Gender impacts and adaptations to climate change

Over one year ago Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) introduced a project that focus on a gendered adjustment to farming, livestock and natural resources management in the context of climate change. The project takes place in the semi-arid areas of Meatu and Iramba Districts in Simiyu and Singida regions, respectively. This story sheds light on what has been transpired during one year of project implementation.

**EPINAV project on Gender and Climate**

This project is implemented under the programme “Enhancing pro-Poor Innovations in Natural Resources and Agricultural Value Chains” (EPINAV). The project commenced in November 2011 and it is implemented by Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) in collaboration with the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) and Tumbi Agricultural Research Institute based in Tabora Region, Tanzania.

The focus of the project is to evaluate gendered impacts and adaptation of climate change in order to improve their livelihoods.

The project concentrates on identifying vulnerability factors; gendered perceptions of climate change; impacts and adaptations of climate change on agricultural systems and natural resources use; determinants of adaptation ability of men and women; and links between gendered adaptation outcomes and agricultural production and natural resources.

This story highlights the initial processes and initial results from the implementation of project activities such as exploratory visits, identification of key stakeholders, inception workshops, and participatory vulnerability assessment carried out within the study areas.
Exploring Meatu and Iramba District

Exploratory visit to the research sites (Meatu and Iramba Districts) was undertaken. This exercise was important for project members to grasp general information and characteristics of the study areas before commencement of the project. During this exercise, the research team found that although Meatu and Iramba Districts are both in semi-arid areas they differ slightly in terms of agro-ecological zones, soil type and landscape. For example, the Southern part of Meatu District is drier than the Northern part. Similarly, the Western lowland part of Iramba district is drier than the Eastern part. Three villages were selected (1) Mwamanimba village found in the Southern Meatu (2) Mwashata village found in the Northern Meatu and (3) Kidaru village found in the Western lowland areas in Iramba District.

Later on, a Participatory Vulnerability Assessment (PVA) was also conducted (May and June 2012). This is an assessment of inability of poor households in managing risk without being forced to make choices that compromise human wellbeing over time. It was carried out to identify, quantify, and prioritize the vulnerabilities in the study areas in relation to climate change and variability. During PVA, it was found out that many poor households lost their resources due climate change. They proclaimed that there was low crop production due to severe droughts, death of livestock due to loss of pastures in grazing lands, and scarcity of water as many water sources have been drying.

Different coping strategies between men and women

Despite of limited resources, they have various coping strategies against the loss of their resources. It was observed that men and women have different coping strategies for climate change and variability adaptations. While selling vegetables from own gardens is common for women, seasonal labour out-migration is common for men during prolonged drought.

Local support of the project

A stakeholder analysis meeting conducted in January and February 2012 aimed at identifying key stakeholders, describing stakeholders’ key roles and functions, ranking identified stakeholders in order of importance in relation to climate change adaptation, and selecting key stakeholders to work with. The key stakeholders found were particularly smallholder farmers and agro-pastoralists, district agricultural and livestock officers, as well as the Land Use and Natural Resources officers. These were all later invited to participate in the inception workshops held in the study two areas.
Stakeholders are open for collaboration and are looking forward to acquire new knowledge and skills, which will be generated from this research.

“Food production and availability of firewood is extremely threatened by the climate variability in my area. The knowledge generated from this project will not only strengthen my coping strategies in food production but also energy supply. Hence, (give me a) better life”, said a female smallholder farmer during the inception workshop.

However, during the various meetings, participants from the study villages seemed to expect more than what the current project can deliver, including supply of improved seeds and promotion of large-scale irrigation farming system. Therefore, the project is planning to look for opportunities to link stakeholders with other partners to fulfil their expectations that could not be met by this project.

Generally, the project has received wide acceptance from various stakeholders due to the fact that climate change and variability in the study areas is increasingly threatening their livelihood.

A need for gender sensitive climate change interventions

Though it is a global phenomenon, climate change impacts and adaptations are differentiated by gender. Therefore, different set of interventions is needed for men and women as have different coping strategies for climate change and variability adaptations.

Project title:

A gendered analysis of climate change impacts and adaptation in semi-arid area farming systems and natural resources management

For more information go to http://www.suanet.ac.tz/cciam/

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