

ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the relationship between gender and adaptive capacity to drought among smallholder farmers in Nabilatuk district, Karamoja sub-region, eastern Uganda. The specific objectives were to i) analyse the effects of drought on agricultural livelihoods and gender relations among smallholder farmers in Lolachat and Nabilatuk Sub Counties; ii) establish the resources that men and women in smallholder farming access and control to withstand the drought; iii) explore the infrastructure and technologies that men and women farmers use to withstand drought; and iv) explore the existing institutions and social networks supportive of men and women smallholder farmers to withstand drought. The study drew on two theories: The Disasters Risk Theory which states that disasters like drought destroy livelihoods and the Feminist Political Ecology Theory which argues that gender is a crucial variable in adaptation to drought. Using a cross sectional research design, quantitative data was collected from a random sample of 161 men and 231 women in Lolachat and Nabilatuk subcounties in Nabilatuk district. This was complemented with qualitative data obtained from Key Informant interviews, In-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions and observation.

Findings indicated that drought is a big challenge for the survival of women and men smallholder farmers, with gender differences in the way these manifest. Women and girls, for instance, experience more work burdens than men because they become more vulnerable during the drought period. Men, on the other hand, experience reduced pastoral activities due to drought, that pushes them to crop farming, ordinarily a female-dominated activity, which also increases men's vulnerability to drought. The findings indicate that there are multiple resources in the study sites i.e., water and livestock. However, the drought has had a significant impact on water resources, forcing women to walk long distances to access water. Men resorted to the sale of livestock at low prices, which caused vulnerability in livestock farming. As the drought intensified, more women than men adopted the use of traditional labour intensive technologies which limited women's adaptive capacity during the drought. The study also showed that institutions like NGOs discriminated women in trainings meant for adaptive capacity which made women more vulnerable to drought than men. Conclusively, the drought has made women farmers more vulnerable to the ravaging effects of prolonged shocks than men. In addition to the available adaptation strategies in Nabilatuk district, it is important that the development partners and government working in Karamoja subregion avail farmers with drought tolerant crops and livestock which can resist the drought. In addition, there is a need to develop a policy for resilience building in Nabilatuk district to reduce vulnerabilities among men and women in smallholder farming.