

Experience in reporting Climate change stories in Ugandan context

Climate change impact in the health and agriculture sector

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Presentation lay out

Introduction

Its implications in the health sector/ agriculture sector

Experience in reporting about the subject matter

Introduction

- In Uganda, when it comes to issues of science journalism looking at climate impacts of climate change it is a matter of relating it heavy rains, flooding, landslides, drought, disease outbreaks and epidemics, like malaria and cholera, as well as lightning strikes.
- These aspects have significant implications on agriculture, food security, soil and water resources. and that is what I usually look for gathering climate change related information for publication

Continuation

- I usually look for the general statistics data where Experts warn that in a warmer climate there will be heavy rainfall increase which is already occurring.
- In general, Uganda receives enough rainfall to feed crops, but as the climate changes, the seasonal patterns have become more extreme
- The country's policy of rapid industrialization and growth in the recent years has been has caused a challenge in environmental degradation particularly destruction of wetlands within the city and major towns and the government is doing little about it

Continuation

- Statistical analyses done on climate change in Uganda show that the mean annual temperatures have increased by 1.3°C since 1960 with a more rapid temperature rise of 0.37°C per decade in the month of December, January and February although experts advice its is better to maintain it below 1.5°C (Ministry of Water and Environment).
- The temperature rise has significant impacts on health as well as agriculture. In Kabale District in Western Uganda where mosquitoes were unheard of the rise in temperatures has favoured the proliferation and breeding of mosquitoes, increasing malaria prevalence.
- In the agriculture sector pests and disease infestation have become a huge challenge both for crops and animals. In crops we have diseases such as banana bacterial wilt, nematodes, cassava brown streak virus, maize lethal necrosis, fall army worm which is major barrier in food security.

Implication on health and Agriculture sector

- Several diseases that are currently endemic in Uganda have increases in prevalence and distribution due to climate change. This is both for human and animals
- These diseases affecting humans include mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and lymphatic filariasis; soil-transmitted helminthes; trachoma and waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid.
- Other diseases that Ugandans experience in a more localized nature include plague, trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) and yellow fever.
- Malaria is believed to be endemic in 95 percent of Uganda (Ministry of Health, 2005)
- In endemic regions such as Apac in Northern Uganda, increases in temperature can result in higher transmission intensities caused by the acceleration of mosquitos resulting in a higher burden of malaria in affected areas.

Malaria case in Apac Hospital



Arocha Swamp



Other diseases

- Diseases such as Ebola and Marburg are a result of climate change
- Schistosomiasis, a waterborne parasitic disease transmitted by snails, is a major health problem in Uganda, causing approximately 40,000 deaths per year
- There is already evidence that schistosomiasis infection has expanded in recent years into areas previously not thought to facilitate transmission like high altitude crater lakes in western Uganda.
- Soil-transmitted helminthes (STHs) are intestinal worms that infect humans and animals and are ubiquitous in Uganda, although their prevalence is lower in the higher elevation northeastern parts of the country. They are transmitted through contact with human feces. STH infections primarily affect poor communities where sanitation is inadequate and treatment is limited.
- In animals we have tick borne diseases such as FMD, Brucellosis, swine fever in pigs among others which are on the increase
- Water borne diseases resulting into Cholera outbreaks and typhoid is rampant particularly in congested areas within Kampala City and other major towns.

Flooding in Kampala city



Mitigation measure

- Community Water and Sanitation Projects by development partners
- Vectors, Pests, and Disease Control Project by the ministry of health and ministry of agriculture
- Vector control strategy of Malaria where treated insect mosquito nets are being distributed to communities and people are urged to sleep under them.
- Climate Change and Development Planning Project by the Ministry of Water and development partners in drilling boreholes for communities in rural areas
- In the agricultural sector scientists have bred improved crop varieties which can tolerate the pest and disease burden. The crops include cassava varieties, banana varieties, sweet potato, beans among others

Reporting Experience

- This is the 8th year I am actively engaged in science reporting. Climate change being one of the topics I have covered widely. The inspiration came from joining science journalism associations both within the country and elsewhere trying to focus on reportage of topics which are under reported in the media
- I tackle the topics by looking at the different sectors such as agriculture, health and environment
- I do these both within the country, East Africa, Africa and other places in the globe
- What I know is that in order to come up with a good climate change story, it has to be investigative and the subject must involve communities be it in urban or rural areas.
- This can be demonstrated by selected links of my stories as below.
- The challenges are immense including lack of support by media houses, lack of trust by scientists, so you have to prove your worth to access information from them

Story links

- <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/Farming/Karamoja-farmers-benefit-from-modern-weather-prediction/689860-2248968-1005atlz/index.html>
- <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/Farming/-scientists-global-warming-glaciers-oceans/689860-4173838-blo700/index.html>
- <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Business/Technology/Climate-change-ocean-sea-acidification-Uganda-Kenya/688612-4183720-df0mk5z/index.html>

Thank you

