REPORT

MARCH 2024

Harvesting climate action across Kenyan counties

Insights from Nandi County

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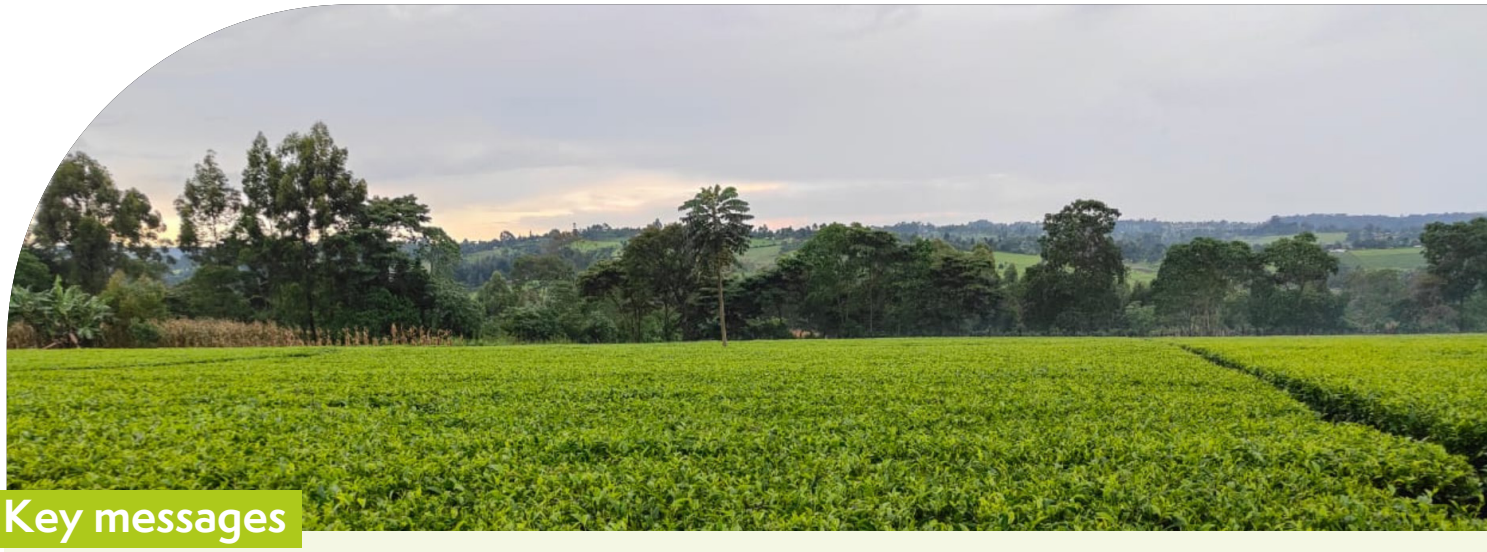


Key messages

- The agricultural sector in Kenya is a devolved function; therefore, the implementation of most climate actions is organised at the county level through the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).
- Nandi County plays a pivotal role in tea production, with cultivation undertaken by both small-scale and large-scale commercial farmers. The susceptibility of tea to climate change requires quick and decisive climate adaptation and mitigation measures within the sector.
- To show its commitment to implementing climate actions, the county government of Nandi allocates 1-3% of the annual county budget to climate action. This, however, still seems to be insufficient.
- To support the national initiative to have 30% of the land covered by trees by 2032 (an equivalent of 15 billion trees), the county government of Nandi, in partnership with the Kenya Forestry Service (KFS) and other key stakeholders, has already realised 26.1% tree cover.
- To enhance climate adaptation in the county, there is a need to 1) scale up sustainable livestock breeding to ensure efficient production, 2) increase investments in feed and fodder storage facilities, 3) scale up the production of drought-resistant crops, and 4) scale up the adoption of new technologies and practices, such as the production of biogas.
- The county government should set aside adequate funding for M&E exercises after the lapse of climate projects to ensure continuity in the implementation of climate change practices by farmers.

Introduction

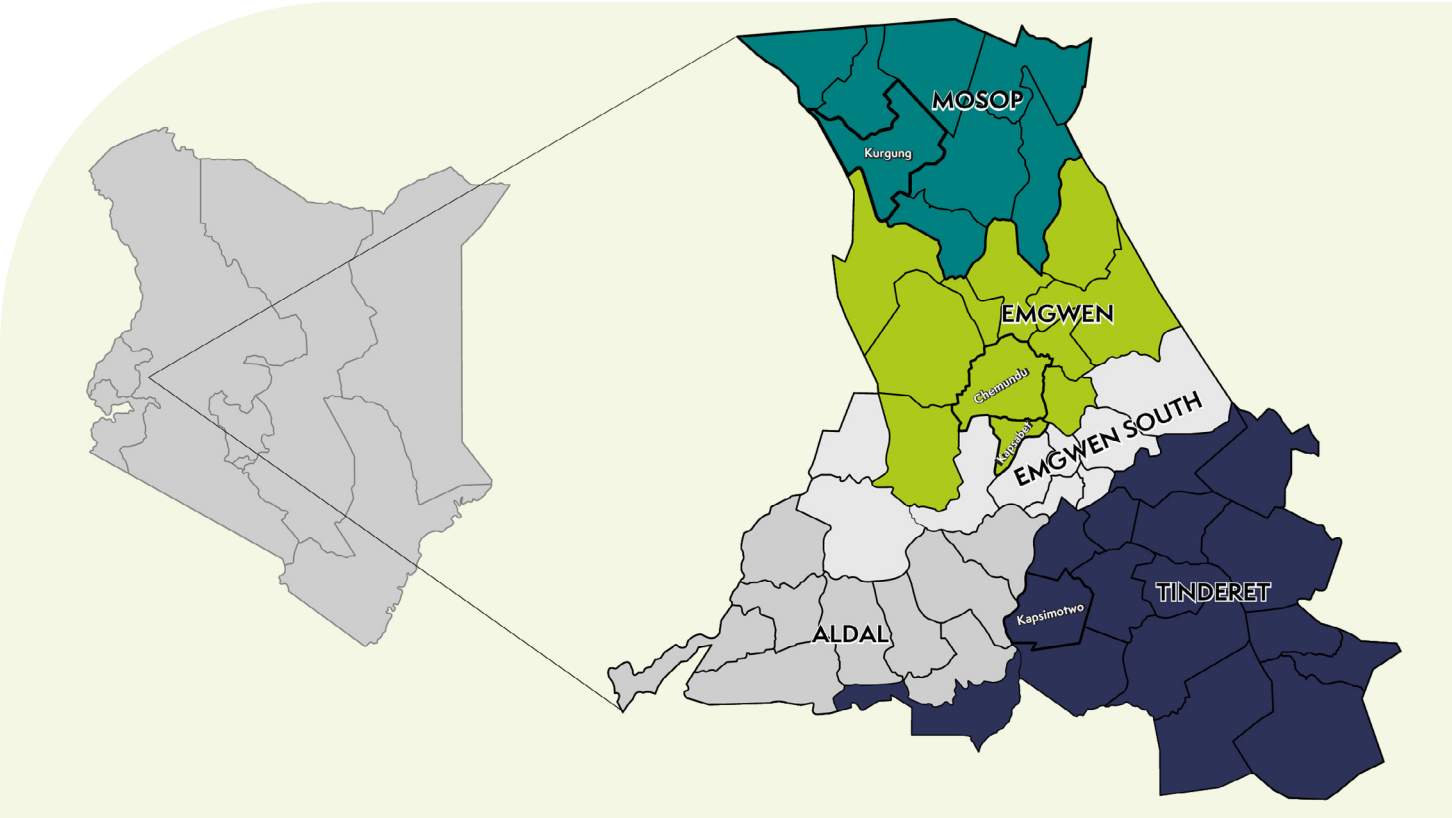
Nandi County is located in the North Rift region of Kenya and covers an area of 2,855.8 square kilometres.[1] The county is a major producer of tea, which is planted by both smallholder farmers and large commercial farmers. The most prevalent climate change hazards in Nandi County include excessive rainfalls, hailstorms, frost, fluctuations in extreme temperatures, and prolonged dry periods, all of which result in changes in the growing seasons and reduced yields.[2]

Agriculture is one of the most essential sectors of Nandi's economy, but it is highly susceptible to climate change and variability. Small-scale producers whose livelihoods depend on natural resources bear the brunt of the effects of climate change. Despite the importance of the agriculture sector, farmers still rely heavily on rain-fed agricultural production, which is unreliable and erratic, with less than 3% of households practising irrigation due to the high cost of the required infrastructure.[1]

Climate change has resulted in new pests and diseases and variations in growing seasons due to changes in rainfall patterns. These, coupled with a loss of soil fertility, have negatively impacted the county's agricultural production and crop productivity.[3]

The county government of Nandi recognises the importance of climate action, with different stakeholders implementing initiatives towards activities that improve production and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This has resulted in a few climate adaptation and mitigation measures being implemented in the county: for instance, climate-smart agricultural production has been promoted to improve the resilience of small-scale farmers to climate change and to enhance food and nutrition security in the region. The county government, supported by development partners, has supported small-scale producers through grants and capacity strengthening on climate adaptation and mitigation measures through programs like the National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP).[4] Farmers also started to implement practices like agroforestry and good agronomic practices to boost agricultural production in the county.

Despite endless efforts by the county government to support farmers and other stakeholders in carrying out climate action, implementation gaps still exist in the county. While climate-smart agricultural production has been advocated to increase the resilience of small-scale farmers against climate change, challenges such as low income and extreme poverty hinder farmers'



adoption of sustainable practices and technologies. The economic constraints limit their capacity to invest in climate-resilient measures despite supportive initiatives by the county government and development partners. Although grants and capacity-building programs like the National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP) have been introduced, the persistent issue of poverty limits farmers' ability to fully embrace these opportunities. Furthermore, the complex nature of climate change demands a comprehensive and coordinated approach, and farmers may lack awareness or understanding about the long-term benefits of climate-smart practices. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure, limited market access, and insufficient extension services may hinder the effective dissemination and adoption of climate-resilient techniques. These systemic challenges contribute to the existing implementation gaps, emphasising the need for holistic strategies that address economic and educational barriers to foster the county's widespread adoption of climate-smart agriculture.

Charting a new climate course

The Nandi county government, like all counties, has national laws and policies, such as The Climate Change Act (2016) and the Kenya National Adaptation Plan (NAP, 2015-2030), as frameworks to implement climate action. The Nandi County Climate Change Fund Act mandates allocating 1% to 3% of the annual budget to the Climate Change Fund.[2] This fund is administered by the office of the County Executive Committee Member for finance, while a steering committee oversees its usage. In collaboration with the County Steering Committee, this Committee publishes the Climate Finance Framework, which addresses issues such as climate change awareness, relevant national policies, local impact, human activities contributing to climate change, and specific adaptation and mitigation projects in the county.[9] The county Department of Agriculture and Cooperative Development has been working closely with the Department of Lands, Environment and Natural Resources to formulate policies that guide cross-cutting climate management. However, the county's adaptive capacity is hindered by limited financial resources, poor market linkages, relatively poor infrastructure, delays in the implementation of policies, relatively high illiteracy levels among the farming communities, insufficient farmer training on climate actions and inadequate budgeting.

Climate change and policy awareness form the foundation for climate action implementation.[5] The Nandi County government, in partnership with NGOs and the private sector, is actively creating climate change awareness. However, climate policy awareness is still low, especially among farmers. The sustainable development of the county depends on the implementation of mechanisms that enhance climate resilience and farmers' adaptive capacity. The county government is mandated to choose and implement appropriate climate adaptation strategies to build residents' adaptive capacity; therefore, policies that contribute directly or indirectly to climate action have been formulated. The county government relies on national and county policies to enhance climate action. For instance, national policies and acts such as the Agriculture Policy (2021) and Agriculture and Food Authority Acts (2013) provide a political foundation for sustainable food and agricultural production at the county level.[6] Further, The Nandi County Climate Change Fund Bill (2020) seeks to strengthen the coordination and facilitation of climate finance for community-initiated climate adaptation practices. This is anticipated to contribute to increased efficiency in using resources allocated to implementing climate actions. Through the Kenya Forest Conservation and Management Act (2016) and National Forest Policy, 2014, the Nandi county government, in collaboration with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), encourages farmers to plant indigenous trees and discourages the planting of (counterproductive) eucalyptus trees, especially around water catchment areas.[2] **Also, through the Nandi Climate Change Action Plan, the county has allocated KSH 10 million**

Seedling production in Nandi County. Photo: Wiebe Smit

(USD 67,000) to establish a climate change unit. Additionally, KSH 200 million (USD 1.3 million) has been earmarked to establish a green climate fund.[4] Other policies, such as the Nandi County Water Act (currently at the government printers) and the Nandi County Wetland Management and Conservation Bill (currently at the draft stage), are being formulated to rehabilitate and protect wetlands from encroachment and for broader conservation and management of water resources. Through the involvement of the local community in the implementation of conservation and management practices, there has been a positive impact on livestock production and water resource management.

The county also developed policies and legislation that support forest protection. For instance, the Nandi County Government has adopted the National Tree Planting Strategy**,** which aims to increase the county's tree cover to 30% by 2032. The county has achieved a tree cover of 26.1 %, making it a leading county in forest conservation in Kenya. Policies that guide tree planting in the county are very effective. However, they are unsustainable due to a lack of long-term strategies. Therefore, **establishing a county climate change department could streamline climate activities, coordinate stakeholder engagement, and enforce current policies to boost resilience to climate change.**

The limited implementation of climate action in Nandi could be attributed to the absence of a coordination unit that mainstreams all climate-related activities, including bringing together all key stakeholders in the policy formulation and implementation process. Furthermore, identifying current policy gaps is challenging due to climate action policies that are not yet fully implemented and, therefore, difficult to evaluate. **There is a need for further sensitisation of the local community on relevant climate policies to further enhance farmers' willingness to accept climate adaptation strategies.** Therefore, all relevant stakeholders should be involved in policy formulation and implementation processes to increase a sense of ownership and improve the implementation of climate actions.

Another key challenge in policy implementation is that most of the policies at the national level are not yet domesticated at the county level. Inadequate funding for climate action contributes to insufficient implementation of climate actions, and therefore, more resources should be allocated to implementation efforts. Most cross-cutting sectoral policies (energy, forestry and agriculture) are also not optimally integrated, hindering efficient implementation. Additionally, the few implemented climate policies do not address community exposure, adaptive capacity and resilience to the impacts of climate change effectively. **Therefore, there is a need for more comprehensive climate change policy schemes in Nandi County.**

Farmers group on a discussion. Photo: Clim-Eat

Navigating climate challenges in Nandi

The overreliance on rainfall for agricultural production increases farmers' vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Climate variability results in reduced crop and livestock production and productivity. Farmers in Nandi County have adopted several agricultural and food production practices to improve their resilience to climate effects. Through projects such as the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (KCSAP), farmers have received training on climate-smart agricultural production, which involves a set of farming practices aimed at increasing the resilience and productivity of climate change-affected land.[7] Farmers have adopted some of the practices that are considered to be climate-smart agriculture (CSA), such as the establishment of kitchen gardens, integrated pest management strategies, crop rotation practices, mulching, the use of organic manure, and the use of certified seeds. By adopting CSA practices, farmers can increase their production, improve food security, and increase their income from selling excess produce, increasing their resilience and adaptive capacity. CSA practices, thereby, also contribute to soil conservation and other positive environmental outcomes, providing long-term benefits for farmers.

Irrigation can help ensure crop production throughout the year, regardless of rainfall patterns. Farmers in Nandi have adopted manual irrigation methods, such as the use of buckets and gravitational furrow systems. Manual irrigation is mainly applied to small-scale production but is labour-intensive and time-consuming. Currently, only 2% of farmers in the county use advanced irrigation methods, such as sprinklers and drip irrigation, due to the high cost of the required infrastructure.[1]

Furthermore, diversification is essential for improving farmers' resilience to climate shocks. Farmers in Nandi County practice crop and livestock farming, with dairy as a major value chain. Beekeeping and poultry farming have been introduced alongside crop production, increasing the diversification of production and sources of income. Several farmers have introduced cash crops such as coffee to boost their incomes. Mixed cropping reduces the risk of crop failure, and engagement in multiple economic activities increases farmers' income sources, increasing their resilience to climate shocks.

Currently, only 2% of farmers in Nandi county use advanced irrigation methods.

Climate change has resulted in new crop pests and diseases in Nandi County, and some existing pests have developed resistance to pesticides.[8] **As a viable solution to the pest and disease challenge, farmers have embraced integrated pest management (IPM) practices, which involve using biological, physical, chemical, and crop-specific strategies.** Notably, farmers in the county use traditional methods, such as the use of wood ash, to control pests and boost soil nutrients. Through the IPM approach, farmers can minimise pesticide use while still ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in pest management. It also promotes the protection of nature and ensures sustainability in agricultural production in the long run. Additionally, most farmers opt for drought- and disease-resistant seed varieties that are early maturing. Farmers embrace early planting to allow for a longer growing period and early pollination. Such practices show that farmers are committed to building their resilience to the effects of climate change.

Climate change results in a reduction in animal feed availability and a lack of water resources for livestock. To combat climate change impacts on livestock production, farmers embrace livestock breeding, especially for dairy cows, to improve yields. Farmers commonly produce feed like silage and hay. The County Government supports farmers with grants, equipment, and capacity building on animal feed conservation strategies through projects such as the Agriculture Sector Development Support Program (ASDSP) and the National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP). Livestock keepers are also reducing the stock number and investing in zero-grazing units to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Farmers also introduced the planting of Napier grass, which serves as animal feed and simultaneously counters soil erosion. While livestock breeding enhances stock productivity, a practice that increases farmers' incomes, improving livestock nutrition can also contribute to raising incomes and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Improved storage of livestock feeds ensures that the feedstock is adequate during the dry seasons, stabilising productivity year-round. However, accessibility to storage units is a significant challenge.

Despite Nandi County being a mid-to-high-altitude area with high rainfall, there is a tendency towards increased water scarcity for on-farm and domestic use, especially in

dry periods. Water scarcity leads to reduced agricultural production, declining forest cover, and reduced quality and quantity of water for domestic use. Farmers have embraced various water management and conservation practices, such as harvesting rainwater using water tanks. Other practices include the sinking of boreholes, the construction of dams, water spring conservation practices, and the drilling of waterways. Apart from farmers' efforts, the county government, in partnership with other stakeholders, supports farmers, schools, and households by acquiring water tanks for rainwater harvesting. However, farmers' water management and conservation efforts are constrained by inadequate funding to purchase equipment such as water pumps and tanks and to sink boreholes. The currently available wells and terraces are sometimes filled with soil, which renders them useless. **There is low community buy-in for water conservation since not all individuals recognise the need for water resource management and conservation.** Additionally, national and county laws and policies geared towards enhancing water resource management, such as the Water Act (2016), the Environment Management and Coordination Act, and the Wetland Conservation and Management Bill, are not optimally implemented in the county.

Climate impacts, such as variations in temperature and precipitation, can adversely affect the ecosystem. Forests, in particular, are susceptible to climate change. Farmers are embracing agroforestry practices, rehabilitation of degraded land, and afforestation (using exotic and indigenous trees) with the help of the KFS. Farmers prefer planting *Grevillea robusta*, a significant source of firewood, timber, and energy on farmland.[4] The Kenya Forest Conservation and Management Act of 2016 encourages the development, sustainable management, and utilisation of forest resources to boost the country's social and economic development. Tree planting is practised in both farmlands and forests, including the planting of fodder trees and fruit trees. **The National Acts stimulate the inclusion of local Forest Community Associations (FCAs) in KFS activities to conserve the forest, encouraging local community engagement in forest preservation**. The local communities in Nandi County have established nurseries in the forest and received advice on nursery management practices from national and county organisations. Through the plantation establishment and management scheme, farmers benefit from the crops while simultaneously conserving the forest.

To enhance climate adaptation in Nandi, there is a need to 1) scale up livestock breeding to ensure efficient production, 2) increase investments in improved feed and fodder production and storage facilities, 3) escalate the production and use of drought-resistant crops, and 4) scale up technology adoption (like the production of biogas). Moreover, it is essential to allocate resources to green energy initiatives. Thereby, it is crucial to consider occasional hazards like hailstorms and frost, which primarily impact tea production, when planning for climate adaptation and mitigation measures. **Smallholder tea farmers can adopt cost-effective strategies to adapt and mitigate the impact of frost and hailstorms. These include selecting frost-resistant tea cultivars, implementing mixed cropping for natural windbreaks, using locally sourced materials like straw for mulching, and engaging in community-based weather monitoring for timely responses.**

Additionally, encouraging collaboration through cooperatives and advocating for government support can further enhance the resilience of smallholder tea plantations to adverse weather conditions. Despite efforts to implement climate adaptation practices, several challenges slow down the process. These include insufficient (financial and human) resources for monitoring resources, limited political goodwill, limited capacity of available staff and stakeholders handling climate action in the county, and minimal research on climate change. **Most available county climate funds are** channelled through national bodies, which often either do not

Agroforestry in Nandi county. Photo: Wiebe Smit

disburse sufficient funds or delay the **disbursement of funds to the county. This results in a significant financial constraint for climate action at the county level.**

Nurturing knowledge

Stakeholders use different strategies to empower local communities to stimulate localised environmental conservation and improve livelihoods. Information on climate change is delivered to small-scale farmers in Nandi County through local radio channels, TV programs (such as Shamba Shape-up), *chiefs' barazas.*[i] [1]A chief baraza is a semi-formal public gathering held in communities at the behest of local administrators. Its aim is to share critical information, to deal with rising information needs in a locality and to collect the views of the local community on certain issues] and community training, and digital tools such as SMS services.

Non-governmental organisations such as Anglican Development Services (ADS), KFS and the International Crane Foundation (ICF) have been at the forefront of delivering climate change training to farmers. In partnership with the World Bank, the county government also extends support through grants and training to farmers through programs such as the Financing Locally Led Climate Action Program (FLLoCA), NAVCDP, and KCSAP. Farmers in the county receive training on food security, beekeeping, fodder production and storage, nursery management, agroforestry, bamboo tree seed propagation and water spring management- and protection.

The forest is a significant source of livelihood for the communities in Nandi, and it acts as a habitat for plants and wildlife. Human-wildlife conflicts are a common challenge in Nandi County. The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) provides support and training services to the victims of human-wildlife conflict on protecting their property, livestock and crops, including establishing livestock enclosures. The International Crane Foundation (ICF) provides training on wildlife conservation and on the ideal number of cattle to be herded in forests to avoid overgrazing. Thereby, ICF informs farmers which areas near or in forests are allocated for grazing. This has contributed to significant positive impacts on forest conservation in Nandi County. Despite the efforts by different stakeholders, the frequency and quality of the training is still relatively low, partially due to the limited funds available for training. This is reflected in the low awareness of climate change policies among small-scale farmers in the county. Furthermore, very few extension officers are available at the sub-county and ward levels, resulting in limited engagement with local communities.

> While adequate funding is critical, there are insufficient funds for implementing climate action in the county.

Adequate funding is critical for effective climate action implementation. The primary sources of climate financing include the National Government and donor funding from non-governmental institutions such as the FAO, World Bank, and IFAD. **Almost all relevant stakeholders in the county possess insufficient funds for implementing climate action, and available funds are not used efficiently.**

To improve climate education and capacity strengthening among smallholder farmers in Nandi, there is a need to increase funding, employ more county extension officers to engage with local communities (currently, extension officers are active on the ward- and sub-county levels), to increase the frequency and quality of training, and to engage knowledge institutes such as universities to support knowledge dissemination.

Building alliances for impact

Effective and sustainable climate policy formulation and implementation calls for collaboration between stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organisations, large/small-scale farmers, and other relevant stakeholders. In Nandi, climate policy formation processes include a public participation process, ensuring broader buy-in from different stakeholder groups and ideally leading to increased implementation of these policies. The county's public participation platforms/forums include the Ward Climate Change Committees, the County Environment Platform, and the County Agricultural Sector Committee. Additionally, projects such as FLLoCa have a dedicated committee representing women, youth, people with disability, and men, contributing to more inclusive implementation practices in the county.

[i] A chief baraza is a semi-formal public gathering held in communities at the behest of local administrators. Its aim is to share critical information, to deal with rising information needs in a locality and to collect the views of the local community on certain issues

Despite the multi-stakeholder approach in climate policy formulation and implementation, challenges still hamper implementation. These include political interference, insufficient funding to facilitate community engagement, inadequate mainstreaming of climate actions, and inadequate knowledge of best practices in climate adaptation. These challenges must be addressed in Nandi.

Monitoring, assessing and appraising progress

The Nandi County Government has established a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit to evaluate projects targeting climate action. This unit is comprised of economists and government officials responsible for validating the unit's operations. The M&E unit implements baseline, mid-term, and end-term evaluations of different climate projects. It uses specific indicators, such as the number of stakeholders adopting adaptation strategies, agricultural productivity, and the percentage of tree cover in the county, to evaluate the effectiveness of climate actions and the impacts of climate change.

Way forward

Several steps can be taken to accelerate the implementation of climate action in Nandi County. **The major challenge in implementing climate adaptation practices is the lack of resources, especially funds, to purchase and establish the infrastructure needed to support the process.** For instance, farmers lack the resources to develop a modern irrigation system and buy farm inputs. To tackle this challenge, the county can establish a dedicated local fund in partnership with government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector. This fund would offer financial support to farmers through low-interest loans or grants, explicitly targeting the purchase and setup of crucial infrastructure like drip irrigation systems. Simultaneously, community-based initiatives and educational programs can be implemented to empower farmers with knowledge of sustainable practices and efficient resource utilisation, fostering resilience in the face of climate change.

Climate change adaptation M&E is an under-exploited area. Most M&E frameworks for climate adaptation have recently been adopted and can be further improved. To ensure efficiency in future climate change decisions, the county government should strengthen the M&E unit and prioritise documenting lessons learned. All relevant stakeholders, including government departments, development partners, and farmers, should be informed of the M&E results. The county government should set aside adequate funding for M&E exercises after the projects end to ensure continuity in the implementation of adaptation and mitigation practices by farmers.

Other than creating awareness, capacity-strengthening activities should be integrated throughout project lifespans and continue to be organised after project closures. The training activities should also adopt a participatory approach to incorporate the ideas and knowledge of local communities. **The local community should not be considered merely as beneficiaries of training and support but also as climate action actors at the regional level.** Further, the county government should implement a sustainability plan for adaptation techniques to ensure long-term effects.

Case study

An example of good M&E practices in Nandi is the case of tree planting activities, where follow-ups are made after six months to ascertain the survival rate of the trees, nursery progress, disease scouting, and assessment of replacement needs. For the trees planted during the long rains, replacement is mainly conducted during the short rains so that the tree seedlings take advantage of the available rainwater. Further, during the follow-ups, the M&E unit prepares and shares quarterly and annual reports with all relevant stakeholders. In general, the monitoring period runs for at least five years. Gender issues are also factored in to determine the level of engagement of women and youth in forestry services. The KFS has invested in an online platform where individuals can register and report on their tree nursery activities. They also have a well-established M&E system that generates feedback on the success rate and potential challenges in implementing their activities. Financial returns generated by communities that adopt agroforestry practices are also monitored.

M&E is essential in deciding where to focus investments. It helps determine what is working and what is not. Through the lessons learned, an institution can make informed decisions on appropriate climate adaptation practices to invest in. While many M&E systems for climate change adaptation are already in place at the project, county, and national levels, the topic is still relatively new.

Recommendations

The primary goal of this report is to support the Nandi County Government in accelerating the implementation of climate policies in the county. The study recommends the following to bring about such acceleration:

- In collaboration with financial institutions and other stakeholders, the county government should develop a sustainable model for financial resource mobilisation to support initiatives to improve climate action in the county. The model should be designed to deliver the climate grants to the intended beneficiaries.

- In collaboration with other stakeholders, the county government should strengthen the capacity of extension officers and other climate action implementers through refresher training to ensure effective climate adaptation strategies at the county level and appropriate management and utilisation of climate funds.

- There is a need to establish and strengthen a standard climate change adaptation M&E unit at the county level to accelerate and foster resilience to climate change. The unit should allow for continuous M&E to assess the extent to which climate actions are being implemented.

- In partnership with other stakeholders, the county government should create more awareness of climate policies among stakeholders, mainly small-scale farmers. Farmers and all other relevant stakeholders should be involved in formulating climate policies to ensure the efficient implementation of climate adaptation strategies. Priorities of the local community should be considered when developing policies, both at the county and national levels. This will create a sense of ownership by all the stakeholders, thus reducing resistance in the implementation process. Concrete actions to achieve this include organising local town hall meetings where farmers and community members can discuss climate challenges, potential solutions, and the impact of policies on their farming activities. Additionally, conducting simple scenario activities, workshops, or focus group discussions can encourage participants to envision future farming scenarios and articulate their needs and concerns. Involving farmers and relevant stakeholders in formulating climate policies is crucial, and these participatory methods can serve as effective platforms to gather local insights.

- To make policies more efficient in Nandi County, adapting and implementing national policies to align with local needs is crucial. The strategies and plans made by the county should match and follow national guidelines. There is a need for research organisations, such as the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), to conduct studies on the alignment of these policies.

- Abundant rainfall in Nandi poses both a challenge and a potential opportunity. Currently, it is considered a hazard due to insufficient water storage capacity throughout the county. The limited options for storage hinder the effective management of excess rainfall, creating a hazard for the region. However, surplus rainfall could be transformed into a valuable opportunity: adequate investments in water storage infrastructure could enhance water availability for agriculture and mitigate water scarcity concerns during drier periods.

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Citation

Gitau Ng'ang'a K & Smit W (2024). Harvesting climate action across Kenyan counties: Insights from Nandi County. Wageningen, the Netherlands: Clim-Eat.

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BRIDGING SCIENCE AND POLICY FOR CLIMATE AND FOOD