

Gendered Impacts and Adaptation Strategies to Climate Change in Urban Informal Settlements: A Case Study of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Ronja Walther¹, Dr Nelly John Babere², and Dr Liana Ricci³

¹University College Dublin, Ireland

²Ardhi University, Tanzania

³University College Dublin, Ireland

Abstract

Women face unique challenges from climate change, exacerbated by broader gender inequalities. Limited financial and material resources and low participation in decision-making hinder their adaptive capacity when livelihoods are threatened. While extensively studied in rural areas, gender-specific challenges in urban settings remain under-researched. This article addresses this gap by comparing the impacts of climate change, land and water management practices, livelihood activities, and adaptation strategies of men and women in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Utilizing a household survey and focus groups in three informal settlements, our findings reveal that both men and women identify floods and droughts as the most severe environmental issues. However, women are disproportionately burdened by flooding's immediate effects, such as dealing with insects, snakes, and damaged assets, increasing their household responsibilities. Female-headed, low-income households, often residing closer to rivers and experiencing frequent flooding, lack the assets to cope, compelling them to borrow from high-interest lenders with short repayment periods, which can lead to gender-based violence. Conversely, women are more likely to implement adaptation measures like raised foundation plinths, and to leverage support structures like savings groups to mitigate climate impacts. For men and individuals with special needs, the destruction of road infrastructure due to flooding is critical, hampering income generation and impeding mobility for people in wheelchairs. Currently, initiatives like Dar es Salaam's Climate Action Plan 2020-2050 do not adequately incorporate gender considerations. This research underscores the importance of integrating gender perspectives to develop effective and inclusive urban climate adaptation policies.

Keywords: Adaptation Strategies; Climate Change; Gender Inequality; Informal Settlements; Urban Challenges