

# Addressing women in climate change policies: A focus on selected east and southern African countries

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## Abstract

This Article responds to claims in the literature that gender mainstreaming is lacking in international and national climate change policy regimes. A scan of climate change policies from selected east and southern African countries was conducted to assess whether climate change policies include gender and women. The focus on women is deliberate given women's greater vulnerability to climate change impacts than men. The research analysis used a framework modified from the United Nations Environment Programme's (2011) recommendations on women's needs in climate change. The main finding is that although the national policies reviewed are in their infancy, with the oldest, the National Policy on Climate Change for Namibia having been put in place only in 2010, the mainstreaming of women's needs in climate change has gained momentum. However, the empowerment of women by climate change policy varies significantly from country to country.

**Keywords:** women, gender, mainstreaming, climate change policy, east and southern Africa

## Introduction

In 'No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues' (the article that triggered the research for this article), Terry (2009) raises the critical problem that women have been excluded from climate change policy, a glaring omission given the evidence that women suffer disproportionately in the wake of climate change-related natural disasters. Terry writes:

"Poor women face many gender specific barriers that limit their ability to cope with and adapt to a changing climate; these must be removed in the interests of both gender equity and [climate change] adaptation efficiency. To date, gender issues have hardly featured in international policy discourse, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol" (ibid: 5).

Terry's statements prompt a question on the status of women in national climate change policy in Africa, understood broadly under gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has been regarded as necessary to ensure women are not further marginalized in climate change as they are identified as among the most vulnerable to climate change and its impacts - droughts, floods and extreme weather events that have been on the rise in the world, including east and southern Africa. In an article on climate change and gender main- streaming, climate change feminist, Margaret Alston (2013 in press: 1) defines gender main- streaming as the:

"Process of incorporating a gender perspective to any action, policy or legislation in order to ensure that the concerns of all are addressed and that gender inequalities are not perpetuated through institutional means."

While the focus of gender mainstreaming is on gender and not strictly women, the social bias towards men places weight on gender inequality and therefore I investigate how women are addressed in climate change policy, broadly under the umbrella term of main- streaming.<sup>1</sup> Hence this Article enquires into the extent to which women are addressed in climate change policies in selected east and southern African countries. Since the enquiry draws its insights from policy documents, it has limitations as the contents of such policies are expressions of principle to guide government decisions and achieve specific outcomes and / or intents rather than the actual implementation of law or action plans on the ground. Further studies that trace gender in policy and action plans and how women are involved in policy implementation are needed.

The challenge of identifying policies that situate women within national plans for climate change is evident as many of the climate change policies under investigation are still new and many are still being developed and are not freely available. A search to identify climate change policies in each of the five east African and 14 southern African countries was made (bearing in mind that Tanzania belongs to both trading blocs). The interventions in addressing climate change (Nhamo, 2013) included are those aimed at mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation, in this context, describes actions aimed at reducing the emission of dangerous greenhouse gases (GHGs) - the gases that cause the globe to warm up resulting in climate change. Adaptation, on the other hand, refers to adjustments made in order to live with climate change and the extreme weather events that result from it (ibid).

The gender specific responsibilities of women that arise from their roles as nurturers and community managers has resulted in their being identified as among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts as well as having capacity for leadership in climate change. Arora Johnson (2011:744), in research on climate change discourses, states that women are positioned as either “virtuous” or “vulnerable”, depending on their global location. She argues that gender bias in the positioning of women can deflect attention from women’s unequal positions in decision-making. She warns that discourses on climate change can contribute to deepening women’s existing inequalities and increasing their responsibilities without the requisite benefits. Noting the inherent bias in positioning of women in climate change discourses, the analysis attempts where possible to identify how women are situated by policies, not only in relation to marginalization from resources and vulnerability, but also their potential agency in climate change solutions and empowerment for gender equality (United Nations Environment Programme UNEP, 2011).

Discourses on climate change can contribute to deepening women’s existing inequalities

It has been well documented that women are more vulnerable during times of climate change-induced natural disasters (UNEP, 2011). Trohanis et al (2011) in their study on the importance of women’s voices being heard in climate change related disasters identify a number of factors that policy-makers should consider in building climate change resilience. These include the gender division of labour, visibility levels, survival skills, access to information, human development factors (such as nutrition patterns, literacy levels and health), inheritance and / or land rights, supply of information, access to emergency aid and influence over decision-making processes. While this generic list is useful as a starting point in raising the profile of women, the diverse geo-political regional and country specific-conditions in Africa require the needs of populations be addressed by governments through assessing climate change impacts and identifying women’s vulnerability and potential roles.

In the following sections I firstly discuss the methodology used in the study; next I discuss women in climate change and case studies from the study area. The findings of the study are then discussed, followed by concluding comments. It is important to note that the research scope is a thematic analysis in relation to key issues emanating from the UNEP framework for women’s needs in climate change and does not undertake a detailed analysis or comparison of policies.

#### Methodology and demographic profiling of study sample

The Article raises the following research question: to what extent are the needs of women addressed in selected east and southern Africa climate change policies? In response to the question raised, the sole objective is, within the limitations of the space available, to present examples of how women have been identified and addressed in selected east and southern African countries’ climate change policies (Table 1).

Eleven climate change policies were analyzed using critical discourse and document analysis as advocated by Altheide (2000) to determine whether women were included and how they were included in policies. As highlighted earlier, the selection was purposive as determined by policy availability online and their translation to English. Discourse and document analysis is not a new methodology in environmental and other studies (see for example, Arts et al, 2012; Bowen, 2009). Altheide (2000) maintains that tracking discourse and qualitative document analysis is a suitable methodology for publicly available policy and other documents. In this case, the online availability of documents was used as part of the selection criteria. Arts et al (2012) view discourse analysis as a social constructivist approach. Hence a clear story-line should eventually emerge addressing the objectives of the study. In addition, document analysis is “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (Bowen,2009:27). Data was retrieved, examined and interpreted to deduct meaning and draw conclusions leading to the development of empirical knowledge. The first level of analysis was a simple frequency count of the words ‘gender’ and ‘women’, and this was followed by description of instances where women were included in the policies considered. The key documents retrieved for analysis were climate change policies.

A number of advantages have been observed when using document analysis namely:

Efficiency, public domain availability, cost-effectiveness, lack of obtrusiveness and reactivity, stability, exactness and broader coverage (Bowen, 2009). However, drawing mainly from Yin (1994 in Bowen, 2009), Bowen highlights that some of the weakness in document analysis include: insufficient detail, low rates of retrieval and bias in selection. To this list I add, from experience, the language barrier. For example, climate change policy documents from east and southern African countries of Burundi (French), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (French), Angola (Portuguese) and Mozambique (Portuguese) were automatically excluded since the author is English speaking. To mitigate some of the drawbacks, supplementary documents such as reports and journal articles were retrieved to supplement instances where there were limited details.

Country/Region	Policy	Year
East African Community (EAC)	Climate Change Master Plan (2011–2031)	2011
	Climate Change Strategy	2011
Kenya	National Climate Change Response Strategy	2010
	National Climate Change Action Plan (2013–2017)	2013
Malawi	National Climate Change Policy	2012
Mauritius	National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework	2012
Namibia	National Policy on Climate Change for Namibia	2010
Rwanda	National Strategy for Climate Change and Low Carbon Development	2011
Tanzania	National Climate Change Strategy	2012
Uganda	Draft Uganda National Climate Change Policy	2012
South Africa	National Climate Change Response White Paper	2011

## **Women in climate disasters: Theory and cases from east and southern Africa**

The United Nations (2010) identifies three pathways in which women are more vulnerable to natural disasters than men, namely: biological and physiological differences, pre-existing social norms and role behaviour, and exacerbated and new forms of gender discrimination.

Climate change related changes and natural disasters have been experienced in east and southern Africa with increasing and more protracted droughts and floods recorded with consequences for populations and governments that include impacts on health, higher mortality rates among vulnerable groups, growing scarcity and competition over natural resources, hunger and poverty and migration (see Jaggernath in this issue). Temperatures during the period 2001-2010 were the warmest and average rainfall broke all records, particularly in the year 2010 (World Meteorological Organization, 2013). While reports on the impacts of extreme weather events in the study region include long term droughts in east Africa and southern Africa, and floods in southern Africa, it has been noted by the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance (2013) that official climate change disaster reports have more often than not failed to disaggregate the gender impacts on women and men, and gender information mapping is critically needed in Africa so that policy is both gender-sensitive and based on the conditions experienced on the ground by those affected by disasters.

With regard to pre-existing social norms and role behaviour, women have limited access to education, leading to higher illiteracy levels (United Nations, 2010). Hence when it comes to early warning, women have reported being left out or that they have to rely on secondary interpretations of information. Their exclusion and lack of information can compromise their safety with implications for climate change interventions and planning (Nelson et al., 2010). Exacerbated and new forms of gender discrimination pose a threat to women's survival during disasters and highlight that women usually have fewer resources than men during crisis and that they are more dependent on outside sources (United Nations, 2010). Drawing from the Pan American Health Organization's 2002 work, the United Nations warn that relief structures, often dominated by men, have discriminated against women, leaving women in disasters marginalized and vulnerable to exploitation and sexual violence, even though in post-disaster situations they take responsibility for children, and the sick and the dying. Due to the loss of economic activities as result of climate change weather events in primary sectors such as agriculture (cultivation and livestock), women in developing countries are unable to find the resources needed for day-to-day survival, and carry a much increased workload (Rahman, 2013). Widespread water scarcity has highlighted both women's vulnerability as well as their importance in resource management in climate change. Figueiredo and Perkins (2012:188) assert that women are:

“the marginalized, the first and worst affected by extreme weather events, but they also possess local ecological, social and political knowledge which can inform and contribute significantly to climate change adaptation strategies.”

They warn that women are not adequately involved in governance mechanisms for water management under climate change, especially water scarcity and flooding. Community based environmental education and awareness is emphasized as a necessary intervention measure to expand women's climate change knowledge base and to get women actively involved in policy development.

Reports and research on the impacts of weather events and climate change disasters have highlighted the need for policy in Africa to recognize the local effects of changing weather in relation to women and men's different gender roles and responsibilities. For example, writing on the floods in Namibia, Angula (2011) notes that although rural men and women in Namibia are both impacted by flood and drought, the effects differ due to the unequal distribution of roles and responsibilities. Since most women are tied to the home they are directly affected by the scarcity of natural resources, for example, wood and water, during floods and drought.

### **Box 1. UNEP recommendations to address women's needs**

- Ensure an enabling environment for increased participation of women in decision and policy-making in local, community, national, regional and international institutions, processes, negotiations and policies related to climate change issues.
- Ensure education, training, awareness raising programmes that address vulnerability and risk of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and trafficking in the context of mountain regions, but especially in high-risk flood, drought and disaster prone areas.
- Design adaptation programmes in food security, agriculture, rangelands and managing natural resources in ways that are sensitive and responsive to multiple roles women and men play in various spheres of natural resource management, households, communities, livelihoods, as well as customary and statutory institutions.
- Improve women's livelihoods and strengthen adaptation by ensuring women's access, control and ownership of resources and access to development resources such as credit, information, training and outreach, and culturally appropriate and labour-saving technology.
- Invest in gender sensitive and culturally appropriate green technologies, water harvesting, storage, irrigation systems, and substitutes for fuel wood and use.
- Conduct a systematic analysis of climate change from environmental, development and gender equity perspectives to fill urgent gaps in research, knowledge and data.

Source: UNEP (2011: 8)

Annecke (2010) maintains that there is limited documentation on how small scale farmers, especially women, are impacted by climate change disasters in South Africa, particularly as most rural women depend on the land for survival. The gender differentiated impacts of climate change need to be acknowledged: "we need studies that look at men and women separately to be able to develop sound policies" (Annecke, 2010:1). The need to empower women for sustainable farming practices as a means of climate change adaptation is highlighted by the African Development Bank (AfDB) who argue that although women comprise 70% of full-time agricultural labour in Malawi, "they have limited access to agricultural extension services, training and credit" (AfDB, 2011:20). Further it is important to recognize that women are not a homogeneous group and it is evident that particular groups of women are more vulnerable than others. For example, in a study on Climate Change in East and Southern Africa: Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation, Eriksen et al (2008) found that elderly women were more vulnerable to climate change disasters than any other group. Gender-sensitive climate change policy needs to respond to the diverse problems of vulnerable groups of women during disasters as well as adaptation and mitigation to cope with changes in weather and extreme weather events.

In order to address the needs of women under climate change, UNEP has drawn up recommendations (Box 1). The recommendations highlight critical areas where women can be enabled by policy, how policy can address multiple areas of vulnerability as well as position women to become agents in adaptation and mitigation. Selected pointers from UNEP's recommendations guide the analysis of the research findings.

#### **Findings: Women in climate change policies**

To establish whether policies mentioned 'women' and 'gender', a scan was completed of all available policy documents. Then an analysis was made to get simple frequency counts using the terms 'gender' and 'women' (see Figure 1). The EAC Climate Change Master Plan (EAC, 2011a) has the highest number of counts of the term 'women' (27). This is followed by the Uganda Climate Change Policy, EAC Climate Change Strategy and Kenya Climate Change Response Strategy, all with frequency counts of 11. The policies with lower frequency counts are Malawi with three counts and Mauritius with four counts. Women and gender are used interchangeably in policies with some policies referring more frequently to women while others have used the term gender more often. The inconsistency is a problem of gender mainstreaming. The following sub-section offers examples of how women are described in the policies under broad headings: women as a vulnerable group, creating an enabling environment, capacity building and information sharing, adaptation programmes and livelihood strategies

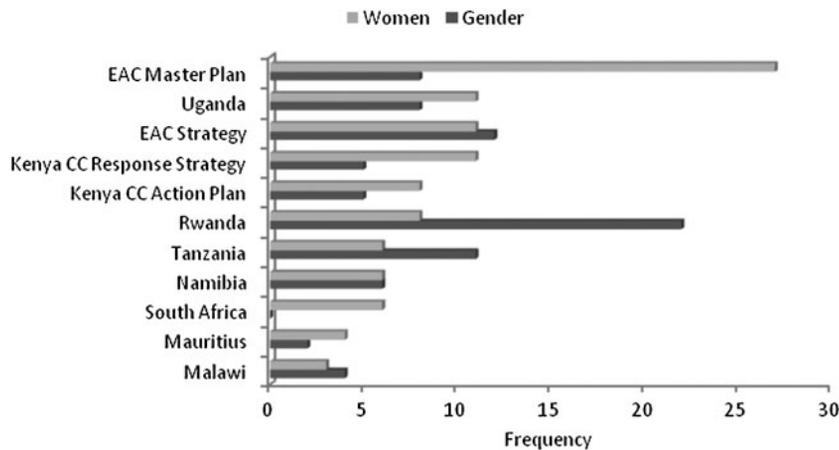


Figure 1. Frequency counts for ‘women’ and ‘gender’ in climate change policies  
Source: Based on analysis by author

### Recognition and acknowledgement of women as a vulnerable group

The policies situate gender and women as needing attention in policy, most often to highlight women as a vulnerable group. For example, Objective 3 of the National Policy on Climate Change for Namibia (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2010) states that climate change negatively affects vulnerable women and the rural poor, while the Mauritius National Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework identifies women (including those who are pregnant) as requiring special attention overall (Republic of Mauritius, 2012). The South African National Climate Change Response White Paper (Department of Environmental Affairs - DEA, 2011) enshrines as one of its principles the realization of special needs and circumstances and under this, (rural) women are singled out as being particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change given their traditional care-giving roles. The EAC Strategy asserts that gender is important and measure 4.4 proposes “to promote gender considerations in climate change issues” (EAC, 2011a:78) Alston (2013 in press) has suggested that gender mainstreaming has been conflated with mere enumeration or token inclusion. Therefore, how women are identified in selected policies, both in relation to how their vulnerabilities to climate change are understood and whether they are situated as part of the solution in climate change holds relevance. For example, water is one critical area of vulnerability and potential involvement by women which the selected policies have addressed more explicitly (UNEP, 2011).

The Uganda (Ministry of Water and Environment, 2013:5) policy acknowledges that the “inadequate supply of clean water and sanitation facilities, tends to have a stronger negative impact on women than on men” and this is aggravated by existing gender inequalities, including restricted access to land. The Uganda National Climate Change Policy identifies women as part of the solution to climate change and it plans to:

“Mainstream gender issues in climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches in order to reduce the vulnerability of women and children to the impacts of climate change and recognize their key role in tackling this issue” (ibid: vi).

Women are identified as particularly vulnerable under the freshwater resources sector in the Tanzania National Climate Change Strategy (Tanzania Government, 2012) to the possible dwindling and pollution of water resources and floods and landslides are expected to have particular impacts for women as diseases increase in the country.

The EAC Climate Change Master Plan (2011–2031) states that women, youth and children constitute the greater number of those living in poverty in communities highly dependent on natural resources to earn a living. It has noted that this group is “dis-proportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate change” (EAC, 2011b:4). Women in rural areas carry responsibility for household water supply, energy for cooking

and heating and food security, all aspects that are negatively impacted during droughts and forest degradation. The policy also pinpoints the household gender division of labour, coupled with unequal access to resources, as the reason why women are disproportionately impacted by climate change related and other natural disasters such as floods, fires and mudslides.

Gender equity emerges as a guiding principle of climate change action and sustainable development for Rwanda with planned gender mainstreaming supported by a commitment to investigate how this can be done, with dual emphasis on women's roles as actors in climate change and their gender vulnerability. The National Strategy for Climate Change and Low Carbon Development (Rwanda Government, 2011:45) proposes a full assessment of how to mainstream gender into programmes and enabling pillars, realizing the need to empower women. This call was not observed in other policies analyzed.

“Neither impacts of, nor responses to, climate change are gender-neutral. Gender matters at all levels and scales and in all sectors.”

The enabling pillars include: institutional arrangements, finance, capacity building and knowledge management, technology and infrastructure as well as integrated planning and data management.

It comes as no surprise that women are mentioned in policies as among the most vulnerable groups to the effects of climate change, a positioning that can expose women to more problems and work without resources or empowerment. Several policies (the EAC, Tanzania, Ugandan and Rwandan policies, for example) seek to address the causes of vulnerability: caretaker gender roles and dependency on natural resources, particularly water.

### **Ensure an enabling environment**

How women are situated in policy also has a bearing on the enablement of their active involvement in climate change and their empowerment. While some of the sampled policies spell out the need for women's representation they are not clear on how this will be done.

The EAC Master Plan (EAC, 2011b) actively seeks out women's involvement as it proposes that women's groups and community based organizations (CBOs) be established to assist in policy development and decision-making processes. It further seeks to draw on women's active participation in monitoring weather and climate changes.

The need for women's representation in decision-making is also addressed in the Tanzanian policy. Equitable representation of women and vulnerable groups is recommended in planning and decision-making and implementation for climate change adaptation and mitigation activities (Tanzania Government, 2012).

Women have an important role in adaptation design, according to the South African White Paper (DEA, 2011:23), which sees the need to “empower local communities, particularly women who are often primary producers in the process of designing and implementing adaptation strategies”. The National Policy on Climate Change for Namibia (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2010) is less explicit although it prioritises the involvement and empowering of women, especially meaningful participation in planning, the development and implementation of climate change programmes and projects at all spatial levels. Similarly, women's empowerment is encouraged in the planning, piloting and up scaling of adaptation and mitigation activities both in rural and urban areas by the Ugandan government (Uganda Government, 2013).

Emphasizing women's equality, the Rwandan National Strategy (Rwanda Government, 2011) starts by highlighting progress made in the promotion of women in decision-making by the country and that the Rwanda Parliament has the world's highest percentage of female representation at 60%. The strategy identifies the need to educate women and girls and as noted earlier, it prioritizes the role of research on how women can be mainstreamed in climate change planning. The Malawi National Climate Change Policy identifies social exclusion as a problem, noting that vulnerable groups, including women, are often

neglected in policies, strategies, plans, programmes and projects addressing climate change (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, 2012). A Ministry of Environment and Climate Change was created in 2012 and is led by a woman minister (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

### **Change – UNFCCC, 2013b).**

Representation in fora and structures at local, regional national and international levels is important if women are to be capacitated as equal participants in climate change responses and plans and not given token recognition which perpetuates existing gender inequalities. In many countries the impetus for gender empowerment comes from established gender equality structures. For example, Kenyan women had minority representation (29%) in the National Task Force that led the preparation of the National Climate Change Action Plan (UNFCCC, 2013b). Although gender equity has not yet materialized in representation on climate change delegations to the annual United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference to the Parties (COP) negotiations and deliberations either, women's representation in national decision-making institutions including parliament, senate and county assemblies are playing a part in the empowerment of women in climate change processes.<sup>2</sup> Education, capacity development and awareness raising programmes Policies' attention to gender in public education on climate change is critical to inform, warn and raise awareness on climate change. Several countries have begun to integrate gender sensitivity in both education materials and programmes to build awareness, resilience and capacity.

The EAC (2011b) notes that climate change awareness by the general public remains low in the east Africa region. To address this, the Master Plan proposes that climate change training materials and programmes should be developed that specifically target women. Women are recognized in the Rwanda Strategy under the priority pillar dealing with capacity building and knowledge management (Rwanda Government, 2011). Rwanda's National Strategy for Climate Change and Low Carbon Development has invested resources in ensuring gender sensitive awareness and education materials. The policy stipulates that adequate education and training will be provided for women and girls. To implement the policy, 540 women from the National Women's Council were trained in climate change adaptation and the impact of climate change on gender (Mukankomeje, 2012). A documentary film on agriculture and climate change adaptation measures was developed. Furthermore, 5 000 copies of an educational module dealing with climate change in Kinyarwanda were printed to be utilized for training trainers. Alston (2013 in press) advises that local and indigenous knowledge and the capacity of women remains a critical pillar in reshaping and restoring communities, especially after climate change disasters. Local languages are highlighted in the Kenya Strategy (Government of Kenya, 2010) as the policy advocates for the dissemination of climate change information in local languages through women's groups and the development of training materials and programmes for specific groups such as women.

### **Several countries have begun to integrate gender sensitivity in both education materials and programmes to build awareness**

Malawi has several capacity building programmes which are in progress with support by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The Climate Change Adaptation for Rural Livelihood and Agriculture (CARLA) in Malawi (AfDB, 2011) is being implemented in three districts: Karonga, Dedza and Chikwakwa. A component dealing with community based integrated climate change adaptation required that 50% of the targeted beneficiaries be women during year one and the same specification was made for the 20 community leaders to be trained in year three. Of the estimated 30 000 beneficiaries, half were women. The Women's Empowerment: Improving Resilience, Income and Food Security (WE-RISE) will further target female farmers through farmer field schools (CARE, 2011). Women farmers will also be trained through a community-based extension workers' programme called Farmer to Farmer Trainers (FtFT). Supporting the farmers are village savings and loans associations established under WE-RISE to support the acquisition of weather-resistant seeds and fertilizers.

The South African government highlights women's community leadership role and proposes collaboration with social networks such as women's organizations to raise awareness, transfer technology and develop capacity (DEA, 2011). Women are viewed as important conduits through which climate change information may be communicated timeously to beneficiaries in communities, but reference to gender sensitive educational materials is not mentioned as a priority. The Tanzanian government highlights women's

environmental knowledge and untapped skills and allocates a role for them in early warning systems, weather forecasting as well as documenting indigenous knowledge on climate change adaptation across the socio-economic sectors (Tanzania Government, 2012). Women will be challenged in terms of securing food and other natural resources under climate change

### **Designing adaptation programmes**

UNEP emphasizes the need to improve women's livelihoods as well as adaptation by ensuring "women's access, control and ownership of resources and access to development resources" (UNEP, 2011:8). Recognition of this priority is given some expression by the Namibian government which states that women will be challenged in terms of securing food and other natural resources under climate change (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2010). The EAC singles out women under the first broad strategic objective focusing on enhancing "climate change adaptation through vulnerability reduction, building socio-economic resilience, disaster risk reduction and adaptation planning" (EAC, 2011a:51). As noted above, the policy highlights the need to improve water conservation and specifies the participation of women in the management of water resources by December 2013.

Women are further addressed in the EAC Strategy under the intervention measures dealing with the need to reduce the vulnerability of the population to sensitive climatic diseases and the need to enhance coping capacities. Activity 'e' stipulates that there should be provision for healthcare services to vulnerable groups such as pregnant women (EAC, 2011a), specifically targeting one of the main areas of women's vulnerability, as those responsible for the care of children and the sick.

The EAC Master Plan (EAC, 2011b) targets women in the following broad adaptation measures: governments should deliberately target women in the efforts to eradicate poverty such as assistance with farm inputs, access to credit should be streamlined for women, improve women's skills and market access, and improve the provision of basic amenities. The EAC Master Plan (2011b) expresses the clear intention to involve women across the identified priority sectors, including: agriculture; water; energy; human health, sanitation and settlement; physical infrastructure; ecosystems and biodiversity; tourism; trade and industry; and cross cutting issues (technology development and transfer; capacity building; education, training and awareness; and climate risk management and disaster risk reduction).

### **Improve women's livelihoods**

Emphasis on long-term sustainable development can position women to overcome poverty and address their unequal access to resources and has been given attention through different policy approaches. The EAC Strategy, for example, harnesses the inclusion of social protection programmes for women to cushion them against further poverty and has the potential to create economic security support mechanisms for the poor (EAC, 2011a). Social protection is also an approach adopted by the Rwandan National Strategy (Rwanda Government, 2011:19). The third objective is framed as "to ensure social protection, improved health and disaster risk reduction that reduces vulnerability to climate change impacts". The policy identifies women subsistence farmers as particularly vulnerable among those who qualify under the programme. Although women are not mentioned frequently in the Malawian policy, women have been targeted in rural training programmes as discussed above. The Malawi Government identifies women's empowerment more broadly than simply livelihoods and commits to "support empowerment of women through access to education, health facilities, micro finance and reproductive health services" (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, 2012: 17). Women have been targeted in climate change adaptation and mitigation action plans. The WE-RISE project running from 2011–2016 is an example that targets female and child-headed households, benefitting 75 000 people. The Kenya National Climate Change Response Policy (Government of Kenya, 2010) addresses women's livelihoods in adaptation and mitigation in the forest sector. So that women can borrow capital for alternative livelihoods, including beekeeping, silkworm rearing and Arabic gum farming, the government has established the Women Enterprise Fund (UNFCCC, 2013b). The government programme to restore the country's forests entails growing 7.6 billion trees on 4.1 million hectares of land by the year 2030 mainly for carbon trading under the reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) global initiative (Government of Kenya, 2010). So far 4 300 women's groups have participated in the programme. The equal representation of women and men in climate change technology

development, transfer and training is provided for in the policy (ibid).

The insertion and inclusion of women in policy alone cannot tell the whole story and analysis of how women are situated in policy does not tell us about how policy is implemented. However, the study's findings have endeavoured to flag the importance of women's inclusion and representation in climate change policy by African countries to address its adverse effects.

## Conclusion

This Article analyzed how women's needs were being addressed in climate change policies in selected east and southern African countries. This follows claims by some authors that women as a critical demographic group was being neglected in climate change policy and deliberations. The major finding was that in as much as climate change policies are still new, having been in place for less than three years, efforts have been made to address women in countries' policies though with differing detail and in different degrees.

The research findings have demonstrated that policies on climate change are an important 'storyline' that provide empirical knowledge on the inclusion of women in the study area, a contingency that arises from the impacts of climate change. Women are situated among the most vulnerable groups to the impacts of climate change and in many of the policies the gender differentiated impacts of weather and climate-induced change are specifically spelt out. It is noted that women are recognized as being important for solutions and several policies mention empowerment, capacitation and representation in decision-making. Analysis of the policy content and particular ways in which women are situated in the selected policies reveals that in most instances women are given not much more than token or symbolic mention, with the exception of the Rwandan policy which makes an explicit commitment to the mainstreaming of women in climate change policy.

commitment to the inclusion of gender in climate change is likely to become a more critical point in evaluation of the effectiveness of climate change policy

Governments' commitment to the inclusion of gender in climate change is likely to become a more critical point in evaluation of the effectiveness of climate change policy in the future both by global and national standards. There is growing pressure from women, gender and climate change activists for gender equality to be respected in global forums and negotiations, as well as for criteria for international climate change funding to include gender, as the Environment and Gender Index testifies (International Union for the Conservation of Nature- IUCN, 2013). While research on governments' commitment to gender and the environment has rated Africa as not doing well among the countries of the world (ibid) (see Review of the Environment and Gender Index in this issue), many of the policy initiatives and programmes surfaced in this research have the potential to achieve climate justice and gender justice goals if supported by resources, advocacy and participation by women. Women's representation and empowerment in decision-making in climate change forums and structures cannot be seen as isolated from policy, planning and implementation, either nationally or internationally. Gender mainstreaming in climate change is not likely to take place without strong linkages to national and international gender equality commitments and monitoring (UNFCCC, 2013b; Alston, 2013 in press)

Going forward, we suggest that further mainstreaming of women's needs in regional and national climate change policies is critical, especially when climate change action plans are being developed and implemented. Participatory disaster risk reduction is an instrument that may enhance women's participation in decision-making and expand capacity of women to be change agents in the spaces opened up by climate change. Given the short implementation period since the new generation climate change policies have emerged in the study area, it is further suggested that follow up studies be done after a reasonable period of implementation to evaluate the extent to which policy propositions have been implemented and their efficacy in addressing women's greater vulnerability to climate change as well as capacitation of women through gender equality as a central part of the solution.

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## Notes

1. Alston (2013 [in press](#)) questions the seriousness with which governments have paid attention to the mainstreaming of gender and whether gender equality goals will be reached as a result. I note her concern on the effectiveness of gender main-streaming as a means to achieve gender equality in climate change and add that how women are situated by policy will also determine whether women are empowered, rather than ascribed token or symbolic relevance in policy.

2. The importance of gender equality laws of countries in providing support and direction for women's mainstreaming in climate change policy as well as equal representation in climate change decision-making, at national and international levels, has been highlighted by Kenya and Malawi (UNFCCC, [2013a](#); [2013b](#)) in submissions supporting the resolution for gender parity and equal representation and participation by women and men in all UNFCCC bodies and delegations.

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