

## Challenges ahead: climate change in the context of weak institutions

Paper prepared for the UN Inter-Agency Expert Group Meeting on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027), 4-6 March 2020, Rome.

### Abstract

*Institutions structure impacts and vulnerability of individuals and communities, they mediate between individual and collective responses to climate impacts, and influence how different actors in climate action access and use resources. Both formal and informal institutions are important building blocks for short and long-term actions on climate change. The new commitment to integrate short-term development priorities and long-term resilience suggest the need for new forms of institutional arrangements that are needed for channeling climate finance and coordinating adaptation actions across sectors, governance levels and communities. Based on literature and personal experiences working in the climate policy space, I identify key institutional weaknesses including insufficient inclusion of grassroots voices, poor coordination among policy actors, ineffective decentralization and limited attention to gender and inclusion. I share lessons from successful case studies, and, based on these, recommend strategies that will improve inclusion and gender, coordinate climate action better, improve capacity and skills and shift focus from policy to action.*

### 1. Introduction

Climate change is widely viewed as a development issue because its impacts are multidimensional affecting various socio-economic sectors and in turn have consequences on lives and livelihoods. Literature concurs that climate change will impact on social and economic development goals, including poverty reduction, food and nutrition security, economic growth, gender equality, social equity, and health (FAO, 2016). This multidimensionality calls for multi-stakeholder approaches and institutional frameworks that can be applied across regions, governments and sectors (Lesnikowski, et al. 2017).

At global level, institutions have been instrumental in guiding countries to undertake climate action. The UNFCCC's Kyoto Protocol, and its Doha amendment, binds signatory developed countries to emission targets and provides Adaptation Finance to developing countries that are parties to the Protocol through the Global Environment Facility. The Paris Agreement brings all nations to agree to a long-term goal for adaptation - increasing ability to adapt, low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development without threatening food production - through their nationally determined contributions (NDCs). The Sustainable Development Goals - Agenda 2030 prioritizes climate change adaptation and mitigation. In addition to a stand-alone goal #13 - taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts - climate change has been mainstreamed across all SDGs and targets.

Significant success has been achieved in translating the international policies to national level policies, intermediated by regional organizations (e.g. African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and commitments (e.g. Malabo Declaration on accelerated agricultural growth). Many countries have ratified the UNFCCC and committed to the Paris Agreement, and have developed National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (Huyer, 2016), and climate change policies and strategies (Ampaire et al., 2020). In the past decade, adaptation planning has taken centre stage in climate policy (Olazabal et al., 2019), with additional efforts being invested in mainstreaming climate change in other sectoral policies, country visions and national development plans (Ampaire et al., 2016b; Twinomuhangi et al., 2019).

Despite the abundance of policies, strategies and other institutional frameworks, tools to support mainstreaming climate adaptation in policy, and the political will from governments, implementation has lagged (Runhaar et al., 2018). As Olazabal et al. argue (2019), development of policies and institutions on its own does not translate into reduction of climate vulnerabilities. Against these challenges, the Global Adaptation Report calls for a revolution in planning on the following key aspects:

- (i) mainstreaming climate risk by integrating into all standard government and corporate processes, from strategy development to budgeting and investment decisions. This implies capacity in micro-economic analysis, vulnerability assessments across social, environment, policies and institutions, and investment to ensure that they are building on system-wide resilience;
- (ii) improving decision making in the face of uncertainty; which calls for application of new decision science methods to inform viable immediate options and longer-term perspectives;
- (iii) strengthening the role of vulnerable groups and local actors in planning processes that affect their own lives. This implies the need to build adequate capacity and resources to help them make and implement decisions that affect them. The Paris Agreement emphasizes that adaptation action should be gender-responsive and follow country-driven, participatory, and transparent approaches;
- (iv) governments need to promote ways to work better across sectoral and jurisdictional boundaries.

These important propositions highlight the fact that there is need to evolve new strategies that can make institutions function more effectively to enable action.

I argue that weak institutions are one of the main causes of poor implementation of climate action among others, such as lack of finance, capacities, and political will. I define institutions as the 'rules of the game' - formal and informal rules that structure individual behaviour and organize social, political and economic interactions for joint decision making and collective action (Li, 2014; North, 1990; World Bank Group et al., 2015). They include both formal legal rules (such as policies, laws, constitutions, property rights) and informal institutions (such as sanctions, norms, beliefs, taboos, customs, traditions). Literature contests the classification of organizations as institutions. Some analysts include organizations to the list of institutions (Dixit et al., 2012; Mubaya and Mafongoya, 2017; Ouma et al., 2017) while others treat organizations as a different group of 'players' (North 1990; World Bank Group et al., 2015). I choose to add organizations to the list of institutions owing to the fact the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 stress the need for public, public-private and civil society partnerships, which makes organizations an important part of institutions in the call for climate action.

In this paper, I combine a review of literature on climate adaptation institutions and personal experiences working in the climate policy field, most of the experiences being part of the literature reviewed, to pinpoint causes of weak institutions and their impacts. I then integrate lessons from literature review and case studies of collaborative research projects to propose practical strategies that can counter weak constraining institutions.

## **2. The role of institutions in climate adaptation**

With respect to formal institutions, global policies such as the Paris Agreement, provide an overarching frame that structures how nations undertake climate action. At national level, global commitments,

reflected through national determined contributions (NDCs), are translated through climate change policies & strategies; and operationalized through National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Sub-national governance levels are expected to translate national level policies and commitments into their development plans and implement response actions on the ground (Twinomuhangi et al., 2019). Implementation is done by local governments through their governance structures and in partnership with other actors such as NGOs, research institutions, civil society and private sector agencies. In most cases, collaboration among actors and between governance levels is facilitated by institutional structures such as committees or task forces, which become part of the formal institutional framework (Ampaire et al., 2017) since their roles are documented in the governance policies.

There is an increasing stream of literature that stresses the importance of informal institutions in complementing adaptation efforts (Makate, 2019; Ouma et al., 2017; Mubaya and Mafongoya et al., 2017; Twinomuhangi et al., 2019). For example, indigenous knowledge has been found to complement weather smart information services in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mafongoya and Ajayi, 2017). In Zimbabwe, indigenous peoples have used tree life cycles to predict weather events such as rainfall, wind, floods, temperature and seasonal changes to drought (Chanza and de Wit, 2015). Mubaya and Mafongoya (2017) also find that traditional leaders are important in resolving social conflicts on natural resource use while the traditional tributary grain reserve (*Zunde ramambo*) cushion communities in times of food shortage. In Uganda and Ghana, informal institutions were found to help in enforcing rules for the common good such as social and environmental protection, construction of soil and water conservation structures, and management of natural resources such as water sources and range lands (Abass et al., 2018; Twinomuhangi et al., 2019). They also enable access to land, financial resources at low transaction costs and labour sharing arrangements (Yami and van Asten, 2018). This means that informal institutions are instrumental in planning and implementing climate adaptation actions.

On the negative side, some informal institutions can be a source of gendered inequalities and exclusion (Huyer, 2016). For example, in most African rural communities, women are relegated roles of being nutrition providers. This role causes women to spend many hours collecting water and firewood and cooking, which takes away time they would invest in attending training to enhance skills and in adopting resilient technologies (FAO, 2015). Another common norm is that most women access land through inheritance or marriage but lack legal rights to land ownership; yet ownership rights determine adaptive capacity. Without rights, women may not be able to access credit due to lack of collateral and as a result cannot hire labour. Lack of land rights is also a disincentive to investment in important technologies that can prevent losses in the short term but are also important for long term adaptation e.g. planting of trees (Theis et al., 2019).

Surprisingly, informal institutions are often translated to shape policy in instances where policy making is not informed by research evidence (see Acosta et al., 2019 for a detailed discussion on how norms are translated in Uganda's climate policy). With respect to climate adaptation, Quisumbing et al. (2019) explain that (i) men and women experience and respond to shocks differently based on their roles and responsibilities; (ii) have different abilities to withstand or cope with shocks due to the differential access to means of coping e.g. irrigation, insurance, or social protection; and (iii) men's and women's assets, savings and investments, are often used differently to respond to shocks. Since inclusion and gender issues are context specific, it is important to understand the interactions among vulnerabilities, gender inequalities, informal and formal institutions and seek to address underlying causes as part of the institutional infrastructure while planning for adaptation.

Both formal and informal institutions interact to enable climate change action (Mabaya and Mafongoya, 2017; Ouma et al., 2017). At national level, government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) are mandated to work together, and in collaboration with other non-state actors, to mainstream climate risk into policies and development plans as well as plan for coordinated action (Ampaire et al., 2017). At sub-national level, Twinomuhangi et al. (2019) find that in Uganda, formal institutions at district levels (development plans, ordinances, byelaws) were a translation of the national level policies; the development plans at sub-county level were aligned to the district development plans; and the task force members, responsible for enforcement of coffee and banana wilt ordinances, represented respective sub-counties at district level. The authors found that informal institutions, such as community rules that compelled each household to plant trees; control bush and charcoal burning; digging of contours on hilly areas, were better known and more respected by locals than the written rules in byelaws and ordinances. Additionally, various players were working with informal and civic institutions, supporting communities to adapt to climate change, including NGOs, government extension, membership organizations and private sector agencies. A related scenario is depicted in rural Zimbabwe by Mabaya and Mafongoya (2017) and in Kenya and Senegal by Ouma et al. (2017). It is therefore important that practitioners understand the existing institutions in each context and seek to involve them in ways that give optimum performance.

### **3. Underlying causes of weak institutions**

Despite the important role that institutions play in enhancing climate action, there are many constraints hindering the effectiveness of these institutions. The institutional mechanisms at the global level are in place, but for them to be effective they need to be adapted and implemented at the national and local level. The next sections will focus on national, sub-national and local levels where significant gaps exist and show that weak institutions significantly account for implementation gaps.

#### ***3.1 Limited inclusion and participation of local and informal institutions***

An inclusive process is one that enables actors to be part of, have part of, and take part in processes and decision making. Literature has stressed the importance of multi-partner collaboration, including the involvement of local communities and vulnerable populations for meaningful climate action (World Bank Group et al. 2015; Castells-Quintana et al., 2015). In contrast, studies conducted in East Africa find that there is limited participation of different actors across governance scales. Central governments take centre stage in developing policies, non-state actors and local governments are not sufficiently involved in the policy process while local communities are often excluded (Ampaire et al., 2015; 2017; Twinomuhangi et al., 2019). In Zimbabwe, Mabaya and Mafongoya (2017) find lack of transparency and inclusivity by governance structures and organisations in their interactions and interventions with communities while a few civic institutions engage with communities. In instances where organizations involve in adaptation, the tendency is to work with civic and not informal institutions. This results in locals being unaware of the policies and their rights; leads to lack of ownership and commitment and does not foster sustainability of initiatives. It also results in policies that do not reflect realities on ground.

#### ***3.2 Poor coordination among actors***

Due to the interactions between governance levels and among different actors (section 2), there is need for a coherent coordination mechanism that guides what happens at each level and how different actors contribute. Coordination among government institutions is required across governance levels and between MDAs at each governance level. Coordinating state and non-state actors requires that central and local governments open more participatory decision-making spaces for actors who have no formal responsibility for service delivery (Mohmand and Loureiro, 2017), including informal institutions.

Literature shows that coordination challenges include unclear actor roles; undefined resource allocation and delivery; poor information flow; and absence of or non-functional implementation structures at different governance levels (Ampaire et al., 2015; 2017; ASSAR, 2016). Policy development and implementation is expected to be done by state and non-state actors and involves inter-ministry and intersectoral engagements. The poor coordination happens between state and non-state actors; and within MDAs at the central government and is replicated across the different local governance levels. Ampaire et al. (2017) find that the roles of different actors and the MDAs are not clearly stipulated to catalyze commitment and the financing mechanisms are not highlighted. There is also lack of linkages between national, sub-national and local actors which results in poor implementation (ASSAR, 2016). The functioning of implementation structures is constrained by lack of financial resources and other factors related to ineffective decentralization (Section 3.2). For example, some local governments in Uganda have waited for over a decade to have the Solicitor General approve local government environment management bills before they can be implemented (Ampaire et al., 2017; Twinomuhangi et al., 2019). Yet the local government is, by the local government act, an autonomous unit responsible for planning, budgeting and regulation and has a district council that could approve such documents if decentralization was effective.

Poor actor coordination is further enhanced by incoherent stand-alone policies and policy making processes. For example, the ministry of agriculture in Uganda houses the Agriculture Policy 2013, National Extension Policy 2016, National Seed policy 2016, National land Policy 2013, Fisheries Policy, Forestry Policy, Agriculture Sector NAP, National CSA plan, agriculture sector climate change mainstreaming guidelines, among others. The ministry of water and environment houses the NAPA 2007, National Climate Change Policy 2015, NDC 2015, a forthcoming NAP, the National Environment Management Policy 2015, Climate change gender mainstreaming guidelines, among others (See Ampaire et al., 2020:50-52 for a list of selected policies in Uganda and Tanzania). Yet staff from the same MDAs meet to develop these various policies. Clearly, it is difficult to effectively mainstream climate risk into all these policies given the limited human and financial resources. There is need to develop and institutionalize an over-arching framework that can harmonize intersectoral climate action across sectors, actors and governance levels.

### ***3.3 Ineffective decentralization***

Mainstreaming climate risk in development plans and implementing planned actions means that there are financial and human resources to enable that. Ideally, the development planning process starts with lower administrative levels e.g. sub-counties developing their development priorities and submitting to district level. The priorities are then reflected in the district development plans and budgets, which are financed by the budget received from the central government plus self-sourced funds. The districts thus provide both technical and financial support to the lower governance levels to enable climate action. NGOs and civil society organizations provide additional support to communities, mainly through interventions.

Ineffective decentralization seems to stimulate multi-dimensional factors that constrain functioning of institutions. Studies conducted in Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda (Ampaire et al., 2017; Mohmand and Loureiro, 2017) find that the local governments (LGs), though declared autonomous by the central government, do not have sufficient human and financial resources to implement policies or climate resilient actions, even when adaptation objectives and actions have been integrated in local development plans. LGs depend on central government funding to a large extent and self-sourced funds to a small extent; both of which are tagged on central government priorities, mostly in the non-

productive sector of the economy (Tumushabe et al., 2010), yet this comes at the expense of local priorities (Nyasimi et al., 2017). In some cases, central transfers do not adequately match local needs, or the functions legally devolved to local governments; while in others, political manoeuvres and clientelist politics lead to funds being distributed unevenly or ineffectively across districts (Mohmand and Loureiro, 2017). In addition, local government staff decry the indicative planning figures and performance measurement guidelines that are not flexible enough to allow innovation in dealing with unforeseeable climate risks, serving as a disincentive to implementation (Ampaire et al., 2017). Second, the human resource is limited in both numbers and capacity to apply the array of tools available for vulnerability assessments and long-term planning among others. A similar trend is observed in Southern Africa (Bosworth et al. 2018). Third, there is significant political interference that not only constrains implementation of actions but also fuels conflicts and mistrust between local leaders, technocrats and the community. Examples include commissioning of political projects that degrade the environment; conflict of interest among politicians due to the need to protect voters' illicit behaviour versus enforcing the law; and bribery to divert the course of law. Although the local governments work well with NGOs and civil society regarding sharing of information, collaborating in stakeholder forums, and contributing to LGs development agenda, they rarely have budgets to share. All these barriers combine to constrain the functioning of institutions.

### ***3.4 Gender mainstreaming not adequately financed***

Section 2 has elaborated a justification for the need to pay attention to gender in planning climate response actions. Gender mainstreaming in policy should be informed by a comprehensive gender analysis, requires a dedicated budget to finance the implementation of specified gender activities, and the monitoring of gender results (Budlender, 2014). However, studies done in East Africa have shown that although governments have increasingly adopted gender mainstreaming in policy, budgets are not often allocated to support implementation of the planned activities (Acosta et al., 2016b; Ampaire et al., 2016; 2020; Huyer, 2016). In general, gender is considered a cross cutting issue that should be resourced by sectoral budgets and staff. In cases where a budget is allocated, the amount is so small that it cannot support effective execution and is invested in activities that do not address causes of structural inequalities (Acosta et al., 2016b; Ampaire et al., 2016; 2020). Additionally, there is a general insufficient understanding of gender issues by both policy makers and practitioners, which results in gender not being given priority in development planning. Some ministries and local governments have gender focal persons, but these are not trained gender experts so do not have skills to conduct gender analysis, integrate gender issues in development plans, and execute. There is also no clear framework for integrating gender in policy across governance levels and monitoring performance leading to inconsistencies between central, sub-national and lower level governance levels (Acosta et al., 2016a; Ampaire et al., 2016). Therefore, relying on ministry staff to execute gender mainstreaming and implementation requires that their capacity is first built to handle the task.

## **4 Lessons learnt from successful interventions that overcame institutional constraints**

### ***4.1 Case study 1: Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR)***

The ASSAR project was part of the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAS) program, an initiative jointly funded by IDRC and DFID. The multi-institutional and multiscale project was implemented in the semi-arid regions of Africa and Asia (Ghana, Mali, Botswana, Namibia, Ethiopia, Kenya and India) and sought to examine the drivers of climate change vulnerability, while exploring ways to enhance the resilience of people, local organisations and governments. It aimed to promote climate adaptation policies and practices that are effective and sustainable at scale.

The project integrated interdisciplinary applied research with capacity building and stakeholder engagement to improve the understanding of barriers and enablers to effective climate adaptation. Noteworthy is that the project dug deeper to find out adaptation barriers triggered by power structures, patriarchal norms and governance disconnects; factors that determine wellbeing and individual aspirations; and intersectional and contextual factors that influence unintended effects. Research also covered governance structures at scale (national, sub-national, local), among other things. The ASSAR project generated a wealth of knowledge<sup>1</sup>, which processes enhanced capacities of stakeholders to understand climate change vulnerabilities in a broader context, work in local and regional multi-institutional partnerships and interdisciplinary teams, and provision of tools to use across regions. This project succeeded in addressing capacity and knowledge gaps, integrating inclusion and gender in climate adaptation actions based on a comprehensive situation analysis, and in bringing private sector and grass roots into a development research partnership.

**Capacity building:** in addition to MSc and PhD studentship, internal capacity building was done through training events, small grants, mentorship and collaborative research, leading to increased knowledge on vulnerabilities, climate adaptation and responses, and strengthened facilitation, curriculum development, and scenario development skills of researchers and practitioners. Professional development was done for early career researchers by strengthening individual research, science communication and networking capacities. Numerous participatory processes such as Transformative Scenario Planning, Participatory Scenario Analysis, Vulnerability and Risk Assessments, strengthened adaptive capacities, fostered dialogue between stakeholders who previously did not interact, and encouraged inclusive adaptation planning.

**Scaling up lessons from district level to national and global levels:** In Botswana, results of the research were used to pilot adaptation planning at district level and lessons were scaled out by government to the entire country. Research was built on user needs (supply responding to demand). District development officers and economic planners were trained to undertake vulnerability and risk assessments. Engagement with policy decision makers included educating members of parliament on the basic concepts of climate change and adaptation and results were shared with various stakeholders. This success was subsequently highlighted by the United Nations as a best practice in inclusive adaptation and an example for National Adaptation Plans elsewhere<sup>2</sup>.

**Overcoming barriers to gender and social inclusion:** Multi-dimensional assessments were conducted to understand gender and social differentiation, using intersectionality variables across rural, urban and peri-urban drylands. The research did not only focus on household and intra-household vulnerability and adaptation but also made connections with broader environmental and socio-institutional dynamics. Results of research were presented at the United Nations 62nd session on the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2018, and implementing staff were invited to advise Namibia's National Delegation to the UNFCCC COP24 on gender and climate issues.

**Managing multi-institutional, interdisciplinary and multiscale partnerships:** The team based on the findings of the vulnerability assessments and stakeholder power analysis to select core and strategic partners on the project and inform the research approach. A desired outcome was mapped out and a

---

<sup>1</sup> More information on the ASSAR project can be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Opportunities and options for enhancing adaptation planning in relation to vulnerable ecosystems, communities and groups, UNFCCC, November 2018](https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/FCCC/TP/2018/3) (<https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/FCCC/TP/2018/3>)

flexible iterative approach focused on engaging, influencing and communicating throughout the research process, was designed to achieve the outcome.

#### **4.2 Case study 2: Getting gender into national policy, Uganda**

Uganda is believed to have taken strides in mainstreaming gender in policy (Kusambiza, 2013). The country has many climate change related policies and strategies that have integrated gender considerations to different degrees (see Ampaire et al., 2020 for a detailed review). The government enacted a gender strategy in 1997 that was revised in 2007. Other legal frameworks that support gender mainstreaming include (i) the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, article 32; (ii) the Equal Opportunities Policy (2006); Equal opportunities Act and Commission (2007); (iii) the Public Finance Management Act (2015). However, despite all these institutions, effective gender mainstreaming is yet to be achieved, as portrayed by the 2014 Gender Inequality Index of 0.538, ranking Uganda 122 out of 155 countries (UNDP, 2015). In 2015, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture undertook research, funded by the CGIAR's Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security Programme, to analyze Uganda's agricultural policies and produce evidence. In partnership with the Parliamentary Forum on Climate Change (PFCC) and a multi-stakeholder national climate change platform<sup>3</sup>, the evidence was used to engage the parliament on the need for gender responsive policy in the country in 2016<sup>4</sup>. Following the awareness creation, FAO and UNDP trained MPs and other stakeholders at national and sub-national levels in gender responsive policy making and programming, using research evidence on gender gaps in policy development and implementation as a foundation for the training sessions. A year later, the climate change bill was rejected by Parliament, one of the reasons being its insufficiency in tackling gender issues<sup>5</sup>.

This case illustrates the importance of research evidence in making a case to policy makers, and the need for multi-actor partnerships. For example, the NGOs in the platform were instrumental in advocacy, the PFCC mobilized members of parliament, the Climate Change Department mobilized ministers and MDA staff to participate and researchers presented evidence. The example also points to the importance of capacity building or creating awareness to 'convert' decision makers as well as equip them to make informed decisions. Even though the short-term partnerships salvaged the situation to address a problem in the short term – building capacity of MPs, which contributed to the case of the climate change bill - better organized, strategic and long-term partnerships are more beneficial and sustainable for impact at scale.

#### **5 What do we need to do differently?**

This paper sought to appraise the causes of weak institutions that constrain climate change action, and, building on successful examples, propose strategies that can strengthen the functioning of institutions. The literature review and lessons learnt from case studies have highlighted a range of inter-linked factors that underlie weak institutions. Below I propose the shifts that need to be adopted to realize action.

---

<sup>3</sup> The climate change platform was constituted by climate stakeholders including government MDAs, international and national research organizations, NGO, apex farmer organizations and private sector (Acosta et al., 2019).

[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-92798-5\\_23](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-92798-5_23)

<sup>4</sup> Engaging the Uganda Parliament with [research evidence](#)

<sup>5</sup> Namuloki J. 2017. MPs reject long-awaited Climate Change Bill. [The observer](#)



### **5.1 Boost inclusion and gender responsiveness**

'Leaving no one behind' means that all actors across scale contribute to vulnerability assessment, knowledge generation, policy frameworks and implementation. Whereas tools for conducting participatory vulnerability assessment and gender analysis are readily available, there is need to build capacity to not only make use of the tools but also implement response actions on the ground. Expertise on gender is not readily available in government departments (see details in section 3.3). As such, capacity building at all levels should integrate a strong gender component and use of proven participatory approaches. In the short term, governments might need to collaborate with other stakeholders that have expertise in gender and other new methodologies to be able to progress as capacity is being built over time. The need to allocate gender budgets cannot be overstated. Gender policies, strategies and action plans need to allocate budgets needed to finance gender activities. The assumption that sectoral budgets will finance gender has not worked; a new approach needs to be rethought.

### **5.2 Adopt holistic coordination mechanisms**

There is need to institute better vertical coordination mechanisms from the national through sub-national to local level and horizontal communication among MDAs at each governance level. With technological advancements, and given the limited financing, there is need to tap into digital technologies to ensure communication happens at regional and national levels. At sub-national and local levels, evidence points to lack of or non-functional coordination structures such as committees, which need to be revamped. Since climate change is understood as a development issue, there is need to sensitize actors from all sectors about this so that they understand their roles and can commit to them by investing resources. Currently, climate change action is seen as a responsibility of ministries and departments mandated to work on environment and natural resources. This perception must change.

Linked to coordination is the need to harmonize policymaking through sectoral planning approaches, as well as integrating with other development objectives. Climate policy frameworks (climate policies, strategies, NAPAs, NAPs, NDCs, guidelines, etc) are only an addition to a wide range of policies housed under each ministry. It is practically impossible to implement all these policies, some of which conflict. As mainstreaming climate risk takes root, there is need to harmonize planning for climate action across sectors and governance levels.

### **5.3 Make financing mechanisms accessible and flexible**

Put money where action happens. It is time to shift the focus to sub-national level where implementation happens. Most of the finance goes to the central government and only little, if any, trickles down to those who need it the most. Overall, requirements for climate financing are stringent; nationals do not have the capacity to write good proposals that can be funded so they miss out. Second, not all financial projections at the local government are honoured by the central government. Yet this makes it difficult for practitioners to plan actions that might not be funded repeatedly, serving as a disincentive to adaptation planning. The central government financing guidelines and performance framework should also be flexible enough to allow innovative adaptation interventions at the local level.

Targeting investments at sub-national level has potential to reduce effects of political patronage, allow LGs more autonomy, enable more local actors to participate but there is need to put in place incentive structures to attract the right expertise to live and work in the rural areas (Mohmand and Loureiro, 2017). The authors caution: "decentralisation does not mitigate against the centralising tendencies of different levels of government", an overarching coordination framework (section 5.2) should guide lower levels on how to coordinate different actors, decisions and investments as well as remain

accountable to national level authorities and lower level actors. Evidence suggests that positive development impacts have been a result of interventions by external actors (Mohmand and Loureiro, 2017).

#### **5.4 Enhance capacity in long-term adaptation planning**

Current national responses to climate related shocks are often limited to short-term and reactive local emergency measures. There is need to invest in purposeful long-term planning for climate resilience. Tools are now available to enable long term planning, but capacity needs to be built to apply them. Considering the limited finances, governments need to critically think through cost-effective strategies that can help to build skills in a sustainable manner. For example, capacity gaps existing across all levels could be filled by placing the right expertise e.g. gender in key positions at departmental level to incrementally impart skills to existing staff as opposed to intermittent trainings. Another viable option is to engage in strategic partnerships so that capacities are incrementally built concurrently while undertaking response actions.

#### **6. Conclusion**

In this paper I have argued that weak institutions are one of the major causes of the lagging implementation of climate response actions on ground. The literature review has shown that both formal and informal institutions are important for implementing actions given the renewed focus to link local and national institutions for adaptation actions, and to work with different stakeholders to reach broader and longer-term impacts. There is also an abundance of the different types of institutions across governance scales, despite their capacities.

Improving the functioning of institutions is a critical initial step that will propel action towards realizing the Paris Agreement global goal of ensuring an adequate adaptation response through enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change. Strong institutions will help to bridge the glaring gaps at national, sub-national and local levels, and will sustain response actions on ground, resulting in long-term impact.

## References

Abass R, Mensah A, Fosu-Mensah B. 2019. The Role of Formal and Informal Institutions in Smallholder Agricultural Adaptation: The Case of Lawra and Nandom Districts, Ghana. *West African Journal of Applied Ecology* 26(SI): 56-72.

Acosta M, Ampaire E, Kigonya R, Kyomugisha S, Jassogne L. 2016b. Towards gender responsive policy formulation and budgeting in the agricultural sector: Opportunities and challenges in Uganda. Copenhagen, Denmark: CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). <http://hdl.handle.net/10568/78605>

Acosta M, van Bommel S, van Wessel M, Ampaire EL, Jassogne L, Feindt PH. 2019. Discursive translations of gender mainstreaming norms: The case of agricultural and climate change policies in Uganda, *Women's Studies International Forum* 74(9-19).

Acosta M, Ampaire E, Okolo W, Twyman J, Jassogne L. 2016a. Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management in Tanzania: A Gender Policy Review. CCAFS Info Note. Copenhagen, Denmark: CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/77770>.

Ampaire EL, Acosta M, Huyer S, Kigonya R, Muchunguzi P, Muna R, Jassogne, L. 2020. Gender in climate change, agriculture, and natural resource policies: insights from East Africa. *Climatic Change* 158(1): 158:43–60.

Ampaire E, Acosta M, Kigonya R, Kyomugisha S, Muchunguzi P, Jassogne L. 2016. Gender responsive policy formulation and budgeting in Tanzania: do plans and budgets match? CCAFS Info Note. Copenhagen, Denmark: CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). <http://hdl.handle.net/10568/78606>.

Ampaire EL, Happy P, Van Asten P, Radeny M. 2015. The role of policy in facilitating adoption of climate-smart agriculture in Uganda. CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). Copenhagen, Denmark. <https://ccafs.cgiar.org/publications/role-policy-facilitating-adoption-climate-smart-agriculture-uganda#.Vgv8Fb8b8ow>.

Ampaire EL, Jassogne L, Providence H, Acosta M, Twyman J, Winowiecki L, van Asten P. 2017. Institutional Challenges to Climate Change Adaptation: A Case Study on Policy Action Gaps in Uganda, *Environmental Science and Policy* 75:81–90.

ASSAR. 2015. Planning for climate change in the Semi-Arid regions of Southern Africa. <http://www.assar.uct.ac.za/assar-outputs>

ASSAR. 2016. Barriers and enablers of climate change adaptation in Ghana. <http://www.assar.uct.ac.za/assar-outputs>

Babier EB. 2015. Climate change impacts on rural poverty in low-elevation coastal zones. Policy Research Working Paper 7475. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/23443>.

- Barbier EB, Orchard J. 2018. The impacts of climate change on the poor in disadvantaged regions. *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy*, 12(1): 26-47.
- Bosworth B, Hegga S, Ziervogel G. 2018. When participation is not enough: lessons from decentralized water management in Namibia. <http://www.assar.uct.ac.za/assar-outputs>
- Chanza N, de Wit A. 2015. Rediscovering indigenous climate knowledge for better responses to climate change: insights from Muzarabani. *The International Journal of Climate Change: Impacts and Responses*: 6: 19-35.
- Dixit A, McGray H, Gonzales J, Desmond, M. 2012. Ready or not: assessing institutional aspects of national capacity for climate change adaptation. [https://wriorg.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/pdf/ready\\_or\\_not.pdf](https://wriorg.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/pdf/ready_or_not.pdf)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2015. Running out of time: the reduction of women's work burden in agricultural production, Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4741e.pdf>
- Global Commission on Adaptation. 2019. Adapt now: a global call for leadership on climate resilience [https://cdn.gca.org/assets/2019-09/GlobalCommission\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://cdn.gca.org/assets/2019-09/GlobalCommission_Report_FINAL.pdf)
- Huyer S. 2016. Gender equality in national climate action: planning for gender-responsive national determined contributions (NDCs). United Nations Development Programme, New York. [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/Gender\\_Equality\\_in\\_National\\_Climate\\_Action.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/Gender_Equality_in_National_Climate_Action.pdf)
- Kusambiza M (2013) A case study of gender responsive budgeting in Uganda. [https://consultations.worldbank.org/Data/hub/files/grb\\_papers\\_uganda\\_updf\\_final.pdf](https://consultations.worldbank.org/Data/hub/files/grb_papers_uganda_updf_final.pdf).
- Kaaria S, Osorio M, Wagner S, Gallina A (2016). Rural women's participation in producer organizations: an analysis of the barriers that women face and strategies to foster equitable and effective participation. *Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security* 1(2):148-167.
- Li RYM. 2014. Law, Economics and Finance Issues in Singapore's Housing Development Board Flats. In: *Law, Economics and Finance of the Real Estate Market*. SpringerBriefs in Economics. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Lesnikowski A, Ford J, Biesbroek R, Berrang-Ford L, Maillet M, Araos M, Austin SE. 2017). What does the Paris agreement mean for adaptation? *Climate Policy*. 17:825–831.
- Mafongoya P, Ajayi OC (editors). 2017. *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Climate Change Management in Africa*, CTA, Wageningen. The Netherlands, 316pp. [https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/91189/2009\\_PDF.pdf](https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/91189/2009_PDF.pdf)
- Makate C. 2019. Local institutions and indigenous knowledge in adoption and scaling of climate-smart agricultural innovations among sub-Saharan smallholder farmers. *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management*. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCCSM-07-2018-0055/full/html#sec012>

- Mubaya CP, Mafongoya P. 2017. The role of institutions in managing local level climate change adaptation in semi-arid Zimbabwe. *Climate Risk Management* 16:93-105.
- Mohmand SK, Loureiro M. 2017. Introduction: interrogating decentralization in Africa. *IDS Bulletin* 48(2). <https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/2856/ONLINE%20ARTICLE>
- North D. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Olazabal M, Galarraga I, Ford J, Murieta ES, Lesnikowski A .2019. Are local climate adaptation policies credible? A conceptual and operational assessment framework. *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, 11:3, 277-296.
- Quisumbing A, Meinzen-Dick R, Njuki J. (Eds). 2019. *Gender Equality in Rural Africa: From Commitments to Outcomes*. ReSAKSS 2019 Annual Trends and Outlook Report. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute. <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2019-annual-trends-and-outlook-report-gender-equality-rural-africa-commitments-0>
- Castells-Quintana D, Lopez-Uribe MP, McDermott T. 2015. Coping with climate risk: the role of institutions, governance and finance in private adaptation decisions of the poor. Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy Working Paper No. 225. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Working-Paper-200-Castells-Quintana-et-al.pdf>
- Theis S, Bryan E, Ringler C. 2019. Addressing gender and social dynamics to strengthen resilience for all, in Quisumbing A, Meinzen-Dick R, Njuki J. (Eds). 2019. *Gender Equality in Rural Africa: From Commitments to Outcomes*. ReSAKSS 2019 Annual Trends and Outlook Report. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute. <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2019-annual-trends-and-outlook-report-gender-equality-rural-africa-commitments-0>
- Tumushabe G, Muyomba LT, Ssemakula E, Lukwago D. 2010. *Uganda Local Government Councils Score-card Report 2008/2009: a Comparative Analysis of Findings and Recommendations for Action*. Policy Research Series 35. Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/uganda-local-government-councils-score-card-report-20089-a-comparative-summary-of-findings-conclusions-and-recommendations/>
- Twinomuhangi R, Natuhwera C, Ampaire EL. 2019. Role of Local Policies in Facilitating Adaptation of Smallholder Farming to Climate Change in Uganda. *Journal of Environment and Earth Science* 9(11): 88-100.
- UN. 2000. *Decentralization: Conditions for Success Lessons from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*. ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/7. <https://publicadministration.un.org/publications/content/PDFs/E-Library%20Archives/2000%20Decentralization%20Conditions%20for%20Success.pdf>
- UNDP. 2015. *Human Development Report 2015: Work for human development*. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_human\\_developmnt\\_report\\_1.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_developmnt_report_1.pdf)

Yami M, van Asten PJA. P2018. Relevance of informal institutions for achieving sustainable crop intensification in Uganda. *Food Security* 10: 141-150.