

Nexus Between Climate Change, Food Insecurity and Mental Health



Kajiado Environment & CC Director Mr. Kanini, Kajiado MET. Director Mr. Lubanga, ACCRCC Executive Director Dr. Rosalind, Fisheries and Agriculture Director & ABDP Program Coordinator, Mr. Siangot during a debriefing meeting in Kajiado County

Climate change is of great concern and increasingly the cost of responding and recovering from impacts attributable to the same has left a great gap in the economies of African nations. Climate change has affected the Global Horn of Africa communities, leading to extreme weather events such as droughts experienced for five seasons consecutively. Climate change impacts threaten to undermine sustainable development as it ravages agro-based livelihoods such as livestock, crop farming and business, affecting the management of resources, health, and productivity.

Health is a complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Mental health and related mental disorders, a component of health, represent a major worldwide disease burden and have become a public health issue. The World Health Organization recognises that mental disorders affect 1 billion individuals worldwide. They cause the most disability worldwide and account for many years lived with disability.

Recent studies, asserts Dr. Rosalind, Consulting Psychologist with ACCRCC and the Principal Investigator, show that climate factors are a stronger predictor of psychological distress globally. The effects of global warming and the increase in frequency, intensity and severity of extreme climate events pose a possibility of gradual escalation of mental illnesses. Communities are faced with loss of livelihoods, lives and property, and socio and economic critical infrastructure leading to emotional instability characterized by loss, grief, anger, pain and shame among others.

The African Coalition of Communities Responsive to Climate Change (ACCRCC), an African Non-Governmental Organization based in Kenya, under the Climate Action Africa (CAA) supported by the Government of Canada and implemented by Alinea, Econoler and WSP, is

undertaking groundbreaking research on the Nexus between Climate Change, Food Insecurity, and Mental Health in Sub-Saharan Africa. This South-South Exchange Research (SSE) initiative aims to explore how extreme weather events and food insecurity exacerbate mental health issues in the Horn of Africa.

This Study spanning Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda, intends to provide crucial insights that will inform government policies to integrate mental health considerations into climate response strategies, aligning with SDGs 3 and 13. With a gender lens, the study takes a gender-responsive approach, engaging women, men, and youths from diverse backgrounds, ensuring inclusivity in our findings. The research observing gender and social inclusivity and integration focuses on the communities to understand the vulnerability, lived experiences, perspectives of climate change, food insecurity and underlying mental health issues.

The voices of the key experts, community and partners in the region are key to enhancing this study outcome to influence policy and preventive, promotive and curative practices and programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. The result of working with researchers in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia is to influence behaviour change. This shall be achieved through building the knowledge base for mitigation and adaptation while embracing the Indigenous know-how, leading to sustainable peaceful coexistence with the environment and sustainable utilization of natural resources among local communities for inclusive prosperity, health and wellbeing.