

Climate resilience of sexual and reproductive health systems and communities in Samburu County, Kenya

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Our Objective

- To understand the climate resilience of local health systems, communities, and individuals to provide and/or access sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in Samburu County, an arid- and semi-arid land (ASAL) in northern Kenya
- To evaluate SRH and gender integration in local and national climate change policies
- To identify opportunities to improve climate resilience of ASAL communities and SRHR service provision

Our Method

- Gender and SRH content analysis of climate change policies
- 22 Key informant interviews with SRH providers and local leaders
- Focus group discussions with men (Moran) (N=4) & women/girls (N=10)
- 20 interviews with women who experienced pregnancy during times of drought, flooding, or heatwaves
- Approved by AMREF Health Africa's Ethics and Scientific Review Committee
- Data collected March-May 2023

The climate crisis is negatively impacting arid- and semi-arid land communities' sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Prolonged drought, extreme heatwaves, and flash flooding in Samburu County, Kenya are contributing to:

Worsening pregnancy outcomes and menstrual poverty

Escalating conflict and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

Increased unintended pregnancies

Decreased SRH service accessibility and uptake through the local health system

Delayed male circumcision and marriage ceremonies

Spread of STIs, including HIV/AIDS

Climate crisis impacts, resilience, and adaptive capacity are gendered.

- Widespread death of livestock due to lack of water and insufficient pasture is increasing the fragility of the Samburu traditional agropastoral livelihood
- Increasing cost of living and work burden on women, causing girls to drop out of school to work
- Outmigration of men in search of work in cities, leading to decreased security in communities left behind
- Loss of cultural identity of Moran (male warriors) leading to psychological distress, substance abuse, and difficulty coping and adapting to climate change
- Changing gender roles as women take on more work in and outside of the home, becoming heads of household



Climate adaptation policies reveal an enabling environment for SRHR and gender mainstreaming

13 local and national policies analyzed
10 referenced gender or SRHR

Average mentions per policy: 8.5 for gender, 3.7 for SRHR, 2.0 for issue integration

Opportunity highlights:

Kenya's National Policy for Disaster Management was the only policy to explicitly link SRHR and climate change, doing so by relating the HIV/AIDS epidemic to droughts, floods, and landslides.

Samburu County Spatial Plan most frequently identified entry points for gender or SRHR integration (n=11).

Samburu County Draft Climate Change Policy calls for partnership with women, affirmative action, and gender mainstreaming. Findings from this research will be integrated before policy finalization.

Promising local climate adaptation strategies

- Improving the policy landscape of Samburu County, including increased investment for climate adaptation programs
- Nighttime SRH services and outreach
- Health facility drug contingency plans for emergencies, esp. essential medicines
- Complimentary alternative livelihoods training and savings groups for women & youth
- Community and health provider education on climate adaptation and health risks
- New boreholes nearby health facilities