

Investigating Gender Equity within Climate Information Services: Insights from Kenya

CHESNEY McOMBER

Changes in climate are posing many challenges for poor farmers in developing countries. Among those farmers most vulnerable to the environmental and economic shocks associated with climate change are women. Gender differences in agricultural responsibilities as well as access and control of resources present obstacles to adaptation and, thus, enhances women's vulnerability to climate change. With limited resources to respond to and recover from environmental shocks, farmers are dependent upon accurate and timely climate information to maximize their crop production in the new reality of changing temperatures and rainfall patterns. Those with access to climate information are better equipped to respond and adapt to the changing climate. Unfortunately, not all farmers have equal access to climate information. Despite recent initiatives by international donors as well as national level policy makers to promote the dissemination of climate information through Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), it is unclear that these initiatives have been beneficial to the most vulnerable farmers. This summer, I was able to conduct a study in Kenya seeking to explore these climate impacts and adaptation strategies with a focus on the communication of climate information to farmers. The overall purpose of this summer research was to understand social inclusivity and vulnerability within climate information services.

This summer research was part of a broader project analyzing social inequity within climate information services under the CGIAR's research program for Climate Change and Food Security (CCAFS), building upon previous research conducted in South Asia in February and led by a team of UF faculty, post-doctoral research



associates, and graduate students (Sandra Russo, Sarah McKune, Wendy-lin Bartels, Amy Panikowski, Smrittee Panta and myself). Our goal was to locate the gender gaps, by which women were excluded from the flows of climate information, and identify entry points minimize inequities limiting women's ability to access and utilize climate information. The research consisted of several interviews at the institutional level, exploring a particular climate information program called *Agromet*, which was facilitated by CCAFS and implemented by a local agricultural research institute in Nairobi over the course of the past year. Among those interviewed were representatives from the Ministry of Environment, the Kenyan Meteorological Department, the Kenyan Agricultural Research Institute, the Ministry of Agriculture, and from local radio stations. We also conducted focus groups with farmers from Makuene, located in the eastern province of Kenya.

Remedying gender inequities first requires understanding in what ways those inequities become obstacles to accessing

information. The qualitative data collected from farmer focus groups provided important information as to why climate information has not been equally attainable for all. Focus group discussions led to an exploration of not only gender inequity but social inequity more broadly. Institutional interviews revealed gaps in communication between various stakeholders within *Agromet* as well as an absence of feedback loops which would allow for multi-level communication and assessment of climate information services from various stakeholders. Ultimately, in analyzing where inequities or areas of social marginalization occur at each stage of the communication transmission (from creation, to packaging, to delivery and utilization), we were able to identify where development policies could be useful in improving gender equity within climate information services.

Chesney McOmber is a PhD student in political science and former FLAS fellow (Swahili, 2010-12).