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Building Capacity for Integrated Family Planning/Reproductive Health (FP/RH) and Population, Environment, and Development (PED) Action: The BUILD Project

# ADVANCING THE INTEGRATION OF FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INTO CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMING IN EAST AFRICA

POLICY BRIEF

EAST AFRICAN REGION MISSION



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## Key Messages

- The East Africa region faces significant climate change vulnerabilities that include droughts, floods, rising temperatures, and food insecurity, which threaten livelihoods, health, and the overall socio-economic well-being of its population, particularly impacting women, youth, and vulnerable communities.
- Current East African Community (EAC) regional climate policies and national frameworks do not adequately address the intersections between Family Planning (FP), Reproductive Health (RH), population dynamics, gender equity, and youth engagement in the region's broader development visions and policy frameworks, limiting the effectiveness of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Recommendations:
  - Revise outdated policies such as the EAC Climate Change Strategy (2011-2016) and EAC Climate Change Policy (2011), as this presents a critical opportunity to integrate FP/RH, population dynamics, gender equity, and youth engagement into climate strategies and to ensure a more holistic approach.
  - Strengthen institutional capacities and align national policies with global climate finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) which are vital for addressing the FP/RH-climate nexus and protecting vulnerable populations from climate-related risks.
  - Implement regional training programs for policymakers, planners, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to enhance understanding of FP/RH and climate change intersection, fostering a comprehensive approach to climate resilience.
  - Organize regional forums to promote cross-sectoral dialogue, engaging stakeholders—including government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners, and religious leaders—in integrating FP/RH into climate strategies.
  - Develop a robust regional monitoring and evaluation framework to track FP/RH integration into climate strategies, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

## Introduction

East Africa, identified as a global hotspot for climate-induced human vulnerability, faces high temperatures, severe droughts, and heavy rainfall, leading to floods and landslides (IPCC, 2023). The region's growing population exacerbates the impact of climate change by straining environmental and economic resources needed for food, health, and education services (Population Connection, n.d.)

The East African Community (EAC), which includes Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania—plays a critical economic role in Sub-Saharan Africa. With a population of over 302 million, the region faces considerable climate variability challenges, affecting agriculture, manufacturing, and energy sectors (EAC, 2023). For example, between 2010-2022, Kenya experienced droughts, floods, and other climate-related disasters, resulting in significant economic losses, i.e., 3-5 percent of Gross Domestic Product as of 2020 (IFPRI, 2023), and displacement of people (OCHA, 2024). Uganda and Tanzania have suffered extreme weather events and disease outbreaks, straining their economies and health systems (World Bank Group, 2021b).

Addressing these interconnected challenges requires integrated development interventions focusing on population dynamics, health, gender equity, and youth participation. The intersection of climate impacts, rapid population growth, unsustainable agricultural practices, and environmental degradation highlights the urgent need for integrating Family Planning (FP), Reproductive Health (RH), gender equity, and youth engagement into climate policies, strategies, and actions as an effective approach for mitigating and adapting to climate change-induced impacts in the region. However, current EAC and national climate change policies and strategies do not demonstrate coverage of these critical elements in the efforts for the region's development. This results in fragmented approaches to building capacities for climate change resilience, which is key to the region's socioeconomic transformation and development.

This policy brief summarizes the findings from a rapid assessment of integrating population, FP/RH, gender, and youth in EAC climate change regional and national policies. It highlights gaps, implications, opportunities for integration, and actionable recommendations to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable approach to cross-sectoral integration of climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts in the region.

## Key Findings

### Climate Change Policies:

- The **East African Community Climate Change Policy (EACCCP) 2011** aims to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change and promote sustainable development through coordinated regional strategies and actions. It guides EAC Partner States in collective efforts to address both climate adaptation and mitigation, focusing on socio-economic development (EAC, 2011a, p. 7). The policy emphasizes the link between climate change and health (EAC, 2011a, p. 18). Adaptation is the policy's primary focus, with mitigation as a secondary priority. It calls for integrating climate actions into national and regional plans and urges financial mobilization through mechanisms like the EAC Climate Change Fund. The policy also addresses the gendered impacts of climate change, and advocates for gender-sensitive approaches to socio-economic development (EAC, 2011a, pp. 7,16-17). While

acknowledging the links between population dynamics and climate change such as rising emissions due to population growth as a result of high energy use, industrialization, and consumption patterns, the Policy does not specifically address FP/RH, or maternal and child health (MCH) issues.

- The **East African Community Climate Change Strategy (EACCCS) for 2011-2016** envisions a prosperous, climate-resilient East Africa by implementing the objectives of the EAC Climate Change Policy. It focuses on six key areas: reducing vulnerability, improving disaster planning, promoting sustainable development, strengthening climate knowledge, advancing education, and ensuring sustainable climate finance (East African Community, 2011b, p. 8).

The strategy includes interventions such as reducing vulnerability to climate-sensitive diseases, enhancing health services, promoting gender inclusion, and maintaining essential emergency services (East African Community, 2011b, pp. 35-36). However, it lacks specific provisions for FP/RH and MCH to climate change. Given that its implementation timeframe expired in 2016, the strategy's review offers an opportunity to integrate FP/RH, gender equity, and youth issues for a more comprehensive approach to climate change response action (East African Community, 2011b, p. 12).

- The **East African Community Climate Change Master Plan 2011-2031 (EACCCMP)** was developed as a unified regional strategy to build climate resilience across the EAC region. It aims to ensure that the region's people, economies, and ecosystems can effectively adapt to climate change. The Master Plan highlights the vulnerability of the region's growing population, especially women, youth, and children, to extreme climate events like floods and droughts. It identifies gender, youth, and vulnerable groups as cross-cutting issues, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive strategies to address environmental and humanitarian crises. The plan proposes mainstreaming gender into climate efforts, improving access to credit and markets for women, and increasing their participation in decision-making on climate issues (East African Community, 2011c, pp. 26-27). It also outlines financing options, including climate funding from bilateral, and multilateral sources, and private investments (East African Community, 2011c, pp. 27-28). However, the Master Plan lacks specific references to FP/RH, and MCH, which limits its scope in addressing population-related challenges and more so in the context of the region's efforts on socioeconomic development.
- The **EAC Climate Finance Access and Mobilization Strategy (2022/23-2031/32)** outlines the region's approach to securing and utilizing climate finance to meet its climate goals. The strategy aims to ensure the mobilization, access, and transparent reporting of climate finance, aligning with the EAC Vision 2050, which emphasizes sustainable resource use. Key goals include increasing access to international and domestic climate finance, enhancing private sector participation, and fostering innovative financing mechanisms (UNFCCC, 2022, pp. 3-4). The strategy acknowledges the role of population dynamics, highlighting that 2.8% of the EAC population (4.7 million people) have already been affected by climate-related crises (UNFCCC, 2022, p. 2). While the strategy promotes capacity-building and collaborative projects for mitigation and adaptation, it lacks specific funding provisions for addressing health impacts, including FP/RH and MCH.

## Health and FP/ RH Policies

- The **EAC Regional Health Policy (EACRHP) 2016** recognizes climate change as a significant social, economic, and environmental challenge affecting health in the region. It highlights issues such as food insecurity from prolonged droughts, livestock diseases leading to zoonotic transmission, and the rise of vector-borne diseases due to changing climates, all of which reduce productivity and strain social safety nets (East Africa Community, 2016, p. 18). The policy envisions a healthy and productive population in the EAC and aims to establish an integrated, equitable, and sustainable health system. Key objectives include strengthening health systems, enhancing disease control, improving health service access, and promoting sustainable financing towards universal health coverage (East Africa Community, 2016, pp. 31,34-45).

The policy emphasizes reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services, alongside environmental protection and capitalizing on the Demographic Dividend (DD) to drive socio-economic transformation (East Africa Community, 2016, pp. 34-35). Objective four focuses on improving health service quality through universal health coverage, community involvement, and promoting RMNCAH partnerships to reduce preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths (East Africa Community, 2016, pp. 39-40). However, although the policy addresses health impacts related to climate change, it does not specifically incorporate FP/RH or MCH in the context of climate resilience, nor does it provide explicit strategies for integrating these aspects into climate change-related health responses.

- The **EAC Integrated Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Policy Guidelines, 2016** aim to create a healthy, competitive, and productive population across the region. The policy views population growth as both a challenge and an opportunity, highlighting the potential of harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in education, employment, health, and good governance (East Africa Community, 2016a, p. 10). The policy focuses on expanding access to equitable, high-quality RMNCAH services, covering areas such as family planning, maternal and child health, adolescent health, immunization, gender-based violence, and emergency healthcare. It emphasizes harmonizing RMNCAH standards and scaling up adolescent-friendly services while ensuring effective integration of RMNCAH policies and resources across the region (East Africa Community, 2016a, pp. 12,15). Gender equity is a core principle, and the policy advocates for sustainable health financing mechanisms and increased domestic funding for RMNCAH services. It also promotes establishing laws to support health financing (East Africa Community, 2016a, pp. 18,22,25). However, the policy lacks specific interventions for mitigating the impact of climate change on RMNCAH and does not comprehensively address youth-targeted programs, despite their importance to the region's development.

## Long-term Development Plans

- The **EAC Vision 2050**, launched in 2016, outlines a comprehensive framework aimed at enhancing resource utilization to boost productivity and improve the social well-being of East Africans. Vision 2050 aspires to raise per capita income to \$10,000 by 2050, positioning the region in the upper-middle-income category (East Africa Community, 2016b, p. 17). The Vision prioritizes climate adaptation, mitigation, and financing, advocating for enhanced meteorological services and access to international climate funds, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the EAC Climate Change Fund (East Africa Community, 2016b, pp. 77-78). Population dynamics, including youth involvement in economic activities and demographic trends, are central to achieving the Vision's goals which highlight the need for strategic policies to harness the demographic dividend and address socio-economic indicators like life expectancy and urbanization (East Africa Community, 2016b, pp. 20-21). Gender equity is a cross-cutting issue in the Vision, focusing on empowering women and ensuring their participation in the region's transformation. It calls for harmonized gender policies, improved access to education for girls, and prioritizing women's health, FP services, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to promote gender equality (East Africa Community, 2016b, pp. 88-89). However, the plan does not cover issues to do with enhancing the integration of FP/RH, and MCH, into climate funding initiatives and broader development strategies.

## Implications

The lack of integration of FP/RH, population dynamics, gender, and youth considerations in climate policies across the East African Community (EAC) region has significant implications as follows:

- This gap increases vulnerability for women and youth, especially in rural areas, who are disproportionately affected by climate change. Without incorporating FP/RH services into climate policies, these groups face heightened risks from climate-related disasters such as droughts, floods, and disease outbreaks. Women, in particular, experience greater health risks due to limited access to reproductive healthcare, exacerbated by environmental stressors.
- Failure to integrate FP/RH into climate change strategies hinders sustainable development by not addressing the root causes of vulnerability. Rapid population growth and high fertility rates contribute to environmental degradation and strain health systems, posing barriers to sustainable development efforts. Neglecting FP/RH in climate policies results in missed opportunities for cross-sectoral synergies. FP/RH programs can serve as critical entry points for climate adaptation by addressing rapid population growth, improving maternal health, and increasing community resilience.
- EAC member states may struggle to access global climate finance, such as from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which increasingly prioritizes cross-sectoral approaches that integrate health and development goals. Without a clear integration of FP/RH and gender-responsive strategies, the region risks being underfunded, thus crippling efforts to build climate resilience.

## Opportunities

There are several opportunities for integrating FP/RH, population dynamics, gender equity, and youth engagement climate action within EAC regional climate change policies, strategies, and plans, as well as those of individual member states.

1. **Revision of Outdated Policies:** The revision of the EAC Climate Change Strategy (2011-2016) and EAC Climate Change Policy (2011) presents an opportunity to integrate FP/RH, gender equity, and youth engagement into regional climate frameworks. These revisions should ensure that climate resilience strategies address a comprehensive range of socio-economic and health challenges, including reproductive health. Additionally, the revision process can strengthen institutional frameworks by establishing clear mandates, budget allocations, and monitoring mechanisms for adaptive management.
2. **Incorporation into National Climate Policies:** Partner States should take advantage of the opportunity to revise their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Climate Change Action Plans (NCCAPs) to include FP/RH and gender-sensitive strategies. This initiative would ensure that climate adaptation efforts align with broader development and health goals.
3. **Access to Climate Finance:** By aligning national climate policies with international climate finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, EAC member states can mobilize resources to implement integrated climate adaptation projects that include FP/RH, gender equity, and youth-focused approaches.
4. **Capacity Building:** Investing in capacity building for EAC policymakers, planners, and civil society organizations will help build a more comprehensive understanding of the intersections between climate change and FP/RH. This enhanced knowledge will improve policy coherence and the effectiveness of climate resilience efforts.

## Conclusion

The EAC region faces significant challenges in its efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. While regional and national climate policies provide strong foundations for action, the lack of integration of FP/RH, gender equity, and youth engagement undermines their overall effectiveness. To ensure that the region can achieve sustainable development and build resilience to climate-related shocks, it is essential to address these gaps.

By integrating FP/RH, gender, and youth into climate change strategies, the EAC and its member states can better protect vulnerable populations, enhance health outcomes, and promote gender equity, ultimately creating a more inclusive and resilient future.

The review of policies in the EAC region indicates that while population dynamics, health, and family planning/reproductive health (FP/RH) are referenced, significant gaps exist in their integration with climate change action. Notably, FP/RH is not recognized as a gender-responsive strategy for adaptation or resilience within existing climate policies and frameworks.



## Targeted Recommendations:

### 1. EAC Secretariat:

- Lead the revision of outdated EAC climate policies, such as the **EAC Climate Change Policy (2011)** and the **EAC Climate Change Strategy (2011-2016)**, ensuring that family planning/reproductive health (FP/RH), gender equity, and youth engagement are integrated as cross-cutting issues.
- Implement regional capacity building and development efforts through training programs for policymakers, planners, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to enhance understanding of the intersection between FP/RH and climate change, fostering a comprehensive approach to climate resilience.
- Hold regional forums targeting regional development stakeholders that include government agencies, civil society, and religious leaders to promote cross-sectoral dialogue—on integrating FP/RH in climate strategies.
- Develop a robust regional monitoring and evaluation framework to track the integration of FP/RH issues into climate strategies, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

### 2. Member States:

- Revise national climate policies, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Climate Change Action Plans (NCCAPs), to incorporate considerations of FP/RH, gender, and youth.
- Strengthen collaboration among health, environment, and planning ministries to develop integrated strategies that effectively address FP/RH and climate resilience.
- Mobilize climate finance to support adaptation projects that include FP/RH initiatives, leveraging available funding from global mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund.

### 3. Development Partners and CSOs:

- Support the collection of data and research on the impacts of climate change on FP/RH and population dynamics to inform evidence-based policy decisions.
- Facilitate capacity-building projects focused on integrating FP/RH issues into climate change policies, ensuring that findings are effectively disseminated and up-taken by policymakers and integrated into regional development processes.

### 4. Research and Academic institutions

- Enhance regional data collection and multidisciplinary research on the impacts of climate change on population dynamics, FP/RH, and gender to strengthen institutional capacity and mobilize necessary climate finance.
- Undertake an analysis of the economic impacts of climate change on the region and build a case for urgent response actions from government and multinational agencies.
- Provide strategic knowledge and capacity building on the integration of FP/RH and climate change action in regional and member states' development policies.

## Annexes:

### A) Policies, strategies, and plans reviewed

Theme	EAC policies, strategies, and plans reviewed
<b>Long-term Development Plans</b>	EAC vision 2050
<b>Climate Change and Environment</b>	EAC Climate Change Policy (EAC-CCP), 2011
	EAC Climate Change Strategy (EAC-CCS), 2011-2016
	EAC Climate Change Master Plan (EAC-CCMP), 2011-2031
	EAC Climate Finance Access and Mobilization Strategy for the East African Community 2022/23-2031/32
<b>Health and FP/RH</b>	EAC Regional Health Policy, 2016 (EACRHP)
	East African Community Integrated Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Policy Guideline, 2016

## B) Abbreviations

<b>BUILD</b>	Building Capacity for Integrated Family Planning, Reproductive Health And Population, Environment, and Development (PED) Action Project
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>DD</b>	Demographic Dividend
<b>EAC</b>	East Africa Community
<b>EACCCMP</b>	East African Community Climate Change Master Plan
<b>EACCCP</b>	East African Community Climate Change Policy
<b>EACCCS</b>	East African Community Climate Change Strategy
<b>EACRHP</b>	East Africa Community Regional Health Policy
<b>FP</b>	Family Planning
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>MCH</b>	Maternal and Child Health
<b>NCCAPs</b>	National Climate Change Action Plans
<b>NDCs</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>PED</b>	Population-Environment and Development
<b>RH</b>	Reproductive Health
<b>RMNCAH</b>	Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent Health
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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