

COVID-19 Pandemic: An Additional Driver for Smallholder Producers' Vulnerability to Climate Change in Tanzania

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Key Messages

- ❖ Covid-19 pandemic has social, cultural, and economic downturn implication and exacerbates the vulnerability of smallholders to impacts of climate change.
- ❖ The government, civil societies and NGO's should increase resources to protect smallholder's livelihoods.
- ❖ It is imperative and a call for climate financing entities in Tanzania to support post-disaster recovery programs to improve conditions of smallholder farmers.

1.0 Introduction

Agricultural production in Tanzania is dominated by smallholder farmers who also play a central role in the supply of total food requirements and export (URT, 2013). Despite of such vigorous role in the country, smallholders have been facing everlasting challenges including high vulnerability to impacts of climate change (Donatti et al., 2019; URT, 2014). In the efforts to address this challenge, the government of the United Republic of Tanzania has attempted to formulate sectoral and institutional frameworks, programmes, strategies, policies, and legislations in favor of smallholders' livelihoods against impacts of climate change. In the agriculture sector, for example, apart from having the national Policy (2013), the government has formulated the Climate Resilience Action Plan (2014-2019), National Postharvest Management Strategy, National Irrigation Act (2013), Agriculture Sectoral Development Strategy I & II, and Tanzania Climate Smart Agriculture Program (2015 -2025). Despite their implementation and coordination challenges, these initiatives are crucial in building smallholders' resilience.

The recent global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has desperately affected all aspects of humanity and is considered as threat to achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction especially in developing countries including Tanzania. Although Tanzania has recorded insignificant number of infections since the first case on March 16, 2020 (URT, 2020b), the impacts are anticipated to slow down the government's efforts against poverty and resilience especially among smallholder farmers. The UNDP in Tanzania has warned the disruptive impacts on the most vulnerable populations, particularly the poor in both urban and rural areas, as they may have limited access to healthcare and lower savings hence they are less able to purchase essential items (UNDP Tanzania, 2020). This situation creates a need for policy and decision makers to be informed on how the pandemic is likely to exacerbate the vulnerability of smallholder farmers to impacts of climate change and variability.

2.0 COVID-19 Pandemic Implication on Smallholders Vulnerability to Climate Change

2.1. Food Security

Food security is one of the key gauges of community's resilience to impacts of climate change and variability (IPCC, 2019). For many years now, Tanzania has maintained a good record of food security in the country compared to other surrounding nations. Despite the recent information on the stabilized national food security recently published by the Ministry of Agriculture (URT, 2020a) as a result of favorable weather conditions and hardworking spirit emphasized by the government during COVID-19 outbreak, smallholders are at high chance to become food insecure. The majority of the countries surrounding Tanzania will attempt to purchase food crops at any cost to meet requirements after lockdowns and mobile restrictions. The ministry has warned that COVID-19's impacts on food supply and demand will directly and indirectly affect all four pillars of food security and nutrition: availability, access, utilization and stability (URT, 2020a). Smallholder farmers might be tempted to sell all their produce considering the higher prices offered. In turns these people will remain with no reserve food to support them in any uncertain climate emergency in the future. Smallholders depend largely on rainfed livelihoods and yet we are not certain how the next growing season will look like in terms of rainfall amount and distribution.

2.2. Alternative Income Reduction

Since the spread of the pandemic across the globe, many economic sectors were severely affected. Tourism in developing countries has been the most affected sector due to cancellation of international flights and closure of country borders. In Tanzania a total of 21 international airlines cancelled 632 flights since 20 March 2020 causing deterioration of key tourism-related activities like transportation, accomodation,

food, beverages, and entertainments (URT, 2020b). Tourism activities in Tanzania served as an alternative income sources for the majority of smallholders around tourist sites (like Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Manyara, Iringa, and Zanzibar) as they sold food stuffs, hotels, restaurants, transportation services, tour guides, and carvings. Such services earned them some money to meet their households basic needs. Shrinking tourist activities have accelerated poverty among smallholder communities of which eventually are exposed to risks of climate change and cannot withstand climate emergencies.

2.3. Climate Action Financing Interruption

Various climate actions intended to lessen smallholders' vulnerability to climate change in developing countries including Tanzania were underway and promising in terms of adaptation and mitigation measures. Climate financing is anticipated to drop due to impacts of coronavirus crisis among major donating partners in the Global North (Montes et al., 2020). Since the outbreak in Africa which was followed by containment strict measures, climate resilience building and smallholder-centred activities undertaken by non-government organizations were affected. Some donor organizations officially notified their recipient entities about the expected difficulties to fund further climate action activities. Reduced climate financing in certain pro-poor and resilience building initiatives in Tanzania and other Sub-Saharan Africa countries is expected to exacerbate the vulnerability of smallholders to projected climate-induced extremes as well as Loss and Damage.

2.4. Reduced Government Revenues

The coronavirus pandemic has negatively affected economic activities which contributed to government revenues. Under this situation, the World Bank has projected a negative economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa and enhanced poverty circles (Montes et al., 2020). In Tanzania where containment measures were not strict like other African countries, tax and

non-tax revenues from the most COVID-19 affected areas declined; especially revenue from tourism, visa fees, hotel levy, entrance fee from sports and entertainment (URT, 2020b). Presenting to the parliament on the Tanzania's government 2020/2021 budget plan, the Minister of Finance and Planning also has informed that the actual GDP growth is projected to slow down to 5.5 percent from the initial projection of 6.9 percent in 2020 compared to the actual growth of 7.0 percent in 2019. Reduction in government revenues as well as private sector has direct negative implication on public service delivery. Availability of public and private investment due to economic crisis may reduce efforts to transform production systems and put at risk ambitious public and private sector commitments to fight climate change (FAO, 2020b). Reduced government expenditure on key sectors like health, water, energy and environment makes poor people and smallholders more vulnerable to climate-related stressors.

2.5. Impaired Market Chain

The COVID-19 crisis is noticeably distressing smallholder producers' access to markets. Direct and immediate impacts are more severe for high-value commodities (perishable products), which are often produced by smallholder farmers (FAO, 2020a). The disease containment measures have caused difficulties in collecting and transporting agricultural products to areas of consumption (URT, 2020a). An example is drawn from Kenya-Tanzania borders where thousands of trucks carrying agricultural goods were discontinued at one time leading to serious destruction of perishable goods like fruits. In some cases, smallholder producers have been restricted from selling products or buying inputs, which eventually will result in a loss of income, loss of produce and it has potentially affected future farming seasons (Zhang, 2020). These situations will lead to increased poverty among smallholders which put them at risk of being swept by climate change disasters due to reduced capacity to withstand the shocks.

2.6. Gender issues

Women and girls in rural areas form the largest population involved in smallholder farming activities in Tanzania. Due to traditions and inequality, they are also responsible for major home-based activities like gathering household's food stuffs as well as involving in small businesses. Expected higher food prices will directly affect women who might be forced into other risky activities. Reduction in small businesses in tourist centres will also lead to loss of control over income by women and make them poorer and more vulnerable.

3.0 Opportunities Arising from COVID-19 Pandemic among Smallholders

Despite the major challenges caused by the crisis, smallholders can tap some resulting economic opportunities such as foreign markets for food as well as cash crops. The value of some crops like ginger and lemons in Tanzania has multiplied following the belief that they can cure COVID-19. There shall also be a considerable demand of agricultural produce especially in neighboring countries which adopted lockdowns and mobile restrictions. Therefore, smallholders will be able to sell crops at higher prices and hence increase their incomes. To make best use of such anticipated economic opportunities, smallholders should be argued to make efforts in farming for expanded production that will meet the demand.

4.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is seen to be a health and economic crisis, it is also affecting the poor and smallholders' capacity to withstand climate emergencies. The vulnerability in Tanzania is associated with strict measures adopted in surrounding countries as well as impaired interaction between countries. Several actions by the government authorities, private sector, and non-government organizations are required to rescue smallholders' livelihoods. Such actions may include:

- Smallholder farmers to be emphasized to increase efforts to produce more food crops;
- The government through the National Food Reserve Authority (NFRA) should provide a good price incentive to ensure enough food reserve;
- Civil societies, NGOs, FBOs, and CBOs should support to raise smallholders' awareness on food crops saving;
- The government, key stakeholders and development partners should provide capacity building on alternative income generation activities;
- The government, key stakeholders and development partners should consider increasing climate financing for post pandemic recovery programs;
- Governments should prioritize services on climate sensitive sectors such as agriculture, livestock keeping and fisheries;
- Gender issues should be considered in addressing COVID-19 impacts.

5.0 References

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Coalition Members

This Policy brief was developed by the National Coalition of Civil Societies on Climate resilience, poverty reduction and Sustainable development in Tanzania.

