



## Gender Dynamics in Climate Change Adaptation Strategies with Particular Focus on Goromonzi District, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe

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### Abstract

This study assessed gender dynamics in climate change adaptation strategies in Goromonzi District, Zimbabwe. Relevant literature was critically analysed, and existing models and approaches on gender and climate change were appraised. The study used the Mixed-Methods Approach. The findings showed that available environmental, financial, and support mechanisms had limited adaptation strategies for the disadvantaged rural women. The study found that climate change adaptation strategies in the area were dominated by men. The study established that women tend to concentrate on farming, while men appeared to focus on better livelihood options when they are natural disasters caused by climate change. It found that men appeared to be more daring in embarking on adaptation strategies irrespective of associated risks than women. The study, therefore, submits that community survival strategies adopted by male and female ruralites in the era of interminable climate change are rather varied, complex, and dynamic.

**Key words:** Adaptation Strategies, Climate Change, Gender Dynamics

### 1. Introduction

Male and female ruralites, the world over, appear to be differently affected by climate change, and consequently, tend to embark on different climate change adaptation strategies. Male ruralites appear to be more daring in embarking on adaptation strategies irrespective of associated risks than female ruralites. On the other hand, female ruralites tend to concentrate on farming for it is less risky. While farming appears to be less risky, it is rather too tricky in this era of interminable Global Warming, for one would never be certain whether there would be sufficient rainfall. Quite often, rainfall is never sufficient, if at all it comes. This places an enormous burden on female ruralites, for without food security, the lives of their families are seriously threatened. This study analysed the gender dynamics in climate change adaptation strategies in Goromonzi District, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. It examined local responses to climate shocks, food security, poverty reduction, and forms of livelihood diversification, and how they are related to gender. This study submits that community survival strategies adopted by male and female ruralites in the era of interminable climate change are rather varied, complex, and dynamic. This is so, for male ruralites tend to adopt more profitable adaptation strategies despite their being risky, such as small scale gold mining, fishing, hunting, and cross border trading. On the other hand, female ruralites tend to concentrate on farming, which is seen as less risky, but in reality, too tricky because in this era of interminable climate change, one can never be certain whether there would be sufficient rainfall. Such uncertain is really a trauma on female ruralites, for poor rainfall seriously threatens the lives of their families.

### 2. Literature Review

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2007), a global assessment of climatic data since 1970 indicates that climate changes has had a visible influence on physical, biological and human systems. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2007) states that Africa will be the most affected continent by climate change. This is because of considerable limited adaptive capacity, compounded by widespread poverty and existing low levels of development. According to IPCC (2007), climate change in Africa seriously threatens economic development, long-term prosperity, as well as the survival of vulnerable groups such as women and children.

In the view of Gukurume (2013), rural communities in Zimbabwe have largely depended on handouts from donors and government. However, Zvigadza (2010) opines that most donors are shifting from the handout system to developing capacity to raise income. The writer goes on to state that, in Goromonzi, *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households appear to form a disproportionately large share of poor households. Chant (1996) argues that, in addition to income generating strategies, livelihood strategies also refer to gendered daily economic and productive activities. Yohe and Tol (2002), Reid and Vogel (2006) and Ráty and Carlsson-Kanyama (2009) observe that despite the anticipated severe impacts of climate change, the burden would not be homogeneous across gender, race, countries, ethnicity and geographic regions. In the opinion of Ráty and Carlsson-Kanyama (2009), men and women appear to be differentially impacted on and experience different levels of vulnerability to climate change. According to Mubaya (2011), poorest countries and communities would bear most of the brunt of climate change. The writer goes on to state that, in Southern Africa, of which Zimbabwe is part of, climate has become highly variable and unpredictable in the last couple of years. In the writer's view, the region is prone to extreme weather conditions and is generally expected to get drier and continue to experience more extreme weather conditions, particularly droughts and floods.

According to Gukurume (2013), despite the painted gloomy picture associated with climate variability, policy making has tended to rely on conjecture rather than empirical evidence. He argues that research on the link between

gender and climate change in countries such as Zimbabwe, is insignificant and largely speculative. In the writer's view, there is mounting evidence showing that Zimbabwe is facing and experiencing adverse impacts of climate change which are manifesting themselves in increased recurrence of natural disasters in the form of droughts, cyclones and floods.

### 3. Methods

This study used the Mixed-Methods Approach, for it enabled researchers to use aspects of both Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies. Since the study attempted to make a detailed analysis of the problem under investigation, the Case Study Research Design was found to be most appropriate. Official and Non-Official Publications were closely analysed. The target population, of which as high as 70 % were female-headed households, were in Ward Four, Goromonzi District. Using the Convenience Sampling Method, out of this population, research participants consisting of 30 males and 30 females were chosen. Added to this sample, were all 12 Village Heads, all 12 female leaders, the Ward Councillor, the Chairperson of Goromonzi District, and the District Administrator. Thus, all in all, there were 87 research participants. Data was collected through the use of Questionnaires, Structured Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and Direct Observation of research participants. Videos were recorded during both Focus Group Discussions and Interviews.

### 4. Findings

The study unearthed the following compelling evidence regarding gender dynamics in climate change adaptation strategies in Goromonzi District:

- Available environmental, financial, and support mechanisms had limited adaptation strategies for the disadvantaged female ruralites, for they lacked fluid capital, skills and education, and access to market;
- Young female ruralites appear to be more disadvantaged than mature female ruralites;
- Climate change adaptation strategies are dominated by male ruralites, and require urgent strengthening of gender concerns;
- Female ruralites appear to concentrate on farming;
- Male ruralites appeared to focus on better livelihood options when they are natural disasters caused by climate change;
- Male ruralites tend to be more daring in embarking on adaptation strategies irrespective of associated risks than women, such as gold-panning and hunting;
- Female ruralites seem to concentrate on farming for it is less risky;
- Male and female ruralites appeared to be differently affected by climate change, they tended to respond differently to such effects;
- Although female ruralites possess valuable knowledge and skills on climate change, such strengths are not effectively utilised; and
- Female ruralites appear to encounter impeded rights, limited mobility, and unequal access to resources as a result of their exclusion in decision-making processes with regards to climate change adaptation strategies;

### 5. Discussion of Findings

A large majority of the target population were female-headed households for males tended to migrate to urban areas in search of better livelihood options. These female ruralites tended engage in the less risky farming. These findings are in keeping with those of Babugura (2009), Banda (2010) and Kalanda-Sabola et al. (2013), who made similar studies on Malawi. The study found that unlike female ruralites, male ruralites tended to be more daring, and embarking on more rewarding climate change adaptation strategies irrespective of associated risks, such as gold-panning, fishing, cross-border trading, and hunting. The study also found that unlike mature female ruralites, young female ruralites appear to be more disadvantaged than mature female ruralites. This observation ties with the findings of Davies, Oswald and Mitchell (2009). The study found that the *raison d'être* why female ruralites appear to be more affected by climate change is that they have limited livelihood options. Farming, which female ruralites appear to heavily depend on, is rather too tricky in this era of interminable Global Warming. One can never be certain whether they would be sufficient rainfall. In most cases, rainfall is too little, if at all it comes. This places tremendous pressure on female ruralites, for without food security, the lives of their families are seriously threatened. Almost all research participants stated that there was an urgent need for the Government to harness rivers and sink more boreholes so that farmers engage in irrigation schemes rather than relying on rainfall. Another finding the study established, was the feeling among female ruralites that they were not actively involved in decision-making. Research participants were generally agreed that their exclusion from decision-making resulted in their views, such as the need for more boreholes and dams, not being prioritised by the Government. Until, such imbalance is addressed, the misfortunes of women will continue unabated. It is not amiss to submit that the salvation of female ruralites lies on furthering themselves in education, for education, the world over, has proved to be the only effective liberator to human disadvantages. The more female ruralites try to advance themselves in education, they more they would be more confident in articulating their grievances.

### 6. Conclusions

From the above discussion, certain salient points may be made. It is crystal clear that livelihood strategies adopted by male and female ruralites in this era of interminable climate change are rather varied, complex, and dynamic. The findings clearly show that more profitable climate change adaptation strategies, such as small scale gold mining, fishing, hunting, and cross border trading, are dominated by male ruralites, despite their being risky. On the other hand, female ruralites tend to concentrate on farming for they see it as less risky, but, which in reality, is very tricky in this era of unpredictable climate change. The uncertainty of having adequate rainfall appears to weigh heavily on female ruralites, for too little rainfall seriously threatens the lives of their families. Female ruralites were firmly agreed that the economic

and social well-being of their families heavily depended on the Government sinking more boreholes and harnessing rivers so that they could engage in irrigation farming.

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## 8. Profile of Lead Researcher



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