

Climate change undermining Food Security

By Denis Marsha Kabuuka¹

Local people especially resource poor farmers in developing countries like Uganda, are feeling the impacts of climate change first and worst. This is to the fact that according to the Global Humanitarian Forum 2009, these countries are contributing less than one percent to global warming.



Far from the garden! A young woman carries a bag of searched food in Butikiro village, Kiboga district

Climatic change impacts are happening in Uganda, with more erratic, intense, severe and or destructive rainfall and droughts. Until recently the bimodal climatic seasons across Uganda have been relatively stable and predictable, to the benefit of agriculture. Today the seasons are becoming unreliable, with rain being less useful because of its distribution and impact. The rains come early even when it is supposed to be a dry season and stop for long periods. In some instances rains have come with them very strong winds and destructive hailstorms, causing floods, landslides and soil erosion.

However the big question is: what does climate change mean for poverty alleviation, wealth creation and well being of the resource poor farmers? Life for ordinary people, and especially women, who constitute 80 percent of subsistence farmers is becoming more difficult as global warming affects climates and makes the weather even more unpredictable. Many farmers

are now increasingly taking more risks and gambling more than ever. They keep sowing and planting in the hope that rain will come and stay. This to a great extent is explaining reductions in crop yields and plant varieties; making food insecurity at worst. Many poor

resource households are beginning to significantly suffer basic food shortages of many sorts. Malnutrition and gradual environmental degradation is thus increasing in many parts of the country. As a result efforts to overcome poverty, disease and overall development especially in rural areas are being frustrated day by day.



Bush burning and forest destruction to give way for subsistence farming in Butikiro, Kiboga district in Uganda. Such practices are contributing to global warming

According to a report on Climate Change and Poverty produced by Oxfam in 2008, climate change does not happen in isolation. It

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interacts with existing problems and challenges; notably deforestation, soil degradation, declining food security and makes them worse. There is a need to scale up efforts to adapt for climate change. Adaptation has to start with adaptation to current climate.

Facilitating resource poor farmers' to access early, quick maturing crop seed varieties because of the shortened rains and prolonged droughts is one of the means of adaptation. In Butikiro village, Kiyuni parish in Kiboga district like many other rural areas, local people are highly prone to present climatic variations and shocks. In this area, Sustainable Livelihoods International Uganda (SLINT-Uganda) with support of online volunteers on nabuur is building resilience to how climate is currently changing farmers' livelihoods. Through a project titled Fruit and Vegetable growing for sustainable livelihoods, SLINT-Uganda with support from on-line volunteers on nabuur is *inter alia*, assisting farmers to adopt the growing of vegetables and fruits including water melon, cabbages and pineapples as a means of not only overcoming poverty and food insecurity but also climate change. Through this farmers are experimenting with a wide range of livelihoods and expected to get two or three crops a season. Their capacity is also being strengthened through crop and soil management practices including by mulching; terracing and use of cover crops. This is also empowering them to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development.

This initiative is among the right strategies and people's resourcefulness for truly promoting sustainable development, and to reduce poverty, with enormous immediate benefits in terms of well-being as climate change impacts accelerate.

As we celebrate this year's World Environmental Day, poor resource farmers must be empowered to adapt to today's climatic variability, or else they will certainly not be able to cope with the greater extremes that global warming is bringing about.

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