

BACKGROUD OF WOMEN CARE GROUP MODELLING IN UGANDA.

Climate crisis increased poverty, diseases, population increase among women in western Uganda.

The climate crisis in Uganda has greatly contributed to the rise of poverty, diseases, and population growth among the women in Western Uganda. The growing changes in weather patterns, such as prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall have devastated agriculture which is the primary source of livelihood in the western region. This has resulted in increased poverty because women who are predominately engaged in subsistence farming are left struggling to fend for their families. Climate crisis effects such as floods result in the loss of crops and livestock which diminishes food security among the people. This exacerbates malnutrition and deepens poverty among the vulnerable populations who include women and children. Climate change has also destabilized traditional agriculture which is the backbone of the region's economy. Traditional agriculture was based on the predictability of the weather patterns in the country. However, the erratic rainfall, droughts, and floods have made the planting seasons less predictable which has reduced crop yields thus directly affecting the livelihoods of women, who are primarily engaged in subsistence farming and food production. With the declining agricultural productivity, women face growing poverty rates and struggle to provide for their families.

Additionally, the rampant destruction of natural resources, such as wetlands and forests, has placed an extra burden on women. Women were involved in basket weaving but with the destruction of wetlands, raw materials such as papyrus is difficult to find. Women instead spend their time fetching water or collecting firewood, which reduces their ability to engage in income-generating activities. The increased labor demands on women, combined with reduced earnings, have intensified gender inequalities in poverty levels, further marginalizing women economically. Women, who are heavily reliant on subsistence farming, face more economic pressure as they try to sustain their households with fewer resources. In addition, Uganda's rapid population growth (3.2% annually) is placing significant strain on natural resources, leading to environmental degradation such as deforestation and soil erosion. The strain on natural resources has further widened the negative effects of climate change and widened the poverty gap. High population in

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a region is widely linked to poverty and it is particularly notable in rural areas of western Uganda where high fertility rates persist, and agricultural land is being depleted

Similarly, the women in the rural areas also have limited access to financial resources and climate adaptation technologies, making it harder for them to recover from climate-induced losses. Inadequate resources and access to information about the nexus between climate crisis and poverty within the area does not offer the women any room to make amends. Also women do not have access to credit or new agricultural practices that could mitigate the climate impacts and reduce poverty in the communities. They are therefore left vulnerable to poverty traps, with little opportunity to improve their environment and livelihoods (World Bank, 2021). over 80% of Uganda's population, including many in western Uganda, heavily rely on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. Therefore the degradation of these natural resources exacerbates poverty, particularly for women who bear a significant burden in rural agricultural communities.

In relation to climate crisis and diseases among women in western Uganda, the report by Rejoice Africa Foundation highlighted how the climate-induced changes, such as erratic rainfall and droughts, have contributed to a rise in diseases like malaria, cholera, and diarrhea. Areas such as south western Uganda have seen a rise in cases of Malaria which were formerly non- existent. Women, as primary caregivers, are disproportionately affected by these health crises. Poor hygiene, water quality and sanitation during climate crises like floods has resulted in the outbreak of waterborne diseases which has affected women and children. The spread of these diseases has also intensified due to the climate crisis. For instance, warmer temperatures and fluctuating rain patterns have created favorable conditions for the transmission of vector-borne diseases like malaria (WHO, 2021) while colder temperatures and floods result in stagnant water and spread of waterborne diseases. Additionally, climate crisis leads to malnutrition among the women and children because of crop failures, malnutrition weakens the immune system, which leaves both women and children more prone to diseases. Rural areas have limited access to healthcare and this can be exacerbated by climate crisis. Bad weather makes it more difficult for women to access health making it difficult to manage these health crises. During climate crisis, malaria is on the rise in Uganda; the number of reported cases was 5.4 million in 2000 and 6.9 million in 2001.

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Malaria is increasingly reported in parts of the country where it was once rare, such as the southwestern districts of Kabale, Kisoro and Rukungiri.

In the event of an outbreak of diseases, women and children are at high risk. However, there has been arguments about just how important rising temperatures might be in spreading malaria. Some scientists consider that rising malaria counts can be fully explained by non-climatic factors. These include the increasing movement of people from non-malarial areas, who have no resistance, to malarial areas; lack of impregnated bed nets; increased resistance of the parasite to most commonly available drugs; deforestation, making clearings and ruts that create good breeding grounds for mosquitoes; and even the removal of papyrus marsh, which makes pools which are more suitable for mosquitoes to breed in. On the other hand, there is some evidence that rising temperatures help mosquitoes to breed more, bite more and live longer.

The climate crisis has equally contributed to an increase in diseases among women in Western Uganda through several interconnected pathways. Climate crisis results in rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns that have created more favorable conditions for the spread of vector-borne diseases. Mosquitoes, for instance thrive in warm and wet environments, and the changing climate has led to longer breeding seasons and expanded mosquito habitats, increasing the risk of infection, particularly among women and children (WHO, 2021). Diseases such as malaria and cholera have prevailed as a result of the change in weather patterns. Warmer temperatures and fluctuating rain patterns have created favorable environments for disease vectors like mosquitoes. Women, as primary caregivers, are more vulnerable to these diseases and often have limited access to healthcare. Additionally, climate change distorts the planting seasons which results food shortages particularly for women and children and hampers their livelihoods.

Additionally, extreme weather events like floods and droughts have led to water contamination, increasing the incidence of waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea. Women who are solely responsible for collecting water for home use are exposed to contaminated water sources which heightens their exposure to diseases (UNDP, 2022). The women in western Uganda are

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disproportionately affected by health challenges due to poor sanitation, lack of clean water, and reliance on solid fuels such as charcoal for cooking. This contributes to respiratory infections such as cough and flu which are equally exacerbated by weather patterns. Climate crisis and environmental degradation are greatly linked to diseases such as malaria and diarrhea, which further worsen health outcomes, particularly for women and children. Malnourished women are more likely to suffer from health complications and are less able to fight off infections.

Climate crisis also has an impact on the population growth in western Uganda. Increased poverty as a result of climate change impacts access to family planning services by women. Poverty and social pressures are key factors for population increase in western Uganda. According Rejoice Africa Foundation, Women face the added challenges of frequent pregnancies and caregiving responsibilities in addition to the already existing burdens of climate change. This population increase further strains the region's limited resources thus worsening the cycle of poverty and health challenges among the women. Poverty, limited access to health and family planning services and information have led to high birth rates among the rural population. Population growth further stresses already limited resources, such as water and arable land, exacerbating the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

In addition, the existing traditional gender roles where women are regarded as primary caregivers and often bear the burden of supporting larger families, are heightened by the economic pressures caused by climate change. Women in western Uganda engage in agriculture and as agricultural yields decline due to climate crises and resources become scarce, families tend to have more children as a strategy for economic survival, hoping that more family members can contribute to labor. However, this population increase puts further pressure on the already strained resources, creating a cycle of poverty and vulnerability for women. Climate crisis and high population growth has put a strain on the healthcare services in western Uganda. This increases the risks of complications during childbirth and reduces overall well-being for women in these regions (World Bank, 2021). The climate crisis has exacerbated population pressures, as women in impoverished regions have limited access to family planning services. People opt for larger families to deal with the economic hardships but this increases poverty as there are limited resources to feed the growing

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population. This creates a vicious cycle, where resource scarcity worsens with growing population demands.

In conclusion, the climate crisis has indeed deeply entrenched poverty, diseases, and population growth which has extremely affected women in Western Uganda. The economic stability and access to healthcare has been worsened by the adverse effects of climate change. Women, especially in the rural areas have faced difficulties in accessing resources such as water, firewood and papyrus due to environmental degradation which has depleted their sources of income. This has equally reduced their opportunities for education and economic activities, trapping them in cycles of poverty. Additionally the limited access to family planning services and information has ushered in the rise of the population which exacerbates these issues.

References:

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