts have been made to ratify various international conventions relating to women/girl's rights. However, the effectiveness of the legal and institutional framework for promoting gender equality is quite limited as there is no direct action to identify and address harmful gender norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality.



#### **National Development Policies**

The Constitution of Uganda 1995 is the country's overall legal framework that provides for gender balance and fair representation of marginalised groups and accords equal citizenship rights to the each of the country's citizens. Gender is mainstreamed into the document as it explicitly states the need for gender balance in public life as well as the importance of recognizing the value of women in the society. Although the Constitution of Uganda guarantees gender equity, its provisions for gender equality are not fully implemented because most of the lower laws have not been harmonized to reflect these rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Despite these provisions within the Constitution, the underlying root causes of discrimination, harmful practices and norms that prevent women and girls from attaining gender equality have not yet been addressed.

The National Development Plan details Uganda's current development status, challenges, and opportunities in line with the National Vision Framework. However, the NDPIII on environment, natural resources, and climate change and land does not adequately bring out strategic and practical gender needs in natural resources and climate change adaptation. It reflects more of a tool to attract resources to environment and natural resources without considering the gender inequalities that are faced therein.

#### Water, Climate and Natural Resource Policies

Uganda has a number of instruments proving an enabling legal framework for water resources management and development. Uganda's policy and legal framework for gender equality in the water and environment sector is guided by international and regional commitments on gender equality. At regional level, Vision 2063 of the African Union acknowledges the importance of mainstreaming gender across all sectors, especially through measures mitigating effects of climate change, and recommends the use of the gender approach in th management of wetlands, reforestation, biodiversity and valorisation of resources, and rural activities. This strategy does not address the underlying causes of gender-based inequalities, nor seeks to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations. Likewise, at national level, though there is a comprehensive framework to guide gender mainstreaming in policies, structures and programme implementation, it is limited by cultural prejudices limiting women's participation in development of water and environment resources.

Of 3 water, climate, and natural resource policies assessed for this brief, one was found to have mainstreamed gender. The National Land Policy is the only policy in this category that has explicitly attempted to integrate the rights of women. However, despite Uganda's progressive legal efforts to establish gender equality in property rights, there still exists a large disconnect between land reform legislation and actual reforms in practice, particularly with respect to women and girl's rights to own and inherit land and other assets. The failure to effectively implement land reform in Uganda is in part due to the presence of legal pluralism that allows the coexistence and interaction of statutory laws with multiple legal orders such as state, customary, religion, and local laws.

The remaining 2 water, climate, and natural resource policies are gender aware. This means that not only do these policies not consider gender as a factor but some of the language used is not gender responsive. Even though these policies emphasize the importance of water security and climate resilience, there are no specific strategies for integrating gender into their activities. There are no implementation plans, no gender disaggregated data and the policies do not explicitly consider gender harmful practices that promote inequalities.

Considering the results of the policy reviews, it is clear that gender has not been deliberately prioritised in the water and climate change policy sphere in Uganda. While different programs may consider gender equality throughout their life cycle, lack of clearly articulated national polices on water security and climate resilience result in haphazard applications of gender approaches.

<sup>2</sup>National Development Plan (NDP) III 2020/21-2024/25, page 105

#### Obstacles to Gender Equality

- Limited knowledge and capacity on gender transformative approaches
- Limited coordination between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and other ministries within the country
- Lack of adequate financial resources by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, mainly attributed to fulfil existing gender mandates.
- Limited gender transformation integration into sectoral policies

#### $\underline{\text{Key Recommendations: The Case For a Gender Transformative Approach}}.$

Gender inequality is a cause for concern, not only in the water and climate sectors, but in society as a whole. Unfortunately, many relevant policies in Uganda that might address gender inequalities are not implemented. Conversely, some policies that integrate gender do so in a tokenistic way that results in a surface level treatment of gender without detailing the pathway to change.

## In order to strengthen gender relevant policies in Uganda, policy makers should:

- Through the Ministry of Water and Environment revise existing water strategy and policy documents to include gender transformative approaches that acknowledge systematic inequalities between men and women and address the root causes of the inequalities.
- Contribute to the implementation of existing gender strategies and polices in the water sector, and to efforts of Ministry of Water and Environment to develop the Gender Transformative Climate Change policy.
- Facilitate effective coordination between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and other line ministries working on issues of water security and/or climate change in the country.
- Prioritize gender in resource allocation, which will ultimately contribute to gender transformation in the water and climate change sectors.
- Enlist experts to develop manuals to guide gender transformative policy development in water and climate change.



#### About Global Water Partnership-Eastern Africa

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) is a worldwide network of 13 Regional Water Partnerships and comprises 3,000+ partner organizations in over 180 countries. Our vision is a water secure world. Our mission is to support the sustainable development and management of water resources at all levels through Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). IWRM is a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources in order to maximise economic and social welfare in an equitable manner, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems and the environment.

GWP Eastern Africa was constituted in 2003 by stakeholders to support the sustainable development and management of water resources at all levels in the region. GWP Eastern Africa is currently composed of nine Country Water Partnerships (Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda) and counts over 200 partners working in these Countries. GWPEA works with these country water partnerships to address water security issues and environmental challenges such as drought, floods, food insecurity, climate change and water insecurity.

For more information, visit: <a href="https://gwp.org/en/GWP-Eastern-Africa/">https://gwp.org/en/GWP-Eastern-Africa/</a>.

