

Investing in Community Media Development for Rural Women and Youth Empowerment in Agriculture Production for Community Development in Africa

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Abstract: Women empowerment implications are multiplied by their multiple roles in households. Besides, climate change and variability affect women more than men in social, economic, or ecological services. To what extent does gender mainstreaming contribute to enhancement of rural agriculture outputs for climate change resilient communities in Africa? We present a coordinated, participatory, and a holistic framework for planning the desired gender equality and women empowerment strategies. We used lessons learned, best practices, and policy applications to illustrate the vital need for gender equality mainstreaming for better agriculture outputs for basic food security and nutrition policy information services. The negative outputs of agriculture have affected food security status due to poor policy, legal, social, economic, political, and environmental perspectives of women's roles agriculture and food security. Currently, there is an urgent need to plan local, national, and regional level measures for women and youth and develop comprehensive plans in response to the current and projected agriculture information services with a focus on ICT. We attempt to provide a local strategy for addressing the gender equality policy community media communication strategy to enhance climate smart agriculture, food security, and food trade by most countries of the region. Africa faces serious social, economic, political, and environmental climate effects, gender inequality, agriculture production gaps, information deficiency, data gaps, gross youth unemployment, and perennial food security crisis. Effective rural development communication strategy enhances north-south cooperation and agriculture production benefits of available, accessible, usable, and stable food for women as well as empowerment.

Keywords – Women, youth, climate, agriculture, gender equality

Introduction

Engaged and vibrant community media ecology can strengthen gender mainstreaming for better agricultural outputs for effective food policy in Africa (Okaka 2014). The agricultural sector is the most important sector of the Ugandan economy (UBOS 2014). Empirical evidence attests to this; for example the share of the agricultural sector to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is about 21%. According to the agricultural module of the 2002 population and housing census, the agricultural sector accounted for 73% of the total employment for the persons aged 10 or more (ibid 2014). Likewise, 74% of the families on farming (MAAIF, 2013).

To improve food security and general nutrition levels, effective leadership, development, and good governance are central elements of the strategy. Leadership must be exercised and policymakers goaded persistently to engage with the issues of food and nutrition security in all parts of the country and at all policy levels as an issue of broad public concern (Okaka and Nagasha 2018). Building political awareness of the burden of malnutrition on welfare and development prospects at local level is vital. The message that poverty is an intrinsic component of food insecurity must be disseminated widely (ibid 2018). Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 1996). This also applies to crafting a regional climate change policy (EAC 2011a).

Media communicators can use the *agenda setting theory* to lead the public debate on the issue at hand. Agenda setting theory argues that media may not tell people what to think, but what to think about (Stanley and Dennis 2003). Community media advocacy is much more central to the role of nutritionists and nutrition planners than it is for most other professionals across sectors (UNAS 2006a). There is a

need to facilitate advocacy efforts to raise the general knowledge of the population of the importance of good nutrition so that malnutrition becomes a political issue for which political leaders, the government, and individual sectors of government are accountable by CSOs and the public (Okaka and Nagasha 2016). Community food security exists when all citizens get a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self reliance and equal access for everyone (FAO 2013). A household is food secure with access to the food needed for a healthy life for all its members in quality, quantity, safety, and culturally acceptable (ibid 2013).

Effective Food Security and Climate Policy Communication Services

African states frequently face food insecurity despite its huge untapped capacity to produce adequate food for regional needs and export market. For example, the most common causes of food shortages are (EAC 2011b): mismanagement of food trade during good harvest time (bumper harvest) and acute deficiency after the post-harvest period and variability in outputs due to climate the variability caused by climate change. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 1996). For example, the media (electronic and print media) can implement advocacy communication campaigns by framing, priming, or setting agenda for public awareness and engagement on food security issues in Africa. One of the recent policy responses is the EAC agriculture and rural development policy (EAC 2011b) was launched to fight hunger in favour of certain food security, defeat poverty, and stimulate ecological agriculture in the sub-region. It is therefore, logical to develop a communication framework for achieving food security public awareness to curb the multiple challenges of rural agriculture (ibid 2011b).

Gender equality concept aims to ensure that the women achieve their fundamental human rights, social, economic, ecological, and political participation and their welfare (AU 2015). In order to enhance gender equality, it is imperative to recognize the barriers that girls and women face include socially constructed norms because they cause learned attributes, behaviour, or status that largely favour males (GU 2007). Agricultural drought has undermined food and nutrition for socio economic welfare of the district where acute deficiency of dietary intake is caused by food insecurity. Food insecurity directly attributed to lack of or poor accessibility, availability, utilization, and stability of food including humanitarian emergency food relief (IDDP 2017). The use of both mass media and interpersonal communication channels provide the maximum audience exposure to the messages for effective agricultural policy implementation among the intended local targets (Okaka and Nagasha 2016).

Issues in Gender Equality for Climate Disaster Adaptation Stress

Local vulnerability to climate change and climate variability will depend on the socio-economic systems in adapting to the impacts of climate change as climate change is projected to devalue the vulnerable community livelihoods (IDDP 2016). These include health, water, homes, transport, education, agriculture, ecosystem, markets, land, and food security. Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects, opportunities, skills, experience, competence, influence, resources, and power to shape their own lives to contribute to society (SIDA 2015).

Therefore, gender analysis (GA) is the starting point to highlight the differences between and among women, men, girls, and boys in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power in a given context and performing GA allows us to redress gender inequalities (ibid 2015). It is vital that communities are empowered so that both men and women are involved in planning, testing, and rolling out adaptation and mitigation activities. There are vital gender equality and equity information, policy, research, knowledge, and practice gaps in the district due to: poor or wrong: attitudes, behaviour, planning, perceptions, policies, management, budgeting, leadership, education, communication, practice, staffing, methods, values, and strategies by local government (IDDP 2017). In addition, there are key gender equity information, policy, research, knowledge, and practice gaps in

the district due to: poor or wrong: attitudes, behaviour, planning, perceptions, policies, management, budgeting, leadership, education, communication, practice, staffing, methods, values, and strategies experienced by the local government district (ibid 2017).

For example, engendered community radio plays a specific and crucial role in encouraging (Lambert 2012): public participation; facilitating community-level debates; strengthening cultural and linguistic diversity; providing access to information; the most effective tool for assisting people in poor communities in agriculture, education, health services, building infrastructure, community forestry, environmental conservation, natural disaster preparedness, empowering the marginalized, and establishing good governance; helping to localize information and messages; giving people tools for cultural expression, news, and information, dialogue, and development. All forms of physical, human, economic, political, ecological resources can be enhanced, conserved, and protected with a focus on gender mainstreaming (Okaka and Nagasha 2016). Women and youth involvement enhances agriculture outputs for sustainable livelihoods.

The Role of Information Communication Technology Services

ICTs are imperatives for telecommunication. ICTs have become a frontline technology for all investments which has helped to push the frontiers of knowledge and skills for sustainable development and human wellbeing. Strategic agricultural production policy innovations are to be designed to increase women empowerment awareness, inform, educate, mobilize, or change behaviour in the target audiences (Day and Monroe 2000). In addition, the key objectives of effective agricultural policy communication are to: capture the attention of the right audience; deliver an understandable and credible message; deliver a message that influences the beliefs or understanding of the audience; and create social contexts that lead toward desired outcome (Coffman 2002).

In addition, having data available in a central place will provide national and regional policymakers with the necessary information to inform policy and decision-making. The risk of adverse effects on agriculture due to climate change, especially in semi-arid, and sub-humid regions and in areas with more frequent and prolonged drought, may easily become life threatening (ACPC and UNECA 2014). This will adversely affect food security and exacerbate malnutrition. African countries like Uganda, need capacity building for water management, irrigation, water storage, infrastructure for water transportation, supply chains for agriculture and drinking water, sanitation, access, and utilisation; reinforce agricultural extension institutions or organisations for assisting, sensitising, and training farmers on adaptation best practice (ibid 2014).

Women and youth empowerment benefits of the agricultural policy dissemination community outreach services include (Okaka 2013): establishing effective collaboration between the agency and the community; improves community awareness, trust and accurate understanding of your mission, programme and successes, increases collaboration and communication with community members, stakeholders and key partners, share resources and exchange ideas, increase programme attendance, especially when conducted consistently, outreach can stimulate behavioural change and the implementation of risk reduction modalities in target groups. Rural agro-policy covers (Okaka and Nagasha 2016): identification of stakeholders, mutual respect, open communication, access to critical information, ethical behaviour, gender or cultural awareness, equal participation, consensus decision making, transparency, or accountability by stakeholders' communication networks (ibid 2016).

Agricultural outreach team should be seen, heard, predictable, consistent, available, accessible, sensible, visible, sincere, respectful, genuine, ethical, and professional (before, during, and after the interventions). Strategic communication (UNICEF 2005) is an evidence-based, results-oriented process, undertaken in consultation with the participants. It is intrinsically linked to other programme elements, cognisant of the local context and favouring a multiplicity of communication approaches, to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change (ibid 2005). Community outreach communication strategy should target behaviour change using effective: communication research, analysis, planning,

coordination, implementation, management, monitoring, and evaluation (AICAD and JICA 2012).

Food and Nutrition Policy Strategies

Effective food policy leads to adequate food and nutrition is a human right; food is treated as a national strategic resource as part and parcel of the overall national development policy; emphasizes the cross-cutting nature of food and nutrition as they affect men, women and children; provides a legal basis for food and nutrition structures, sectoral policies and action plans; response strategies to concerns at all levels; gender considerations, and all vulnerable groups. Food security is the outcome of food system operating efficiently. Efficient food system contributes well to all dimensions of food security as shown in the diagram below, see figure 1.

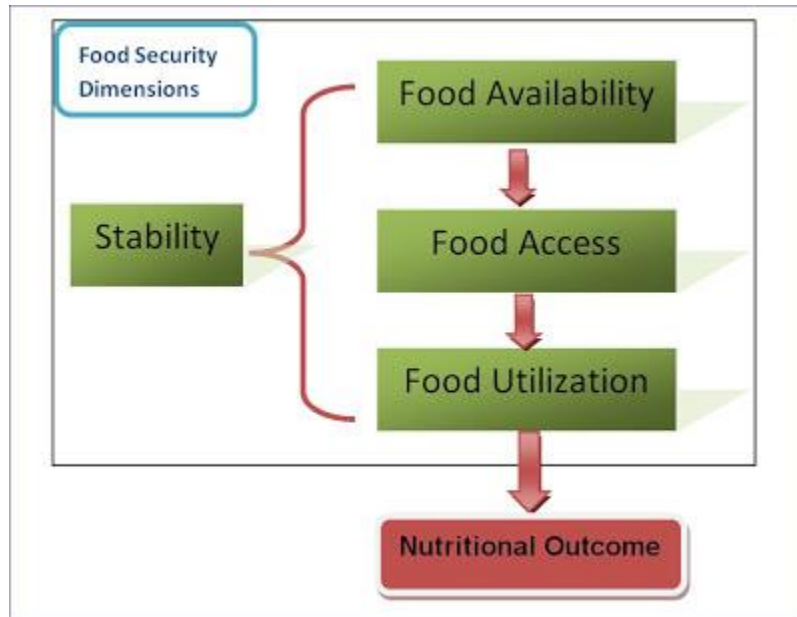


Figure 1: Dimensions of Food Security (FAO1996)

In brief, food availability ensures that adequate food is ready at local people's disposal; access caters for all households and individuals who have adequate resources to obtain the food they need either through production or purchase; utilization is about human body function to adequately ingest, digest, and metabolize the food; and stability is about assurance of continuation of all the above said dimensions (FAO 2013). **Isingiro** district in Uganda has developed community development plan for gender equality, youth and women empowerment for climate smart agriculture, food security, and nutrition for community and household livelihoods (IDDP 2016). This south-western Uganda district has already developed a communication service strategy for early warning for women empowerment from subordinated status to socio-economic have a voice in family benefits with a focus on food security (Okaka and Nagasha, 2018).

Gender inequality factors have been collectively unpacked by both men and women to promote agriculture outputs; engage gender transformation for effective adaptative capacity and mitigate climate variability impact on agriculture, and food security in **Isingiro** district (ibid 2018). The ultimate goal of women empowerment is to achieve gender equality. The district has planned climate change and variability adaptation strategies in tandem with gender assessment matrix. It has awakened up to achieve the values of women empowerment for the community are agreed to cherish all gender roles as a socio-cultural construct of roles, responsibilities, attributes, opportunities, privileges, status, access to and control of resources and benefits between women and men, boys, and girls in communities (IDPP 2016).

The current gender inequality status in the district is affecting all the socio-cultural and economic strata of the society: men, women, boys and girls, rural and urban people, normal and persons with disabilities, youth, and adults (Ibid, 2016). In its responses, the district has attributed the prevalence of gender inequality to multiple socio-cultural and economic factors. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action such as legislation, policies, or programmes in all agricultural areas. It addresses women's and men's issues and skills for partnerships in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres for women and men benefit equally, and inequality is stopped.

As a result, we need to make socio-economic gender variables to analyze roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of men and women in any context. Gender concept underscores the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men in a given culture or place (SIDA 2015). The national agricultural research policy, guided by the principles of modernization of agriculture, based on a market-responsive, client oriented and demand-driven national agricultural research system comprising public and private institutions working in tandem for the sustainable economic growth of Uganda (MAAIF 2013). Agriculture policy needs to be decentralised based on agro-ecological zones and seek to implement options of funding research on a sustainable basis. The funding of research and marketing of agricultural products in Uganda is poor (ibid 2013).

Climate change disaster has worsened stress on rural water supply, natural environment, disease, malnutrition, early deaths, and low agricultural productivity (IPCCC 2014). Effective community based adaptation brings faster benefits and mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change impacts. At the moment, most of the African agriculture is dominated by the single - handed practice by the peasants (poor small farmers) without any significant policy incentives for: information communication, logistical, infrastructure, marketing, technology, and taxation support. Climate and climate change are the most important environmental and natural resources which a poor rural farmer is openly proud of in Africa (Okaka 2014). This requires them to be well informed, facilitated, equipped, or empowered to adapt to adverse climate effects from severe damage, unpredictability, irregularity, frequency, variability, and intensity. Youth and women empowerment enhance agri. outputs.

Africa needs to heighten investment in climate science and innovations since these are central to enhanced agricultural performance in a dynamic climate environment (Denton 2014). Effectiveness of a communication strategy is vital for coordinating, informing, planning, mobilizing, monitoring, and evaluating all socio-economic and political development resources for sustainable agriculture in Africa. Gender mainstreaming in climate change and variability into public and private sector plans, projects, and programmes such as (Nyasimi, Radeny, and Kinyangi 2013) gender equality, poverty reduction, enhanced agricultural outputs for food security and nutrition. In most African states, the rural sector which is dominated by agriculture (crop, forestry, animal or livestock, and fisheries management), is not only the food basket of the urban sector, but also the backbone of the nation.

A younger, more educated, connected, and urbanised Africa liberates energies, increases women participation, and allows for the ICT revolution to leapfrog Africa's institutional backlogs (Lopes 2013). For example, many African countries such as (ibid 2013): Cape Verde, Kenya, Ethiopia, Morocco, and Uganda. Community media promote national and local investment plans. African agricultural lacks productivity due to heat and drought stress, with strong adverse effects on regional, national, livelihood and food security (ACPC and UNECA 2014).

Consequently, we must improve our institutional and policy capacity and invest in practical South-South partnerships for effective risk management (Lopes 2013). Concurrently, let us leverage agriculture since the 90 % Africa's rain fed agricultural production and food security could certainly face severe loss and damage (ibid 2013). Climate information services will better integrate water, land use, energy, food security, and prospects for the youth among the vital inputs into Africa's agricultural value chain (Denton 2014). In addition, Africa needs to persuade the sceptics of climate change in Africa on the reality of our vulnerability to it as well as to leverage the opportunities from the nexus between Africa's

transformation agenda and climate change (Lopes 2013).

Agriculture produces significant effects on climate change, primarily through the production and release of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, but also by altering the earth's land cover, which can change its ability to absorb or reflect heat and light, thus contributing to radiation (Okaka and Nagasha 2016). Land use dynamics such as deforestation, desertification, and the use of fossil fuels, are among the major sources of carbon dioxide. The latter is vital for agriculture which is also a major contributor to increasing methane and nitrous oxide concentrations. After decades of agro-technological progress, weather is still a key factor in agriculture production, soils, and natural ecology across large parts of Africa (ibid 2016).

Conclusion

Africa still needs to develop, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of its communication policy strategy for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable agricultural production with a focus on both the urban and rural vulnerabilities. The coordination framework should focus on: abject poverty, low or lack of awareness of adaptation strategy; cancerous state corruption, rain-fed peasant agricultural regime, high vulnerability to climate change disaster risks; low awareness, lack of access to information, and low research and development interventions on climate change disaster risks on one hand, and the looming benefits of climate change impact on food security.

Besides, most rural farmers dominated by women and youth, lack specific information on the magnitude of climate change risks and benefits, the effects of innovative technological changes on productivity, food markets, financial opportunities, project proposal writing, mitigation, and adaptation options. Climate information services are critical inputs for effective climate disaster risks management for accelerated social equity for empowerment of women as well as girls too. Gender mainstreaming research can deliver effective public campaigns for the much needed better national agricultural productivity outputs. There are policy, research, information, innovations, funding, and north-south gaps. The current national agricultural communication strategy is quite wanting indeed. Information, knowledge, and attitudes are key determinants of agricultural seeking behaviour in Uganda where ignorance alone, is the commonest cause of poor production outputs. Good agricultural communication services aim to reach the audience, attract attention and belief for a better agro - production.

Climate change and agriculture are interrelated processes which take place on a global scale. An assessment of the effects of global climate change on agriculture might help to achieve innovative farming methods to optimize the African agricultural productivity and production. The effect of climate on agriculture is related to variations in local climate patterns. In the long run, the climatic change could affect agriculture in several ways: productivity, in terms of quantity and quality of crops; agricultural practices, through changes of water use (irrigation) and agricultural inputs such as herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers; environmental effects, in particular in relation to the frequency and intensity of soil drainage, soil erosion, reduction of diversity; rural space, through the loss and gain of cultivated lands, land speculation, land renunciation, and hydraulic resources; and adaptation.

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