

# GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE DISCOURSES IN UGANDA

*Insights from women representatives of CSOs*



**Author: Elena Georgiadi**

Master's Thesis for the Environment and  
Society Studies programme

Radboud University

February 2023

## Colophon

**Title:** Gender and Climate Change Discourse in Uganda:  
*Insights from women representatives of CSOs*

**Date:** 10-02-2023

**Word Count:** 23976

**Author:** Elena Georgiadi

**Student Number:**1061189

**Supervisor:** Dr. Kaufmann (Maria)

**Second Reader:** Dr. Aoki Inoue, C.Y. (Christina)

**Internship:** GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice

**Programme:** Enviroment and Society Studies.

**Specialization:** Global Enviroment and Sustainability



**Radboud University**



**To Irene**

## Acknowledgements

My interest for the intersection of gender and climate justice was sparked when I first got my hands around the book *“Women and environment in the Third World”* written in 1988, by Irene Dankelman. In 2020, I had the honor of meeting Irene in person after she willingly agreed to offer me the most valuable advice that led me choosing my career path and the topic of this research. Without Irene, this research would not have been possible and I would not be where I am today. She became my mentor and guided me through the most important steps of the research until she could no longer do so. It was my greatest honor to work with Irene and I devote my research to her. I promise to continue her legacy and fight for gender and climate justice in her honor.

I also would like to thank the internship organization GenderCC – Women for Climate Justice which hosted me and helped me reach all the wonderful CSOs in Uganda through their feminist, powerful and welcoming network. GenderCC and my colleagues opened the door for me to a whole new world that I can now proudly say now that I am part of. I would of course like to thank Maria, my academic supervisor for her help and availability.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents, Roula and Michalis, for their constant support. All my love goes to my sister, Sophia, who believes in me and helps me become a better person every day. Moreover, I am very thankful for the most amazing and empowering friend group I had the chance to be part of in Nijmegen. The support and great friendship of these inspiring women made life so beautiful and Nijmegen my home. Last but not least, I would like to thank Tatjana for everything because without her my journey would not have been the same.

Many thanks to the eco-feminist movement and to all the feminists who have paved the way for the younger generations who strive to make a change in this world. I am grateful for you and thank you for keep reminding us that climate justice cannot be achieved without gender justice.

I hope you enjoy reading!

## Abstract

Women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change compared to their male counterparts. This is a reality acknowledged by policymakers who produce the dominant discourse in Uganda. However, the “victimization discourse” that targets women and the feminization of vulnerability has been crucially criticized by a significant number of scholars who believe that gendered vulnerability to climate change is a result of complex factors which cannot be simplified. They argue against the generalization of women as a vulnerable group as manifestations of vulnerability to climate change vary in different ways based on gender and other intersecting identities. This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the dominant discourse of policymakers through the review of papers focusing on the analysis of climate change policies and in parallel, it seeks to shed light on the discourse of women representatives of CSOs in Uganda in order to map out the emergence of a counter-discourse in the country. This thesis uses a feminist critical and intersectional lens to further comprehend the synergies and mismatches of the two discourses in order to provide positive alternatives which go beyond the generalization of women as vulnerable by bringing into perspective the different sub-groups of women and the contextual conditions which shape vulnerabilities.

**Keywords:** feminist critical discourse analysis, gender, intersectionality, gendered vulnerability, climate change, climate policy documents, policymakers, civil society organizations, Uganda, patriarchy, feminism

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## List of Abbreviations

(F)CDA - (Feminist) Critical Discourse Analysis

CSOs - Civil Society Organizations

CSA - Climate Smart Agriculture

DNCO - Dunia Nzuri-Climate Outreach

GBV - Gender Based Violence

GEDA - Gender-Environment and Development Action

G4CA - Girls for Climate Action

NAPA - National Adaptation Plan of Action

NCCP - National Climate Change Policy

NAPE- National Association of Professional Environmentalists

NAWAD- National Association for Women's Action in Development

NDC - Intended Nationally Determined Contributions

NDP II - Second National Development Plan

NDP III - Third National Development Plan

SWAGEN - Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment

UNDP - United Nation Development Programme

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Glossary

**LGBTIQ+:** An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. The plus sign represents people with diverse SOGIESC who identify using other terms. In some contexts, LGB, LGBT or LGBTI are used to refer to particular populations. Additional characters may be added, such as A for asexual, agender or ally, 2S for Two-Spirit or P for pansexual. In many locations, the letter order varies, e.g., LGBTQI+ or GLBTQI+. SOGIESC-related acronyms are not static and continue to evolve over time. To ensure inclusivity and accuracy, they should be applied with careful consideration to the individuals or populations being referenced.

**Gender binary:** A traditionally Western concept classifying gender into two distinct, supposedly “opposite” forms, labeled men/boys and women/girls. While many cultures have historically recognized a variety of gender identities with corresponding roles in society, these identities may have been suppressed with the spread of Western colonization. As these traditions are rediscovered and Western understanding evolves, it is clear the gender binary fails to capture the nuances of lived gender experiences. The gender binary has also historically been used to oppress women and people with diverse gender identities, preventing them from exercising their human rights and participating as equals in society. Adherence to the gender binary in language (for example, by using male/female pronouns or only referencing men, boys, women and girls), data collection and services excludes other genders and limits our ability to provide appropriate and respectful assistance.

**Gender roles:** A set of societal norms dictating what types of behaviors are generally considered acceptable, appropriate or desirable for a person based on their actual sex or perceived sex or gender.

**Gender mainstreaming:** A strategy for assessing the gendered implications of any planned action, including policies, programming or legislation, and for ensuring the concerns and



experiences of people of all genders are an integral consideration in the design, formulation, implementation, analysis and monitoring of planned actions.

**Cis/cisgender:** A person whose gender identity and the sex they were assigned at birth align.

**Trans/transgender:** Terms used by some people whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans, transgender and non-binary are “umbrella terms” representing a variety of words that describe an internal sense of gender that differs from the sex assigned at birth and the gender attributed to the individual by society, whether that individual identifies as a man, a woman, simply “trans” or “transgender,” with another gender or with no gender.

**Non-Binary:** An adjective describing people whose gender identity falls outside the male-female binary. Non-binary is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of gender experiences, including people with a specific gender identity other than man or woman, people who identify as two or more genders (bigender or pan/polygender) and people who don’t identify with any gender (agender).

All terms are defined by UN Migration, SOGIESC.  
<https://www.unhcr.org/6163eb9c4.pdf>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Climate change presents disproportionate impacts and consequences in the Global South which reflects one of the greatest global inequalities (Brändlin, 2019). Countries that are least responsible for causing anthropogenic climate change face long-term climate uncertainty and are significantly vulnerable due to increasing trends in temperature and extreme weather conditions (Roy, 2018). The impending impacts of climate change exacerbate existing inequalities in several regions of the Global South and these climate-related repercussions burden on the livelihoods of people and severely affect their quality of life (Roy, 2018).

More specifically, African countries face a growing threat due to climate change resulting in increasing temperatures, accelerating sea-level rise and disaster events which contribute to food insecurity, population displacement and resource stress. The aforementioned climate change risks highlight the climate urgency in the continent for addressing impacts on human health and safety (UNFCCC, 2020).

Gender inequality and climate change are ultimately intertwined (UN Women, 2022). In the Global South, women are affected by climate-related disasters disproportionately compared to their male counterparts amplifying existing gender inequalities — a reality that stems from gender and socially constructed norms (Elasha, 2012; UN Women, 2022). In particular, women representing the vast majority of poor live under precarious conditions and face disparities in income, limited access to information and education. During climate disasters, socio-cultural and childcare responsibilities influence women's capability to migrate and they are often exposed to heightened domestic and sexual violence (Elasha, 2012).

Gender refers to the relations between women and men and in relation to adaptation, women develop different coping mechanisms to respond to climate change (Annecke, 2010). Due to gender inequalities, women and girls are more vulnerable to climate change, however scholarly research has argued that it is imperative to (re-)consider women as active agents that possess unique skills and knowledge and not display them simply as passive victims of climate change (Annecke, 2010; Pyburn & van Eerdewijk, 2021).

Dominant discourses in climate change adaptation research illustrate simplistic framings of women as vulnerable victims, particularly in the Global South (Pyburn & van Eerdewijk, 2021; Tschakert & Machado, 2012). Such narratives perpetuate negative stereotypes regarding the role of women in climate adaptation by centering on their greater vulnerability to climate change compared to men (Pyburn & van Eerdewijk, 2021). In climate adaptation research, the most frequent collocation of words is 'women' and 'vulnerable', which not only constructs a one-dimensional image for women but it also conceals the deep-rooted gendered inequalities that make them vulnerable in the first place (Tschakert & Machado, 2012).

## 1.2. Country Context: Uganda

Uganda is a landlocked country with a tropical climate which entails stable rainfall patterns, however in recent years, the country has experienced major climate projections and accompanying impacts (IOM, 2021). Changing temperature patterns involve an increase in the frequency of warm days and rainfalls have decreased and become less predictable and less evenly distributed (Ministry of Water and Environment, 2015). Lasting droughts threaten key crops and the security of livelihoods that depend on agricultural production which is the vast majority as roughly 72% of the population inhabits rural areas (Ministry of Water and Environment, 2015).

In Uganda, climate change is an added stressor for women as they face gendered and climate-related risks. According to United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), during the course of climate disasters and prolonged droughts in Uganda, women and girls maintain their household responsibilities and they make longer and more frequent journeys in search of food and water which expose them to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence (Gevers et al., 2020).

As aforementioned, climate change has severely affected Uganda and many regions have been hit by extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods and rising temperatures. This change in weather patterns calls for community-based mobilization and many non-profit organizations work on projects to address climate challenges which are organized to help local communities to adapt to climate change (Becktold, 2017). These organizations showcase empowering initiatives that engage with the voices of local communities to create resilience and they strive to create climate movement leaders (Derler, 2020; Becktold, 2017; Becktold, 2017). By establishing a thriving platform, women on the frontlines of climate change are empowered and the members of these organizations aspire to raise awareness for their issues (Derler, 2020).

Climate change is not gender neutral thus, in this research I draw on feminist arguments regarding gendered vulnerability and take a critical stance in regards to the simplistic framing of women as victims prevailing in climate policies in the Global South. I gain insights from women active in various organizations based in Uganda with different advocacy levels (UN, international, national, local) in an attempt to create a platform where women share their own perspective for themselves and the community of people they represent. I also try to investigate where do these women position themselves in the dominant discourse produced by policymakers. According to Butler et al. (2016), dominant ideas of vulnerability conceptualize and pre-assume paternalism as the site of agency and vulnerability is understood as the site of victimization and passivity. However, vulnerability could be seen as the very possibility of resistance as it unlocks new ways of resistance, such as grassroots modes of organization (Butler et al., 2016; Landau, 2020). The question raised here is *how do women involved in organizations in Uganda frame gender from their own personal perspective?*

The reason I chose to focus on Uganda as my case study is rooted in my personal interest in the advocacy work of these organizations and the empowering initiatives of the women involved, as I believe they are worth of more academic visibility. In order to achieve socially

just action, acknowledging the framings and centering the voices of marginalized voices is key (Nash et al., 2019). After observing their work online, I decided to conduct this research as an attempt for academic activism ([see section 5.1.](#)) and my initial plan was to use my privilege to create a platform within mainstream academia that is inclusive of all voices.

### 1.3. Research Problem

Adopting a feminist critical & intersectional lens when examining the dominant gender and climate change discourse by policymakers allows us to understand power imbalances and existing inequalities in language under patriarchal systems in the context of climate change. In return, by identifying the discourse of women that are active in various organizations and advocate at different levels for gender and climate justice, one can see how they interact or reject the discourse by policymakers.

To be more specific, the research problem appears to be the lack of academic representation of women involved in environmental organizations in Uganda. There is a paucity of research on the voice and agency of women, and there is a need to focus on the different ways women construct and/or negotiate their own identity (Nartey, 2020). Thus, this thesis argues that there is a need to map the gender and climate change discourses and shed light on how women themselves perceive their own identity, since the way these women view “*vulnerability*”, “*intersectionality*” and “*feminism*” lacks in literature, yet are the main concepts of this research.

## 2. Research Aim & Research Questions

Since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, gender mainstreaming has been adopted as the new standard for governments and organizations on a global level as an important pathway to gender equality (Lau et al., 2021). Numerous bodies and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have promoted gender equality as an essential requirement for climate-related projects and policies to be more efficient (Lau et al., 2021). Mainstreaming gender in climate policies is considered an important tool for the Ugandan government and there has been an attempt to understand the differentiated impacts of climate change to men and women (Ampaire et al., 2019).

Therefore, this research first aims to map the dominant gender and climate change discourse produced by policymakers in an overview of climate change policies in Uganda. Starting from a critical feminist standpoint, the researcher aspires to explore if an intersectional approach is taken into consideration within the policies in relation to gender as an attempt to gain a better understanding of the dominant discourse.

Second, the thesis also aims to identify the gender discourse of women involved in various organizations in Uganda and it specifically focuses on their response to and interaction with the dominant discourse by the policymakers. The overarching aim is to compare the two discourses and analyze any mismatches/differences and/or synergies. Depending on the

findings, the end goal of the thesis is to share recommendations with national policy makers in order to update the language in climate policies if it is deemed necessary.

The main research question of the research is the following:

***What are the gender and climate change discourses as produced by policymakers and women representatives of CSOs in Uganda through a critical feminist & intersectional lens?***

In order to answer the main research question, three sub-questions were formed:

- 1. How do policymakers frame the position of women and/or gender in climate change policy documents in the Ugandan context?*
- 2. How do women in CSOs interact with or counteract the policymaker's gender and climate change discourse?*
- 3. What are the mismatches and/or synergies of the two discourses?*

## **2.1. Delimitation of study**

For the purpose of delineating the depth of the research, it is essential to state that this research focuses on cis-women involved in organizations, yet the researcher argues for a need to move beyond the binary and explore the experiences of non-binary, transgender and gender non-conforming folx within the context of climate change in further research.

In addition, it is worth acknowledging that the women who are part of organizations speak from a certain position that represents their social, economic and educational capital. Current feminist theory supports that asymmetric relations are experienced in different and various ways by different groups of women (Butler, 1990).

Thus, the category of 'women' does not include all women universally as according to Butler (1990), current systems produce normative gender identities which are heterosexists and create further discrimination for women that do not fall under the category of a heterosexual woman (e.g., lesbians, transgender women). It is imperative to avoid the perpetuation of a narrative that supports the sameness of all women by positioning white women as representatives of the universal experiences of women including non-white, non-western, queer, women with disabilities and poor women.

It is therefore important to acknowledge the differences among women and the fact that certain groups are subjected to sexism in different ways and degrees, thus this research adopts a perspective that is **comparative** and not **universalizing**. In order to make the discourse more inclusive, further research should be conducted that includes the voices of women involved in organizations whose work is based on a community and local level and of particular importance are women who are in the frontline of climate change.

Building on that, the research focuses predominately on the discourses which are visible at national level. However, the gender and climate change discourse of the women in organizations is likely to also be more locally-based or community-based, yet the one produced

by policymakers is evidently produced nationally and therefore, it is regarded as the hegemonic/dominant discourse due to its influence in the national political arena.

### 3. Societal & Scientific Relevance

Climate justice is widely recognized by scholars as an essential interlinkage to gender justice (UN Women, 2020). At the Bali Conference in 2007, feminists lobbied for gender-equality in the context of climate change with the slogan 'No climate justice without gender justice' (Terry, 2009). The conference was seen as a breakthrough for gender advocates and gender-specific dimensions in climate policies are increasingly being discussed ever since (Gender CC Network, 2008). The rights of women and girls ought to be at the center of climate action and organizations have taken this task by being proactive in creating spaces to promote the voices of those on the frontlines.

This research is conducted in collaboration with GenderCC which after its formal formation in 2008, has grown as a community and is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the gender and climate change field. The thesis is part of my internship at the Berlin-based organization. GenderCC as a network organization advocates for societal transformation and it views gender mainstreaming as insufficient. Thus, the findings of the research will be utilized to potentially gain a better understanding of the self-identity and voices of women in Uganda and they will be communicated with the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development in Uganda. In addition, the findings of the research were requested and will become available to all the organizations interviewed to help with their advocacy work. Therefore, all the useful insights could potentially contribute to a more equitable representation of gender and contribute to one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which links climate and gender justice (Wedeman & Petruney, 2019).

What is mentioned above refers to the **societal relevance** of the thesis, since it acknowledges the equitable and proper representation of women in climate discussions as of high importance and part of it is the acknowledgment of their agency and role in climate adaptation. Disregarding gender inequalities within the framework of climate justice perpetuates the stereotypical view of climate change as a masculine field dominated by academia and reflects a misrepresentation of gender specific power dynamics (Puentes, 2020).

Women and girls in patriarchal societies in the Global South are socially and structurally marginalized which leaves them with little decision-making power (Dankelman et al., 2008; Khalil et al., 2019). Since there is no academic literature regarding the perspectives of women involved in organizations in Uganda, this research's findings will contribute to a body of literature that is not sufficiently explored. It will also conceptually contribute to the mismatches/overlaps between the two discourses and these all constitute its **scientific relevance**.

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1. The link between Gender and Climate Change

Gender as defined by Dankelman (2012), is *“a manifestation of the dynamic and context specific relationships between men and women”* (p. 10). As a concept is viewed as an ideological and social construct which produces social differences that are specific to the role division between males and females (Dankelman, 2012). To see how gender is linked to climate change, it is important to dive into literature that relates to various topics.

#### 4.1.1 Gender roles and climate change

According to UNFCCC (2021), when talking about gender the conversation is often limited to facts regarding gendered vulnerability, however the connection between gender and climate change entails more depth. Women are disproportionately affected compared to men; however, the experiences of individuals depend on several factors which are determined by social norms and societal expectations (UNFCCC, 2021). Reducing the conversation to something that only concerns countries in the Global South should be avoided because gender norms exist everywhere and have an impact on everyone (GenderCC, 2021). This means that even though this research focuses on Uganda, other research elsewhere has found that gender norms also affect women and men in cities in the Global North. To be more specific, research showed that during hurricanes in the US, men experience a higher death rate compared to women which can be explained by men’s risky behavior and the fact that they are represented more in emergency response jobs (WEDO, 2020). However, gendered factors lead to differentiated experiences during climate disasters because of the different levels of preparedness – men tend to be more prepared than women (WEDO, 2020).

Gender roles are influenced by people’s access to resources, capital, land and societal expectations (UNFCCC, 2021). Research conducted in Tanzania, showed that the marital status of women can affect their access to climate information resulting to unmarried or widowed women being able to be environmentally informed compared to married women (Van Aelst & Holvoet, 2016). Therefore, essentializing women as one group can have negative policy impacts even though their initial positive intentions (GenderrCC, 2021).

Gender inequality plays a significant role when discussing the climate and gender nexus. Research in Uganda, has shown that climate change fuels gender-based violence (GBV). In times of climate crisis like droughts, women and girls are exposed to sexual assault because they need to make longer journeys in search of food and water (Gevers et al., 2020). However, violence is not a result of climate change alone – structural issues such as gender norms and laws lead to an increased risk of GBV ((Castañeda Carney et al., 2020; GenderCC, 2021).

### 4.2. Concepts and Definitions: Vulnerability and intersectionality

#### 4.2.1. Vulnerability

Arora-Johnson (2011) in research on climate change discourses, states that two viewpoints are prevalent in climate policies and they position women as either “virtuous” or “vulnerable”. The scholar argues that a separation is needed between being poor and being woman as this generalization leads to the correlation of poverty with vulnerability. Vulnerability is multifaceted and is generated by different processes. Arguments about women’s vulnerability in the Global South keeps women on the climate change map, yet it also works for the status quo (Arora-Johnson, 2011). Arora-Johnson (2011), argues that gender bias in the position of women leads to the deflection of attention from women’s unequal positions in decision-making and climate change discourses can contribute to the increase of their responsibilities and exacerbate existing inequalities.

Extensive research has shown that women in the Global South are particularly susceptible to climate change and their vulnerability is attributed to gender and social norms (Dankelman, 2010). A significant body of literature on gender and climate change in Uganda, shows that women experience climate change differently compared to men due to limited access and control over natural resources resulting from structural inequalities (Dankelman & Jansen, 2010; Carr & Thompson, 2014). In addition, research in nine countries in East and West Africa has shown that men have more land control compared to women, and often the latter social group struggles with insecure tenure due to poor land quality (Pérez et al. 2015). However, many critical scholars have criticized the legitimacy of the binary male-female concept in vulnerability research related to climate change as it fails to fully acknowledge power relations that have been developed within the respective social contexts (Tschakert & Machado, 2012; Arora-Jonsson 2011; Carr & Thompson, 2014).

According to the IPCC report (2001), vulnerability is a function of exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity. A study regarding the gender differentiated vulnerability to climate change in Eastern Uganda confirmed that female-headed households are more vulnerable, however it showed that disparity in adaptive capacity was a more prominent cause of vulnerability differences between female and male-headed households than sensitivity or exposure (Balikoowa et al., 2019). The difference in vulnerability to climate change between male and female-headed households which contradicted what available literature suggested and which overemphasized the vulnerability of women to climate change (Balikoowa et al., 2019). They concluded by suggesting that gender may not be the best dimension to assess differences in vulnerability to climate change and proposed further intersectional studies to capture how gender interacts with other dimensions e.g., age, ethnicity, religion which also contribute to vulnerability outcomes. Empirically proven, the generalization of women as more vulnerable may not exist universally, therefore the view that climate vulnerability is gender-linked should be re-assessed To elaborate on that, since gender norms and roles vary from place to place, linking gender to climate vulnerability cannot be sufficiently proven on a universal standard (Balikoowa et al., 2019).

#### 4.2.2. Intersectionality

A significant number of critical feminist scholars in an attempt to gain a comprehensive understanding of gender in climate change research has argued the importance of an



**intersectional approach** in research (Djouidi et. al., 2016, Nightingale 2011; Kaijser & Kronsell 2014). Research by Djouidi et. al. (2016) on how gender is framed in 41 papers on climate change adaptation through an intersectional analysis argues that the adoption of an intersectional lens provides the advantage of an in-depth understanding of gender. However, the scholars note that in climate change research, gender is most often seen as a dichotomy between men and women and that depicts the “**feminization of vulnerability**” which is reinforced in those studies. What is meant by this term is that vulnerability is most often directly linked to women which reinforces the victimization discourse in climate change studies (Djouidi et al., 2016). The differential impacts of climate change can be better understood through the adoption of intersectionality in research as this approach helps the scholar to gain a grasp of the complex power dynamics through the reveal of women’s agency and other emancipatory pathways related to gender (Djouidi et. al., 2016).

In a similar vein, Kaijser & Kronsell (2014) claim that an intersectional approach shows that individuals and groups related to climate change in diverse ways as a result of their situatedness in power structures and thus, vulnerability is context specific. Intersectionality helps to avoid essentialization as it allows to create solidarity and agency across and beyond social categorizations and the scholars, make sure of intersectionality as a tool for critical thinking (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014).

In recent years, academics have shifted their focus to gendered agency, skills, voices as an attempt to correct the universal binary between masculine knowledge and vulnerability of impoverished women. There has been an attempt to move beyond the positioning of women as inherent victims of climate change, yet the authors argue that this matter should be approached in a careful manner as it runs the risk of another extreme which is the simplistic portrayal of women as virtuous (Tschakert & Machado, 2012; Arora-Jonsson 2011).

#### 4.2.3. Collective forms of organization: the role of women

Dankelman & Davidson (2013), prompt to describe the collective efforts of women to organize themselves and advance the argument for listening to what women have to say instead of describing them as victims of an environmental crisis. This study shows that women create forums for themselves and are organized on a grassroots level and within international networks. It is argued that organizing gives women collective power to fight for collective objectives (Dankelman & Davidson, 2013). This relates to Butler’s argument regarding vulnerability which leads to women searching for alternative resources of self-empowerment and organizing on grassroots level as a form of resistance (Butler et al., 2016).

Research conducted in Bangladesh on the contribution of women in grassroots innovation for climate change adaptation, showed that the generalization of coastal women in developing contexts as passive victims of climate change was challenged (Khalil et al., 2019). Women organize themselves on community level based on social capital and trust and mobilize local knowledge and their role as change agents is a more accurate representation of the collective work (Khalil et al., 2019). This finding could be relevant to the social context of Uganda, however there is no relevant research done on women involved in organizations.

A study on the role of women in disaster resilience has shown that the involvement of women in community-based organizations and NGOs contributes to female-empowerment (Alam &

Rahman, 2017). That occurs because women get the opportunity to adopt resilient livelihoods and create a productive role for themselves which then can be seen as an asset in community resilience through the contribution of their unique knowledge and experience (Alam & Rahman, 2017).

The role of women in organizations is essential because a pathway often chose to build resilience for themselves and on behalf of other women. Feminist activism creates coalitions, partnerships and alliances between women and organizations and it is important because it can lead to long-term change and challenge inequalities embedded in societal structures (Smyth & Sweetman, 2015). In the same vein, a research report published in 2014 on the experiences of women in organizations in the context of food insecurity shows that the women interviewed supported that there is a need to address gender inequalities that contribute to women's vulnerability and move beyond the status quo (Ravon, 2014).

## 5. Theoretical Framework

### 5.1. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis is at the nexus of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and feminist studies and emphasizes how power and discourse sustains hierarchically gendered social arrangements. Discourse is defined as "*categorizations and concepts that give meaning to physical phenomena and social realities*" (Hajer, 1995, p.44; Foucault, 1972, p. 117). Feminist CDA is aspired to foster social emancipation and transformation of gender and focuses on the discursive dimensions of social (in)justice (Lazar, 2007). It can be used both as a theoretical and methodological framework and in this thesis FCDA is the basis of theoretical assumptions around gender and discourse.

The aim of feminist CDA is to indicate the complex, (un)subtle ways that gendered assumptions and power relations are discursively produced, sustained or challenged in different contexts and communities (Lazar, 2007). Critical Discourse does use discourse analytical methods, however it also draws from Critical Social Theory. What brings together critical discourse theorists is the critique of dominant discourses that have an impact of inequalities and injustices in contemporary society (Renkema, 2009). More specifically, since the 1980s, feminists pointed out that addressing women and men in universal terms can be problematic as gender intersects with other social categories including age, sexuality, ethnicity and social class (Lazar, 2007). This thesis is interested in power, framings and gender discourses, thus a feminist perspective in CDA was deemed the most appropriate method of analysis.

One might ask why there is a need to put a feminist label in CDA? It is worth noting that not all studies focusing on gender take a feminist critical stance as FCDA aims to demystify the intercorrelation of variables, that of gender, power and ideology in discourse (Lazar, 2007). The work of Lazar (2007) shows that feminist CDA critiques a gender based patriarchal ideology which creates hierarchical relations between men and women by assigning to the latter an inferior position in the periphery.

Van Dijk (2004), another critical analyst, focuses on the social variables of context, power and ideology. In this thesis, one of the most relevant concepts is *ideology* which is defined as a system of ideas or belief systems. They are socially shared by members of a specific group (e.g., feminists, conservatives, racists, etc) and they do not consist of private or personal ideologies. In turn, ideologies consist of social representations that define the self-image of a group and organize its identity, actions, norms and values in relation to other groups (Van Dijk, 2004). They carry specific cultural values that are relevant to the group such as freedom, justice and equality among others and are relatively stable. Ideologies are socially shared, yet not all members carry equally strong feelings about them and there are differences of expertise in a group.

The representations of a group are the basis of discourse and context has a major role as it can potentially create *biased discourses*. According to Van Dijk (2004), an example of a biased discourse would be the way some men speak to or about women as it depends on the way women are represented in general thus their attitude might be ideologically biased. Ideologies could create *ingroup* and *outgroup polarization* which could be suggested by pronouns such as us and them, our people or those people which therefore creates a *positive self-presentation* and *negative other-presentation* (Van Dijk, 2004). Ideologies are the basis of discourse and thus, it is a concept relevant when trying to map the gender discourses in Uganda. More specifically, it is of great interest to see whether a negative other-representation is constructed in regards to women affected by climate change when looking at the discourse of policymakers. Also, another possible assumption would be the creation of polarization between women in organizations and policymakers.

According to Van Dijk (2004), a group's ideology becomes dominant as it gradually gets accepted by an entire community. In connection to this study, international or national ideas regarding gender are likely to have influenced the views of national policymakers and therefore it is possible to have been integrated into local policy documents. This could have an impact on people that construct a certain idea about themselves depending on how policymakers represent them in official documents (Zaman, 2021). Thus, this theory is particularly helpful when looking to answer the second and third sub-question of the thesis, as they both aim to understand if women indeed perceive themselves as vulnerable or if they have distanced themselves from this framing. Foucault (1970) argued that the people who are normally spoken for and spoken about, may start to speak for themselves which leads to the development of a *counter-discourse*, as an act of resistance to power oppressing them. Thus, the research tries to investigate whether that is the case in Uganda.

Gender is considered an *ideological structure* as it divides people into men and women and it is hegemonic as it appears to be naturally acceptable to most in a society (Lazar, 2007). For example, in certain contexts women are assumed to be the natural caregivers and men's role is prominent outside the household thus the public domain is primarily a men's domain. This taken-for-grantedness and normalcy of a patriarchal gender ideology leads to power differentials and inequality. However, gender ideology is not absolute and alternative discourses could potentially pose challenges to the gender structure (Lazar, 2007).

The main concern of FCDA is the understanding of discursive challenges which are posed on the status quo. Power relations are complex and gender asymmetry take subtle or indirect forms and in contemporary times. In other words, sexism might seem to relate to progressive

egalitarian values, thus a closer analysis of the discourse is needed to unfold these incidents. Foucault (1977) showed that modern *power* is discursive in nature and Bourdieu (1991), supported that its effectiveness is based on the internalization of gendered norms which is identified as routine acts in text and talk in everyday life. This makes modern power 'invisible' and legitimizes it as something natural (Bourdieu, 1991). This relates to the discourse of policymakers since dominant discourses carry more power and influence as they are widely accepted.

As mentioned, in some cases, power relations and dominance are discursively challenged and counter-resisted by disadvantaged groups (Ehrlich et al., 2017). However, dominant groups may also engage with a counter-discourse. According to FCDA, the diversity that exists among men and women means that one should avoid making dichotomic assumptions or assume the uniformity of the sexes (Ehrlich et al., 2017).

In addition, concepts such as *manipulation* and *power* are crucial in CDA and they require further analysis. Manipulation refers to communicative and symbolic forms of manipulation that have discursive influence and it is a typical observer's category and not a participant category (Van Dijk, 2004). It involves the abuse of power, which in other words is called domination. The manipulation recipients are assigned a more passive role and this has a negative consequence if the victims of manipulation do not understand the full consequences of the manipulator. Dominant groups re-produce their power through influencing the information, knowledge and beliefs of recipients. One of the most common strategies is generalization which manipulates the social representations of specific groups (Van Dijk, 2004). The word 'manipulation' holds a strong meaning and calling a group of people 'manipulators' is a severe accusation; thus, this research handles the matter carefully and in a respectful manner in order to see if this concept is relevant in the Ugandan context.

To help maintain a specific focus while conducting this research, I deemed appropriate to adopt another theory in order to have certain questions that provide guidance and direction. According to Therborn (1982), there are three ideological interpellations: an ontological, normative and strategic layer. The ontological layer refers to what is real, or in other words, it defines how a phenomenon is considered in the world. The normative layer, illustrates the different actors' preferences and values and the last layer; the strategic one refers to which policies are realistic and feasible. Depending on these layers, I formed some guiding questions that are analyzed in a later section (see 5.3. operationalization). These questions have as their basis the rationale and principles of FCDA (see 5.1.1.), and all the main concepts mentioned in the theory section are taken into consideration.

To sum up, FCDA adopts a radical emancipatory agenda which means that the research itself is praxis-oriented. According to Lazar (2007), critical praxis-oriented research does not pretend to take a neutral stance, therefore the work of critical academic feminists can be seen as **academic activism**.

### 5.1.1. The rationale and principles of FCDA

The practice of FCDA demonstrates a strong interest in a critical focus on reflexivity. Critical feminists consider critical self-reflexivity and institutional forms of reflexivity, an important aspect of their analysis (Lazar, 2007). The latter area of interest of FCDA focuses on progressive institutional practices that make strategic use of feminism by appropriating its values for political and commercial gain. This particular strategy is adopted by governments and other institutions which engage superficially with progressive (feminist / anti-racist / anti-homophobic) discourses with the mere aim of presenting a distractive and enlightened self-image (Lazar, 2007).

As previously mentioned, critical feminists should remain engaged with self-reflexivity of their own positionality and practices (Lazar, 2007). It is imperative to acknowledge the flaws of classical liberal notions of equality and freedom which imply that women should be the *'same as men'* or it assumes the sameness of all women. Therefore, feminist scholars should be mindful of that and avoid the perpetuation of the mainstream neo-liberal thinking (Lazar, 2007).

The inclusion of diversity and equitable representation is an issue where feminist critical scholars have assigned their reflexive attention to in recent years. However, two points as Lazar (2007) indicated should be critically considered in further research. The first one is the positionality of scholars when researching a community that is not one's own and is traditionally considered non-privileged or subaltern. The researcher should also explicitly state their positionality and personal identity in order to avoid claiming authoritative knowledge about communities in the south, which is the case of this thesis.

The researcher remained in close contact throughout the development of the thesis with Irene Dankelman who is a former lecturer at the Radboud University with a vast experience in the area of gender and climate change and has advised on these themes in many countries and regions on a global level. Irene helped me with the topic of the research, warned me about my position and gave me advice. More specifically, the research questions were developed with her help, and she also gave me feedback before the collection of the data. The interview guide was approved by her, before I proceeded with the interviews. In addition, we met several times for me to report my progress and receive further advice from her.

### 5.2. Intersectionality

Intersectionality as a term was coined in 1989 by American scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in the field of critical race theory. According to an intersectionality perspective, human beings lead multidimensional and complex lives and cannot be assigned to single categories as they are outcomes of different social locations (such as ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age, etc.) power relations and experiences. Hankivsky (2014) defines intersectionality as;

*" (...) an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g. 'race'/ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography,*

*age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media).” (Hankivsky, 2014, p.2).*

Adopting an intersectional lens means that the researcher looks at the gender and climate change nexus in a more complex analysis and moves beyond the treatment of gender as a binary where men and women are homogenous and universal groups/categories (Hankivsky, 2014). Intersectionality enables researchers to be critical towards a ‘one-size-fits all’ approach and understand the complexity of human lives and the gendered impacts of climate change in an intersectional manner (Hankivsky, 2014).

The intersectional theory is adopted as the theoretical cornerstone of the thesis. This theory is of particular interest because intersectionality helps to uncover explicit or implicit assumptions about certain social categories, considers which social categories are absent and if there any aspects of identity neglected or deemed insignificant (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2013). According to Kaijser and Kronsell (2013), gender is often considered in climate policies, yet women are only mentioned as a vulnerable group which categorizes the people who fall under this group in deterministic and simplified terms.

### 5.3. Operationalization

The theoretical framework of the research can be viewed as the basis for the conceptual model. In order to offer an explanation for all the concepts operationalized in the model itself, I deem important to offer a definition for the word *ideology*. As mentioned in the theory section of the thesis, Van Dijk (2004) defines ideology as the basis of discourse. Ideologies are socially shared among the members of a group, however not everyone is likely to share the same intensity of feelings for an ideology and the beliefs/values that accompany it.

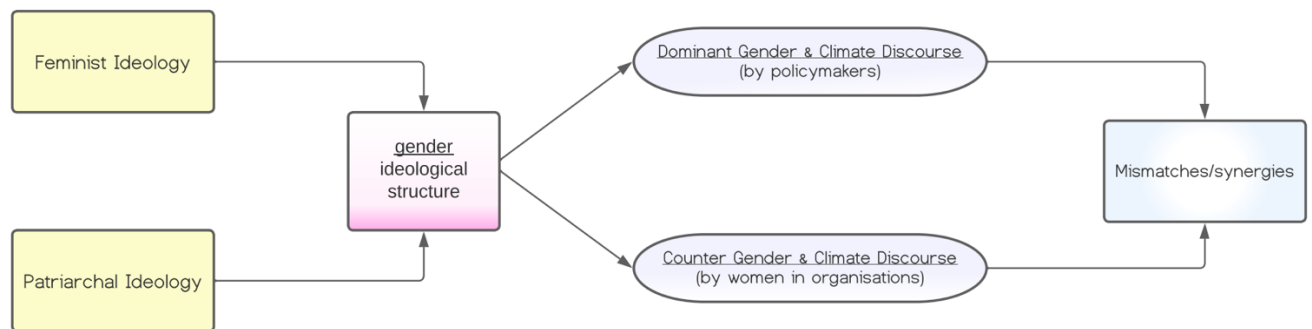
In connection to this study, it is assumed that the most prominent ideologies are the feminist ideology that is mainly connected to the gender discourse of women in organizations whereas, the patriarchal ideology predominantly influences the policymaker’s discourse. International or national ideas regarding gender and women rooted in the aforementioned ideology are in line with the status quo and it is assumed that they have become widely accepted as their influence is visibly in the discourse produced by policymakers in policy documents.

In the model, the gender discourse of women in organizations is referred to as a counter discourse as it is assumed that women have empowered themselves as an act of resistance to the power oppressing them. It is important to note that dominant groups, which in this case are policymakers is possible to engage with a counter discourse. The purpose of FCDA is to *avoid dichotomic divisions of men/women* and to shed light on the diversity existing within a social category.

Gender is considered an *ideological structure* according to Lazar (2007), and depending on the context certain assumptions regarding men/women and their gender roles are assigned to them. However, it is important to keep in mind that gender ideology is not absolute and

alternative/counter discourses could potentially challenge the gender structure. That could happen from both discourses identified in this research.

Lastly, as seen in the model the gender discourses lead to differences in gender narratives and the portrayal of women in discourse within the climate change adaptation context.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model

As aforementioned, a set of guiding questions which relate to the three layers developed by Therborn (1982) are included in the table below. These questions serve as the basis for the interview questions included in the interview guide and as a direction to later identify overlaps and mismatches between the two discourses.

It is important to note that during the interviews, explanatory questions regarding concepts important to the research were asked (see ontological layer in **table 2.**). After attending the United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference in Bonn in June 2022 as an observer from GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice, and interacting with various women from different civil society groups working on gender and climate change, I made the realization that everyone has a different perception on what is feminism, patriarchy, gender, intersectionality, and vulnerability, hence the set of questions under the ontological layer.

Ontological	Normative	Strategic
How do you define gender?	Are women considered vulnerable? By whom and why?	What are the causes of gendered vulnerability?
How do you define feminism?	Are there any observable assumptions regarding women?	How is gendered vulnerability challenged?
How do you define patriarchy?	Do you practice intersectionality? If so, why?	What are the advantages or disadvantages of an intersectional approach?
How do you define intersectionality?	Are there any aspects of women's identity which are neglected or deemed insignificant?	How are potential barriers of intersectionality addressed?
How is patriarchy experienced in Uganda?		

*Table 1. Questions based on the 3 layers by Therborn (1982).*

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1. Research Design & Research Strategy

In this section the research design and research strategy is explained in detail. The research strategy of a thesis is an essential part as it is defined as the overall design of a research, and based on that, the researcher follows a certain procedure concerning the research methods which are used to gather and analyze data (van Thiel, 2015). The research problem and the body of existing literature influences the design of a research and depending on these two aspects the researcher proceeds to choose the kind of methods and techniques that are suitable in order to answer the research questions (van Thiel, 2015). However, other significant factors may influence the researcher which relate to more practical matters (e.g., financial issues or the expertise of the researcher). Overall, there are four research strategies; experiment, survey, case study and desk research (van Thiel, 2015).



The strategy of this research is designed as such depending on several reasons. First, the researcher has opted to do desk research, which therefore means that the research relies on existing and previous research to support the thesis. In other words, the research will proceed in doing content analysis of climate change policies or consult existing literature in Uganda to assess the role of gender/women. This decision is influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic which interferes with the initial plan of doing fieldwork in Uganda. However, this research cannot be supported merely by existing data, therefore the researcher combines the method of content analysis with semi-structured interviews to sufficiently answer the research questions. In addition, the design of the research is organized in that way as the research itself was conducted as part of an internship position.

The research philosophy of the thesis is *critical theory* as it focuses on power relations and critiques assumptions (Moon & Blackman, 2014). The research and theory that the thesis is based on is used to understand the gender discourses in Uganda in the climate domain and shed light on the discourse of women through their point of view and own voice. Therefore, with emphasis on feminism and emancipatory agenda, this research views patriarchal assumptions embedded in the world and aims to give space on individuals and/or groups of women that should be empowered within academic literature.

## 6.2. Research Methods of Data Collection

The research was conducted through qualitative methods by means of a *desk study* to collect secondary or pre-existing data, in combination with *semi-structured* interviews to gather primary data, as mentioned above. Given the COVID-19 context and travel restrictions, all interviews were held online on Zoom.

Here, the data collection methods are presented. In the following sub-sections, I elaborate on how I collected data to construct the discourses of policymakers and women involved in environmental organizations in detail.

### Policymakers/National Discourse

To construct the policymakers/national discourse on the gender and climate change nexus, I focused on climate change policy documents in Uganda and existing literature analyzing the official documents. As highlighted above, opting for a desk study has the advantage of making use of existing data that can enrich the research itself. According to Jesson et. al., (2011), a traditional literature review is “*a re-view of something that has been written*” (p. 9), however, a systematic literature review follows a certain method and the steps are listed below:

1. Define a research question
2. Design a plan
3. Search for literature
4. Apply exclusion and inclusion criteria
5. Apply quality assessment
6. Synthesis

The authors emphasize that a traditional literature review is possible to follow a systematic approach, however a systematic review needs to address the six steps (Jesson et. al., 2011). In this research, I opted for a systematic review since I aim to summarize all available academic evidence related to the policymakers' discourse, which is one particular research topic. Traditional reviews provide a broad overview of a research topic and they do not appear to be specific enough, and suitable for the research question of this thesis. Systematic reviews on the other hand, are detailed with specific inclusion and exclusion criteria (Demeyin, 2018).

In this paragraph I explain how I conducted a systematic review. Defining the research question was influenced by my personal interest to interact with women who have an active role in climate change adaptation, and it was necessary in order to understand if a counter discourse has been truly contracted to identify first the discourse by policymakers. Therefore, I conducted keyword research which included: "Gender OR Women AND Climate Change AND Uganda", "Climate Change Policies AND Uganda", "Climate Change Policies AND Gender OR Women AND Uganda", "Climate Change Policies AND Gender OR Women AND Africa". The keyword research makes clear what my exclusion and inclusion criteria are and important to note that all the articles collected were written within the last 15 years, therefore from the year 2007 onwards. In addition, snowballing as a commonly employed sampling method was used to identify important articles relevant to the discourse. Furthermore, the databases used to collect articles are: Google Scholar, RUQUEST and GreenFile. It must be noted, that during the collection, I read the full policy documents and had an overview of what is written in order to have a better representation of the findings included in the articles. These primary efforts, enabled me to identify existing research on climate change documents needed for the literature review, which were used as background information (van Thiel, 2014).

### **Women representatives of CSOs' Discourse**

In regards to the organizations, the selection was based upon specific criteria. The organizations interviewed are all based in Uganda, and the interviewees identify as women. They all operate on different levels (local, national, UN) and all organizations have an environmental focus. After conducting each interview, I asked for recommendations and that is how I came into contact with some of the organizations. Overall, these are the most prominent and active climate organizations with a gender perspective in the country. In the table below, one can find the name of organizations that were interviewed and other relevant information:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	TYPE	NAME OF INTERVIEWEES	DATE OF INTERVIEW
GIRLS FOR CLIMATE ACTION (G4CA)	NGO	JOANITA BABIRYE CO-FUNDER	JULY 22, 2022
DUNIA NZURI-CLIMATE OUTREACH (DNCO)	NETWORK ORGANISATION	MIRIAM TALWISA NATIONAL COORDINATOR	JULY 24, 2022
SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE AND ENVIROMENT (SWAGEN)	GRASSROOTS ORGANISATION	GERTRUDE KABUSIMBI KENYANGI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	JULY 25, 2022
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S ACTION IN DEVELOPMENT (NAWAD)	VOLUNTARY WOMEN'S NGO	CHRISTINE BWAILISA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	JULY 30, 2022
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ENVIROMENTALISTS (NAPE)	ACTION ORGANISATION	SOSTINE NAMANYA GENDER AND FOOD SECUTIRY OFFICER	AUGUST 5, 2022
GENDER-ENVIROMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ACTION (GEDA)	NOT FOR PROFIT DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION	BIHUNIRWA MEDIUS MANAGING DIRECTOR	AUGUST 6, 2022

**Table 2.** Selection of Organizations

### 6.3. Data analysis

For the analysis of data collected, a deductive approach was used. The starting point of the research is a broad overview of the dominant discourse and then it seeks to understand whether a counter discourse has been produced by the very own voices of women involved in organizations and identify the mismatches and/or synergies of the two discourses. Therefore, the aim is to narrow the topic to a specific conclusion. The method of the research is Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), which is used to uncover patriarchal structures in discourse. This is also combined with the use of an intersectional lens, which offers the very basis of the analysis.

The content of the related articles that have focused on the analysis of climate policies was analyzed through an extensive literature review. This helped me identity the gender and climate discourse of policymakers in policy documents and collect the findings of other researchers in order to make a conclusion and see if there is an agreed consensus. The articles were thoroughly read, and specific focus was of course given on the terms, “gender” and “women”. The first step however, was to identify all relevant policies in order to gain a deeper understanding of the policy framework in Uganda and this was deemed a necessary and then collect findings through the data analysis which were gender specific.

The data analysis of the transcripts of semi-structured interviews was performed through a coding software called ATLAS.ti. The [interview guide](#) is part of this document and the transcripts can be found in the ATLAS.ti bundle. To construct the discourse of women active in CSOs two rounds of coding were followed. During the first round, important themes were identified to make the data analysis clear and specific codes were assigned, as well as, quotes were identified. In [Step 2](#), one can see the sub-topics/themes which emerged. While doing this

process, I also kept memos which helped me make sense, and keep track while later writing down my data. During the second round, I revised all the codes and unnecessary ones were deleted. All the codes which remained, were assigned to sub-groups. The [sub-groups](#) of codes can be seen at the end of the thesis and more analytically, in the ATLAS.ti bundle.

#### 6.3.1. Validity

According to Yin (2003), one has to distinguish between internal and external validity. Internal validity relates to the extent to which the findings reflect reality and are shaped by the respondents without the interference of the bias of the researcher. To enhance the internal validity of the research, the researcher focuses on both primary and secondary data by deriving them through interview and document analysis as this leads to data triangulation. In addition, external validity relates to the generalizability of the research.

#### 6.3.2. Reliability

In respect to reliability, Yin (2003) defines it as the way in which the findings of the research can be reproduced and are independent of biases and/or mistakes. To ensure the reliability of the research, the analysis of the transcripts were performed in a careful manner and the interview guides, notes and transcripts are provided in order to enhance the transparency of the research process.

### 6.4. Ethical Considerations

The main ethical consideration of the researcher of this particular thesis is the avoidance of any potential interference of certain biases that one might carry when conducting critical research. The researcher respects and fully acknowledges the need for honesty, transparency and confidentiality in research. The respondents carry the right to remain anonymous and withdraw at any stage if they wish to, and their willingness to participate is based on informed consent. In addition, revealing the privilege and identity of the researcher is of paramount importance as these elements are both likely to influence the analysis of the data. However, as previously mentioned, in order to maintain a self-reflective position, the research consulted a local researcher and a renowned academic in the field of gender and climate change.

#### 6.4.1. Positionality of the Researcher

As the researcher of this thesis, I deem necessary to state my positionality and personal identity. I am a white and queer female-presenting person and I conducted this research while being in my mid-20s and my pronouns are she/they. I am able-bodied and I come from a middle-class Greek family. My background studies are in Social and Cultural Anthropology and Environmental Studies. I carry a strong interest in intersectionality, queer and gender studies and I am a climate activist.

## 7. Findings

### 7.1. Step 1: Policymakers' Climate & Gender Discourse

#### 7.1.1. The Climate Change Policy Framework

The **National Climate Change Policy (NCCP)** of Uganda was approved in 2015 and it is the most relevant document regarding climate change research as it provides the guiding framework for climate action in the country. It highlights developing capacities and financial mechanisms and other tools to respond to climate change (Bamanyaki, 2020).

In addition, **Uganda's Vision 2040** emphasizes the negative effects that climate change has on Uganda's economy and aims to provide for the development of appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in all sectors. The **Second National Development Plan (NDP II)** offers direction for key sectors in accordance with Vision 2040 and the **Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy 2017/18 – 2030/31** ensures that the goals of NDP II and Vision 2040 are achieved sustainably (Bamanyaki, 2020). The Uganda Green Growth Strategy specifically says that women are to fill 75% of new green jobs in the agricultural sector and 70% in natural resource management (Willman & Arnold, 2022).

It is important to note that Uganda was the first country to sign the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Partnership Plan in 2018 in order to meet the obligations which were laid down with the Paris Agreement indicating a significant reduction of national greenhouse gas emissions to adapt to climate change (Bamanyaki, 2020). This makes clear that the Government of Uganda acknowledges the need to address climate change and is willing to make the effort to achieve sustainable development and green growth while meeting the Paris Agreement commitments (UNDP, 2020). These efforts can be seen in the aforementioned policy documents which provide an overview of the aims, goals and strategies of the Republic of Uganda.

In Uganda, there is a **Gender Policy** that was approved in 2007 and it provides the foundation of clear directives for the Ministry of Gender, Labor and all other Ministries to mainstream gender in their activities and policies. Gender mainstreaming however, has become a shared responsibility where no clear structures are set which would monitor its correct implementation (Acosta et.al., 2015). As Pollack and Hafner-Burton (quoted in Acosta et.al., 2015) stated:

"If gender is everybody's responsibility in general, then it's nobody's responsibility in particular".

The country also has a **Land Policy** (2013) which might not seem directly related to climate change, however its direct connection will become clear later on while unravelling all the findings of this research. The Land Policy grants men and women *equal* rights to both sexes to own and (co-own) land.

In the **Third National Development Plan (NDPIII)**, the government of Uganda aims to reduce the share of the population dependent on subsistence agriculture as a main source of

livelihood from 69% to 55%, an ambition goal with important and positive impacts for the environment (Willman & Arnold, 2022). However, that happened before the outburst of COVID-19 which made Uganda de-prioritize the transition out of subsistence agriculture to a more sustainable way of living including sustainable jobs and sectors. According to a paper, the World Bank supports these efforts and believes that by only empowering women a just transition can be achieved (Willman & Arnold, 2022).

In addition, the **National Adaptation Plan of Action** (NAPA) was submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2007 and it identifies nine adaptation priority areas. These include: community tree growing, land degradation management, strengthening meteorological services, community water and sanitation, water for production, drought adaptation, vectors, pests and disease control, indigenous knowledge and natural resource management and climate change and development planning (Nyasimi et. al., 2016).

Uganda comprises central and local governments, and it operates through a decentralized system. Local governments are able to create their own development plans, however they are expected to reflect key national documents (e.g., the Uganda Vision 2030) and international agreements to a significant degree (Acosta et. al., 2019). At national level, gender references are integrated in Uganda's policies and it is in line with international norms on gender mainstreaming with key national policies including: NDP II (2015/16-2019/20), Agriculture Sector Strategy Plan (2015/16-2019/20), Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Country Plan, Uganda National Climate Policy, Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and the Guidelines for the Integration of Climate Change in Sector Plans and Budgets (Acosta et. al., 2019).

In the following section, I further analyze how gender is frame in climate change policies in Uganda and in what way policymakers interact with the term through those documents. I would like to end this paragraph however by noting that in 2017, the Ugandan parliament rejected a long-awaited **Climate Change Bill** due to complication related to gender issues. More specifically, Joanita Nakachwa and Benard Namanya noted that a 27% of women was consulted out of the 700 people to create the draft for the bill (Namuloki, 2017). However, Kaberamaido Woman MP Maria Gorett Ajilo mentioned that the percentage of women involved in the process was too small given the fact that women make up the majority of people affected by climate change and she says "We want to this law which takes gender seriously [...] Climate change affects a woman more when it comes to famine and drought because she is looked at as the one to cook and provide food for people to eat in a home or water to drink" (as quoted in a paper by Namuloki, 2017).

Uganda has policies which are directly related to climate change, however there are some which provide options for potential climate adaptation yet they do not explicitly mention climate change. These policies include some that have already mentioned in this section which are the Uganda National Policy (2013), the National Development Plans, and the Uganda Forestry Policy (2001), The Uganda National Environment Management Policy, among others (Ampraire et. al., 2017).

### 7.1.2. Gender and Climate Policies

Climate changes policies in Uganda have integrated gender mainstreaming and therefore, include gender and women as mentioned in the section above (Acosta et. al., 2019). However, there is a significant amount of research that has been conducted where policy documents were analyzed through a gender lens. These papers are critical towards the absence of a gender responsive considerations or of the way gender and women is portrayed. Also, many papers note that women and gender in climate policies in Uganda are used interchangeably (Nhamo, 2014). In addition, research has shown that Uganda is one of the African countries (along with Kenya and Rwanda) with the highest number of references to gender issues in climate policies (Huyer et. al., 2020). In this section, I collect all the findings from different documents to construct the policymaker's discourse as developed in climate policy documents in Uganda.

An analysis of policy documents in selected east and southern African countries shows that the Ugandan Climate Change Policy Draft 2012 mentions the term women eleven (11) times and it identifies women as part of the solution to climate change (Nhamo, 2014). One of the main priorities of NCCP is to:

*“Mainstream gender issues in climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches in order to reduce the vulnerability of women and children to the impacts of climate change and recognise their key role in tackling this issue”. (NCCP, 2015, pp.17).*

However, as Nhamo (2014) noted the Climate Change Policy Draft emphasizes deliberately on women's (and children's) greater vulnerability. However, the author highlights the fact that unlike other African countries, the Draft Climate Change Policy of Uganda (2012) tries to promote the empowerment of women in planning, piloting and up scaling of adaptation and mitigation activities (Nhamo, 2014). The actual policy was finalized in 2015 and research shows that identifies important obstacles and barriers that interfere with women's adaptive capacity and therefore increase their vulnerability. The policy also recommends to improve the resilience of vulnerable groups with certain strategies, however, there is no concrete plan on how the policy itself will engage with other sectors to implement its gender-inclusive approach which is considered a significant gender gap (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

Research focusing on gender mainstreaming in climate change adaptation in Uganda as a case study, shows that there is an implementation gap (Acosta et al., 2020). Gender mainstreaming is an effective strategy to promote gender issues in policy, however it has been in part limited as it was crafted in international arenas and fails to take into consideration cultural and social barriers in local contexts (Acosta et al., 2020). Thus, Acosta et al., focuses on the analysis of policy narratives to explain implementation gaps in gender mainstreaming in Uganda. Through their analysis, the gender narrative dominated, yet other narratives were also present in the interviews that constituted conflicting and more skeptical understandings (e.g., the male supremacy narrative). That coincides with what Allwood (2013) mentions regarding gender mainstreaming in development policy. Even in the cases where gender appears to be mainstreamed, unintended consequences arise as part of the policy-making process that reflect gendered assumptions (Acosta et al., 2020; Allwood, 2013).

A study conducted in 2015 on the framing of gender issues in climate change related policies in Uganda indicated as one of the shortfalls in policy formulation and implementation, the usage of unclear gender terminology and gender stereotypes (Acosta et al., 2015). More specifically, it was found that in both the East African Community Climate Change Policy (EACCCP) and the National Climate Change Policy of Uganda, the word gender and women were used interchangeably which was coupled with the portrayal of women as a vulnerable group to climate change. In the National Climate Change Policy of Uganda, the word "women" appears in association with the term "vulnerability" in six out of eight sections and Acosta et al., (2015) argues that representing women as vulnerable in such manner, creates a simplified vision of gendered vulnerability and it creates discursive effects. Women are perceived as a homogenous group in the context of climate change, and the climate change policy in Uganda disregards the broad spectrum of women existing in society and this simplified portrayal of women does not address the root of causes of gender inequalities (Acosta et al., 2015).

The same issue is highlighted by Ampaire et. al. (2019) in their study. More specifically, the authors state that most policy documents in Uganda make gender appear as a women's issue and both men and women are described as separate groups delinked from any other dimensions of intersectionality. Considering gender as a "women's issue" gives insignificant and little attention to men's vulnerability to climate change (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

The same paper by Ampaire et. al. (2019) conducted extensive research on the gender integration in selected national policies of Uganda and I will collect the findings here. I find important to specify that I am only focusing on policy documents from the 2000's since they seem more relevant to the current discourse. Starting with the National Draft Climate Change Costed Implemented Strategy (2013), gender mainstreaming seems to have a vital role and it is considered a key strategy in addressing climate change. The strategy promotes the participation of both women and men and supports the integration of gender and climate change issues in education curriculum and training programs. However, it seems to lack an action plan to implement the gender activities that it recommends and it does not provide a specific budget (Ampaire et. al., 2019). The Uganda National Environment Management Policy (2014) Fine Draft, recognizes that gender imbalances exist in decision making in regard to natural resource use. It supports the integration of gender in policies, education/trainings and research. Similarly, to the previous document, it lacks an actual gender integration strategy, action plan and budget and it also does not include actors nor roles (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

In addition, the Uganda Forest Policy (2001) and the National Seed Policy (2016) recognize the role of women and the youth. The former policy highlights the existence of gender-differentiated access to forest resources and encourages the participation of both women and youth in decision making over forest resources. The latter policy, supports the promotion of gender friendly technologies and interventions (Ampaire et. al., 2019). However, both policies do not provide an action plan to first ensure gender equity in access to forest resources and the first policy does not address any structural challenges to women and youth access. The second policy does not provide any strategies that could be used to involve women and the youth despite the fact it promotes that, as previously mentioned (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

The National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) (2007) does not mention gender which comes as a major disappointment. Also, the Uganda Climate Smart Agriculture Programme (2015-2025) and the Uganda INDC (2015) are both gender blind. The National Development Plan I



(2010/11-2014/15) is the only policy analyzed that provides an actual budget to operationalize projects but they are not gender responsive (Ampaire et. al., 2019). The National Development Plan II (2015/2016-2019/2020) highlights that there are structural challenges which impede gender equality from being achieved, yet it does not provide the mean to address this issue (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

The findings of a study conducted on policies in East Africa, showed that in Uganda the characterization of women as a homogenous vulnerable group is persuasive (Ampaire et al., 2019). The dominant portrayal of women as a vulnerable population in policy documents is argued to prevent from focusing on structural barriers and gender inequalities and it is problematic since it potentially contributes to the perpetuation of victimizing stereotypes. In addition, the authors argue that it fails to take into consideration the active role of women in climate adaptation (Ampaire et al., 2019). Treating women as a homogenous vulnerable group runs the risk of simplistic climate change gendered policy that will most likely not be efficient. The authors proceed to suggest the need to move beyond the oversimplification of gender and highlight the necessity to consider intersectional when referring to gender (Ampaire et al., 2019).

In the documents analyzed in this paper, both women and men are portrayed as a homogenous group and there is no mention of **intersectionality**. Women are seen as marginalized and vulnerable without control over productive resources, and only a 4% of documents in Uganda describes women as major actors in agriculture, natural resource managements and agents of change. The results show that documents in Uganda mention women more in relation to the term gender, thus they make gender a women's issue (Ampaire et. al., 2019). The authors specify that treating women as a homogenous group increases the chances of failure of a policy because it disregards the complexity of vulnerability and adaptability of climate change. They suggest to move beyond the oversimplification of gender and the integration of intersectionality (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

As previously mentioned, Uganda has its own Land policy (2013) which ensures equal rights to both men and women. However, research on "Gender Differences in Asset rights in Central Uganda" has shown that gender inequality in land rights is a common implication where customary laws and practices usually interfere with the relationship women have with land (Kes et al., 2011). The policy aims protect women and children's rights to inherit and own land and it also provides a consent clause to protect children, however there is an implementation gap which interferes with the gender provision of the policy (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

Due to patriarchal norms, the customary laws give ownership to men or male heads of extended families while women are regarded as "secondary" right owners. That is because they only get to have access to land through their husbands, fathers, brothers and other male relatives (Bikaako & Ssenkumba, 2003; Benschop, 2002; Rugadya, 2010). In addition, if women are granted access to land through their marriage, they always run the risk of losing it if they get a divorce or if they are widows. This is highlighted in another paper that analyzed the Land Policy of Uganda and identified that the rights of widows and divorcees are not addressed (Ampaire et. al., 2019).

In addition, it is worth mentioning the findings of an important paper by Acosta et. al. (2021) which focuses on national (and sub-national) policy actors in Uganda to examine to promise to improve gender equality in agriculture and climate change adaptation. The study showed that policy actors take into consideration global gender discourses and propose solutions to gender inequality. However, the proposed solutions did not address local gender norms. Even though, policy actors acknowledge local norms and culture as major barrier, they do little to address the underlying causes to gender inequality. The authors of the research suggest the involvement of local feminist organizations in order to *“critically engage, assess and address local gender inequality patterns in agriculture and climate change adaptation”* (Acosta et. al. 2021, pp. 11). More specifically, the results showed that only a few actors made the effort to translate policy for the local context and in this case, ‘the local’ and ‘the global’ are in constant interaction which unfortunately, is translated in *“narrowly designed and underfunded initiatives with very restricted implications for local gender relations”* (Acosta et. al. 2021, pp. 17). The local solutions proposed by the policy actors were general and vague, lacked content and specificity which is something that makes one wonder since gender inequality in agriculture and climate change are problematized and gender discourse is prominent in the policy makers’ circle (Acosta et. al. 2021). The result of that is the deflection of attention of deep-rooted inequalities which leads to a *“shallow politicization of gender issues”* (“ (Acosta et. al. 2021, pp. 18). The authors argue for a strong feminist approach where women’s interests and rights are taken into consideration to properly address gender issues in Uganda. They think there is discursive disconnect between women’s rights movements in Uganda with national and local politics, and they support the involvement of those local feminist movements to advance the transformation of the current climate agenda into gender responsive climate agenda (Acosta et. al. 2021).

Women are heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture and make up 73% of workers according to The Uganda National Household Survey conducted in 2019/2020 (UBOS, 2021). Despite the fact they make up the majority, they still earn half as much as men because they tend to work in insecure jobs and sectors and their time is constrained by unpaid care work within their households. The Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) highlights the importance to transition away from subsistence agriculture, however it faced a setback due to COVID-19 (Willman & Arnold, 2022).

## 7.2. Step 2: Women in CSO’s: Climate & Gender Discourse

### 7.2.1. Definitions: Gender, Patriarchy and Feminism

In June 2022, I had the great opportunity to attend the UN Climate Change Conference (SB Sessions) in Bonn as part of the GenderCC team. During the conference, many actions happened advocating for climate and gender justice; I also had the pleasure of meeting inspiring people at the women caucus and I attended a training on “Feminist Climate Justice: Advocacy & Action” organized by the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC). At the training, women from different backgrounds and places of the world working on achieving climate and gender justice got together to have discussions on the topic. To my surprise, it turned out that even though we were all working advocating for the same goal, there were variations in the way we defined the terms gender, patriarchy and feminism. That is the reason why, I decided to establish a solid foundation while constructing the discourse of women in CSO’s in order to

avoid defining these terms myself for them as they are of high importance for the purpose of this research.

Therefore, I would like to start with the definition of **gender** as provided by six women from six different CSO's based in Uganda. Gender was generally defined as a social construction. More specifically, everyone highlighted the fact that gender refers to socially constructed roles *"that have been there for hundreds and hundreds of years and go upward by a number of histories"* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). Supporting this argument, Gertrude Kabusimbi Kenyangi says that *"Gender is a social construction of men and women. To put it simply, that social construction of men and women as opposed to the biological construction"* (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022). On a similar note, Joanita Babirye (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022) argues that gender is defined as male and female and it is about gender roles which affect how society considers different genders and the roles they have to play. In addition, one of the interviewees (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022). says that *"the expectations of that context in which we live, we live our lives, the expectations in terms of roles and behavior that the context expects us to partake. And so, that goes for men and women, that what gender is essentially is"* (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).. Bihunirwa Medius (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022) follows a similar line of thought and when asked to defined gender from her own perspective says that *"These are socially and culturally constructed roles and responsibilities for women, girls, men and women in a particular society"* (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022).

It is important to note that it seems that gender considers both men and women when defined by the women from CSO's. One of the interviewees from NAPE, Sostine Namanya elaborated on the reason why gender is not only about women even though it is mostly referred to as such. She thinks this argument is *"very articulate and right"* however, she shares a rhetoric question as an example; In the in the case of an accident, who is the first person to rescue? She goes to say that the person who is highly affecter or injured from the accident is rescued first, and then the others who are less affected are rescued. *"And in this story"*, says Sostine, *"I always refer to the women as the ones that are highly injured and they need to be rescued fast and given the attention that they actually deserve. So, yeah, I always mention that when I'm talking about gender and always agree with people, that is, gender is not about women. But the reason why we are almost seeing gender as women is because the statistics are also very clear, like the levels of GBV, the levels of daily segregation, because you identify as a woman, all those things"* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

As previously mentioned, gender is generally defined as the socially constructed roles, responsibilities between men and women, male and female. However, one of the interviewees mentioned a very important perspective of gender that I would like to highlight here. Christine Bwailisa argues that if she was asked this question a long time before then, she would have offered a different definition. In the past, she thought of gender as either male or female however her perspective has now changed because she thinks that if one defines gender in that manner then they are missing out some of the things in between (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). She says *"We have other categories of people now in the community that we also can't leave them out. We have to identify them and have and also be part of our genders. [...] I would say maybe, for example, on my attendance sheet, I wouldn't"*

*just say where the column where someone just says men, male or female. I would also go ahead and include also other like maybe the others, maybe the LGBT, the transgender. I would also give them that opportunity to identify as that under that same column. That's why I would just say the characteristics around either femininity or masculinity, depending on how the person identifies themselves"* (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). This argument that moves beyond the binary of men and women and highlights LGBTIQ+ people and most specifically transgender individuals is of high importance. It goes to show that women in CSO's also take into consideration the fact that a person can identify as they wish and it seems that they are willing to go a step ahead to include them in the process. When asked if this perspective has been adopted by other organizations as well, the interviewee responded: *"Yeah. I think now that the world is becoming more involved, I would say, yes. People are becoming more gender inclusive and they are recognizing that we actually need to not just tag someone as what we think they are"* (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

The next term that I asked a definition for from each one of the interviewees is **patriarchy** as experienced in Uganda and more specifically within the climate context. Similarly, to the definition provided for gender, many similarities were noted among the interviewees. More specifically, the words male domination, lack of access to resources and decision making seem to prevail in the transcripts. First, it is important to mention that women in CSO's see Uganda as a patriarchal country, and patriarchy is *"a system of governance where men have all the power and women are excluded from it, and because all men have the power, they allocate resources, they are assigned duties. [...] They are in control of everything"* ((G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022). In a patriarchal country like Uganda, children cannot take anything that belongs to their mom, all the lineage comes from the father, and men *"they dominate power, they dominate ownership of resources, they dominate mostly everything in this society we live in"* (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). The male dominance is highly prominent and visible in all spheres of society and especially in decision-making. This tendency appears in both negotiation rooms and households. Men are responsible of land management, and they in control of natural resources. This seems to not be an isolated case, as it happens not only in Uganda alone, but in other countries as well as more men than women are represented in spaces where women-related issues are discussed (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022).

The term patriarchy as explained by an interviewee are the boxes in which men and women have been categorized; in other words, patriarchy affects both sexes as men are supposed to be strong, they are supposed to lead and *"man up"*. In the case a sample of women have been able to live up to the same standard, for example through financial excellence, then the structure does not recognize that they put negative connotations on them. They are often seen as aggressive and they think in the case they have money that there was a man behind that (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Patriarchy seems that it also can be in simple terms. In the patriarchal system of Uganda, women *"have to stay at home, cook, take care of children, take care of the sick"*, therefore, they do not have enough time to attend and participate in community meetings. In that case, men make decisions on their behalf. As Sostine Namanya says *"That is what it is. We don't need*

to talk about big terminologies, but it is the women staying at home to do the unpaid care work while the men are going in meetings to make decisions on our behalf” (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). Men are also the decision maker at their household, even though women have way more responsibility within that sphere. It seems that some men are trying to challenge those stereotypes and support their wives, however, even though Uganda has a lot of cultural diversity and different ethnic groups, men share the same privilege compared across them to their female counterparts at household and community level (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022). A practical example is given to make this clearer; when women have the opportunity to have access to new technologies provided by organizations and in this case for the purpose of the example are stoves which are solar powered, they always have to consult their husband. Some are supportive; however, others see cooking as the sole responsibility of women and they are not willing to pay for a device that would make a positive impact on their wives’ life (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022).

Accessing land rights is a reoccurring issue that women have to face in Uganda and it is linked to patriarchal tendencies and beliefs. Land is most often inherited and it is passed on to male children, therefore women who are born in these families are left landless. When they get married, they can access the land and they become the main users of this land. However, the problem is that they do the farming, grow the food and support their family, yet they have no rights on the land because it is owned by their (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). In addition, women are more interested in nutrient dense crops, fast maturing because they want to provide their households with food security yet, most husbands seem to be more interested in “cash crops” (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022). However, due to years of lobbying and advocacy work change is happening and I will elaborate on that in a later section.

Finally, the last term which was asked to be defined by the women in CSOs is **feminism**. That is because there are different waves of feminism throughout history, and I have come to understand that this concept is context-specific after the training in Bonn. Especially after doing the interviews, this became even clearer as it seems that there were many overlaps in the way the respondents defined gender and patriarchy, however with the term feminism it becomes more complicated. First, feminism is defined as a belief system, a thought process where the equality of men and women is advanced in order to achieve gender justice. Therefore, *“Feminism for us is not where we seek women to dominate; it is where we seek both men and women to coexist harmoniously with equal opportunities”* as Gertrude Kabusimbi argues (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022).. Christine Bwailisa, following a similar line of thought, argues that feminism has to include everyone in society. She believes that when talking about feminism we should include all genders due to their different experiences of discriminations which leads to different vulnerabilities and challenges. She also sheds light on LGBT+ issues because she believes that that through the practice of feminism everyone can have an *“equal opportunity or equal rights so that they can really participate with their full potential”* (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

Feminism was defined as a term with several layers; it has to related to an anticapitalistic, anti-racist and anti-green extractivist thinking. To be defined as a feminist, Sostine Namanya argues that one has to be ecological thus aware of the need to move away from consumerism (the

result of capitalism) in order to find *“a different system that protects the planet, a different system that protects the women that are at the front lines where droughts and flooding is happening”* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). For all that reasons, NAPE is following a feminist approach in practice and they have an eco-feminist movement of over 7000 grassroot women in Western, Northern and Eastern Uganda. As an organization, they found that there are women who are saying *“enough is enough”*. They are resisting violence and peaking up for equal opportunities (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

However, it seems that feminism is a concept that is not well understood by everyone. As Joanita Babirye argues feminism considers equal opportunities for both men and women however, she has noticed that there is extremism in the feminist movement. She believes that this is because a certain percentage of people who identify as feminists, they wish to change things rapidly and do not see this transition as a process that needs time (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022). Also, Miriam Talwisa from DNCO argues that feminism *“I think, is not something that we have been able to understand deeper, to reflect on or even understand deeper how to handle it”*, thus they do not necessarily follow a feminist approach in practice (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Lastly, one CSO prefers to use a different approach which is called integrated women empowerment approach and not a feminist approach. Bihunirwa Medius believes that when taking on a feminist approach the *“other side”* is excluded, and by that she means men. In practice, they are trying to engage men in the process of empowering women (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022).

Thus, it seems that some CSOs argue that feminism advances gender equality and includes women and men. There is also a case where the LGBT+ community is part of a feminist approach in practice, however, there is confusion in how to handle the term or there is hesitance when interacting with it.

## 7.2.2. Gendered Vulnerability & Climate Change

### 7.2.2.1. Main Causes

Gendered vulnerability is a reality that cannot be denied; however, this reality is proven to be more complex than policy documents make it seem. In this section, I analyze all the causes that lead to women's vulnerability as listed and explained thoroughly by women in CSOs who interact with other women on the ground on a daily basis through their valuable work.

*“Vulnerability is not homogenous; the way people in urban centers are vulnerable to climate change is not the same way people are in the countryside or in the mountainous areas or in drylands susceptible to the effects of climate change* (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022). This quote makes it clear right from the beginning, that women are affected in different ways depending on the location and the context they live in. The societal expectations and gender roles existing in the Ugandan society is deemed to be a significant aspect of vulnerability. To be more specific, women are responsible for food gathering, fetching water

and firewood, cooking which entail all the basic necessities in their households. Climate changes exacerbates their vulnerability because of gender role they are conditioned to perform. In other words, in the case of extreme droughts and floods, and they also have to walk longer distances to collect water and firewood which leads to more causes of Gender Based Violence (GBV). They also tend to be more susceptible to waterborne diseases (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022); J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022)

On the other hand, men can easily migrate and find another source of income in urban areas. However, their daily interaction with the environment makes them the best people to create action as Joanita Babirye argues (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022)

Therefore, patriarchy is believed to be the main cause of women's marginalization. Gender roles, societal expectations and cultural beliefs are all bi-products of this wider system. Women are exposed to abuse, neglect and marginalization (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022). To be more specific, certain cultural beliefs in communities severely affect women's adaptive capacity. For example, in some communities, women are not allowed to climb trees, or hills. Therefore, in the case of a flash flood, they need to find other ways of surviving. In another example, women are forbidden from riding bikes. Thus, they have a disadvantage when it comes to fetching water, or food to women in communities who are allowed to bike as it reduces their time of searching and exposure to unpredictable dangers and predators (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Another aspect of vulnerability arising from the patriarchal system in Uganda is women's limited access to decision making. Women have low power and limited skills in their communities, therefore, they are unable to participate meaningfully in decisions and debates (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). Their economic status plays a huge role in that and affects their level of vulnerability in a significant way. Women who engage with farming have to deal with multiple problems. One of them is the effects of climate change to their agricultural practices. When they are lacking the financial means to have access to agriculture advisories, they only depend on governmental information which is not specific enough. In the case they need money to adapt to the effects of climate change, their vulnerability increases because as women it is unlikely to be benefited in order to carry out their agriculture in the way the new climate conditions dictate" (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022). The issue of land access is a problem that affects women on a significant level. That is because women have to depend on their husbands as heads of their households. Since they do not own the land, they cannot make decision on what they plant to better the health of the planet (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). Sostine Namanya believes that the laws and policies of Uganda are actually good because they protect women, yet, women are not aware of that due to the high levels of illiteracy or access to translated documents (original documents are in the English language), and they cannot exercise their rights. However, *"once the women are aware of the entitlements in the legal framework and what to do, they cannot be stopped. It's like unlocking their power in a way that they know the provisions. They know they are protected"* says Sostine Namanya (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

As mentioned, gender roles impact the position of women, and “as the climate is changing, women will be affected more” argues Bihunirwa Medius (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022). They are highly depended on energy and availability of water. With the current water crisis, women end up walking longer distances. *“Women interact more with natural resources, with the climate, because they have to reach out for water, for firewood or for things within the climate. So, any change, that happens definitely will affect the women more because they will not be able now to also support their families in that way”* says Bihunirwa Medius. To add on that, with changes in seasonality, many crops are affected, and whole households depend on that which is the sole responsibility of women. Crops like legumes and grains are preferred by women, however it often happens that their crops are destroyed and women lose everything especially the food security of their households (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022). Especially during dry season, there is hunger. Many flee their homes due to the insecurity cause by the droughts and the people who suffer the most are older women who cannot support their children, and their children end up starving to death. The men have the opportunity to leave and find employment in cities or nearby towns, yet the women do not have the same privilege (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022).

Lastly, even women who want to have access to technology that requires a bigger capital and village savings or loan associations cannot support, they struggle to get a loan from a bank because a collateral is required which is something that most often cannot provide. That is because land is owned by their husbands and in the case, they have a business themselves, they might not keep business records which could be used as proof of their financial records. For men as owners of land, they are in a more advantaged position and they can access credit more easily (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022). Therefore, it seems appropriate to conclude this section with this quote:

*“I believe the capitalistic system actually thrives on women's, kind of freely, ignorance of their rights, who are less confident to participate and confront, for example, an investor that is cutting down a tree that would be absorbing the bad greenhouse gases. So, for me, I feel like us not having a voice, the more money they actually make”* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

#### 7.2.2.2. Approaches and Ways to address vulnerability

This section sheds light on the various ways CSOs are trying to address the aforementioned causes that lead to women’s vulnerability to climate change. Information sharing, awareness and trainings seem to be key in the way gendered vulnerability is challenged. However, the inspiring tools used and tactics to empower women are to be elaborated thoroughly here.

#### Information sharing and awareness

An important point to be mentioned again is noted by Miriam Talwisa. When trying to address women’s vulnerability, she always goes *“back to that of gender; Women are not homogeneous”*. That goes to show that what works for one group of women or a community, but not work for the other due to their diversity in characteristics, restrictions or/and qualities (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022). Therefore, NDCO follows a specific focused programming. That is because climate change is not static and there is a broader



spectrum of women that needs our attention. Their aim is to interact with the communities they are working with on a deeper level to understand their needs and their specific context they live in. That can be seen clearly in this quote:

*So, for us to be able to help the situation, we need to understand exactly what do they need other than us getting into the community with our thought-out ideas, you know, and putting them on these communities, because it is what we think works for them. [...] We are currently working with the objective of ensuring that the actions of ground essentially address or are linked aligned to the need that communities do have now”* (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

As previously mentioned, information sharing and awareness is an important tool used by the CSOs interviewed for the purpose of women’s empowerment in the context of climate change. Sostine Namanya has come to believe that holding back information is might be done in an intentional way, either by investors or the government so that people remain oblivious of the ways they are protected by the constitution of Uganda. This is an assumption of course, however, it remains a big issue that ought to be solved. Therefore, NAPE is trying to address this challenge by translating official documents, policies and laws into local languages (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). However, as Sostine Namanya notes *“you cannot go to communities and start talking about the green economy, green extractivism, low economy in these communities. Some of these greens and blues, they actually mean colors. The language has to be really, really digestible and understandable and fitting within the context* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). NAWAD is also doing translations of the actual documents and complicated law terms, which is actually an incredibly time-consuming job as there are more than 55 local languages in Uganda and the official documents are most often in English. They deem translations important because otherwise women lack information and there are laws which actually favor them (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

Information sharing has to be right and timely because in that case, women “can make decisions they can contribute to their individual survival and resilience, but also can help in the planning, policy formulation, in, you know, big decisions to be made in terms of actions in those particular communities where they're coming from” (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022). In other words, when women have access to the right information they can regain their agency, defend themselves and advocate for their rights with their own voice. Another way other than translations offered by NAPE is the Community Green Radio, which is a platform for women and young girls and other discriminated citizens on which they can have discussions on issues of climate change, environmental justice, but also engage with local leaders and the legislators on the issues they are not happy with, educate about what the alternatives could look like and how they can be applied in practice. Sostine Namanya says that *“we are proud of that program because we feel like it gives a voice to the voiceless and it provides the solutions that are actually hidden”*. GEDA has also adopted a similar mass media approach, which is called radio drama series. The idea is to partner with the FM radio and the producers of a famous drama series and they give them scripts which highlight important issues that they want to spread across. They sponsor the program for two-three months and the messages becomes consistent, entertaining and widely known since the drama series characters are valued by the target groups (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6,

2022). Apart from the radio programme, NAPE, also provides other platforms like the eco-feminist movement where a collective of women practices local legal solutions in terms of renewable energy and clean energy (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

NAPE also takes into consideration the high levels of illiteracy in many communities; therefore, they often utilize drawings to convey important messages. Another important way that this CSO does to inform people is by printing and putting up articles in the Constitution which give them the mandate and they are able to protect and own land. Securing land and water rights is a challenge that many women have to face. Therefore, there are legal aid clinics which advise them on land matters (e.g., land grabbing, violating) (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). NAWAD advocates for collective farming as a way to address land issues. They encourage women to collectively buy land, because as a group they are more protected as it is harder for husbands to interfere. When it is time to harvest, they also do it as a group, and they gain more from all the hard work they have put throughout the year in the farm. As mentioned, many times before, along with land issues, GBV is something that is highly linked to climate change. Women and young girls are often victims of GBV and especially during COVID rape and sexual abuse cases were heightened. NAWAD as an organization, offers important information, like which numbers to call whom to consult when there is a case of sexual abuse. Also, they urge women to form solidarity groups in these cases because uniting their voice is more likely to bring justice to the victim (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). The organization in certain cases helps families mediate when there is conflict, as they train women to use their voice and speak up for themselves or on behalf of the women being oppressed in order to access justice.

### Trainings

There are several trainings in place by CSOs which aim to empower and help women reclaim their agency. C4CA has a training called Climate Leadership Program and by the time women finish it, they are ready to take action as they later engage in the subcommittees at their local level and have influence. The Climate Demonstration Hubs (CDHs) are again an initiative by C4CA and women learn to create solutions. First, the organization finds what local challenges exist in the communities and together with the people participating they identify key methodologies and ideas in a localized way. For example, poverty and the need for money is often the issue, thus C4CA thought *“How do we turn these challenges into opportunities with them and how can their different ideas, their local solutions into business opportunities at the same time? And this is how they are contributing to green businesses, and these local innovations that can give them some money as well, but at the same time they are saving the planet and saving their communities too, in regards to climate action. [...] We are using their local knowledge to create solutions that turn into business opportunities* (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022) Women who participate in these trainings are highly engaged and the turnout is quite significant. That is because they are actually benefitting from them by simply learning how to create energy cooking stoves or paper bags, they become more independent one might say, and they end up making a living out of these solutions (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022) The CDHs are mainly for women and girls, however there is also the young environmentalist program which targets boy and girl children at schools. GEDA also follows the school approach and does school awareness because they find imperative the engagement of the youngsters in their earlier stages in order to change gender

narratives which are culturally constructed (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022).

In addition, NAWAD conducts trainings for paralegals. In other words, there are people in communities who are trained to become community-based paralegals and they help women in their communities with certain issues they might have (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). Similarly, NAPE trains women advocates in various communities who then participate in district, national and international places where decisions are made (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). This ensures the continuity of the impact of the trainings after they end, as Christine Bwailisa says, because they create structures which enable people to stand up for (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

In that context, SWAGEN teams up with other organizations to advocate for gender responsive allocation of the budget and trainings since there is a good constitution yet the implementation of policies is poor. DNCO also collaborates with policy makers and has been part of a number of policy processes.

### **Men engagement approaches**

One specific approach to address women's vulnerability to climate change which specifically strikes me is entails men engagement. GEDA believes that men have the capability to influence other men, and it could lead to a domino effect which would benefit women in a patriarchal country. Therefore, they have adopted approaches which specifically engage men because many of them actually acknowledge the fact that women have been challenged. However, patriarchy has subjected men and not only women, of course. This becomes clear because some men who are not in denial of the reality women endure, they are still reluctant to participate because they are concerned with how society will portray them constructed (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022). However, there are still a significant percentage of men who keeps challenging women and this example comes from a personal experience of Sostine Namanya who shared that she feels challenged as an activist in various spaces, and even at the COP by old black and white men who make decisions and pass policies ((S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). Therefore, engaging men at various levels, and especially on the ground is a innovative approach.

### **7.2.3. Perspectives: the “victimization narrative” & policymakers**

#### **7.2.3.1. Are all women vulnerable?**

Women's vulnerability to climate change is a reality that cannot be denied. There is a general consensus on the matter by all women representing CSOs which were interviewed for the purpose of this research. However, this reality seems to be more complicated as women in Uganda are affected by different levels of vulnerability depending on several factors and intersecting identities, even though they are referred to as a homogeneous group in policy documents. All the aforementioned topics are thoroughly analyzed in this section.

As mentioned above, all women are referred to as a vulnerable group in policy documents and this can be clearly seen in the finding's section in regards to the policymaker's discourse. Bihunirwa Medius specifically mentions that referring to women as vulnerable is a starting point for CSOs working on gender related issues as it helps to understand disparities and address the *"critical needs of different genders"*. It has also helped addressing gender issues in education as the government started recognizing that a girl child cannot compete with a boy child due to cultural constraints, thus they adjusted the entry points for female students. Since gender has entered the policy discourse, it has become a bargaining area for advocacy and it has benefited organizations which are fighting for gender (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). However, the real problem is if all the gender considerations are actually implemented, as mentioned by Bihunirwa Medius:

*"Can we be able to see that in the programming? Can we be able to see that in the budgets? I think that is where the challenge is. [...] These policies are here, but we want to see this reflected in the budgets. We want to see it reflected in the program. If there is a program on climate change, is there any specific area that is focusing on women?"* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

Furthermore, it needs to be highlighted that another issue in policies is the fact that women are treated as a homogeneous group. This is reflected in the words of Bihunirwa Medius, as she specifically argues that mentioning women as a vulnerable group is the correct thing to do, however we cannot *"blanket it as one"*. The solution to that would be to have categories in documents and an example with a set of questions is given to support this argument:

*"If you go to women in a pastoral community, are they affected as women in the crop farming community? If you go to women on the landing site, on the fishing community, are they affected? Are their levels of vulnerability the same like women who are in a crop farming? If you go to the refuges like Uganda, we host very many refugees here, is the vulnerability of refugee women and under the nationals the same level? But also, we must categorize in terms of age. [...] Women with special needs; is their level of vulnerability the same like the women who do not have any special needs? How about the pregnant and lactating women?"* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

On a similar line of thought, Gertrude Kabusimbi from SWAGEN believes that women must not be seen as homogeneous. Many things have changed and much progress have been made, as a noteworthy percentage of women have gained education and skills and also the number of women owning land has increased significantly. Gertrude Kabusimbi argues that policymakers should *"make a distinction between the women that are still in a vulnerable position because there are very many in the majority and those that have made progress"*. In addition, she believes that viewing woman in that way is due to ignorance. Policymakers are thought to conduct armchair research because they do not go to the ground to interact with women and activists in order to get accurate information (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022).

However, Joanita Babirye shared that she has conducted research to see how women are included in various policy departments in Uganda and she argues that in climate policies at national level women are viewed as homogenous vulnerable group. She wonders if actions is being prioritized by saying:

*“If you are considering them vulnerable, then what are we doing about it? Well, there is nothing. I didn't see any action at the end of the day. Okay. Women are vulnerable. Then what? What are we changing about it?”* (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022)

It is important to note that she does not believe that this narrative victimizes women, since they are already victims of climate change. In addition, Joanita Babirye thinks that the inclusion of women in policies is done because “We just want to feel legitimate in a way we do things”. In other words, she believes that the inclusion of women not only in policy documents but also in other spaces where conversations are happening is because the government wants to look good. However, she does not know if what women are actually saying is being considered. Men are used to think of themselves as the big bosses, and when feminists advocate for gender equality, they end up including women who have the same qualifications as them out of guilt. Many things have changed in Uganda the last years; women have received university scholarships, they have gained economic and educational capital and *“they are creating, they are innovating”*. Thus, guilt might be a factor which leads men to include more women in discussions, however the question is whether their voices are considered (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022).

It worth noting that everyone woman from the CSOs interviewed specified that women are not homogeneous, and this is something that has been revealed to them through their work. NAWAD is no exception as Christine Bwailisa argues that women are “all unique in a certain way” and they all face different vulnerabilities and challenges. This is because there are different hierarchies and circles in society. She also goes a step beyond that narrative and supports that there are unique differences inside subgroups of women. For example, women who live with disabilities face diverse vulnerabilities and challenges depending on the disability (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

Viewing women as a single vulnerable entity is a coin with two sides. On a good note, seeing women as vulnerable in policies has given activists leverage to advocate for them in order to surpass obstacles brought by patriarchy and discrimination. On the other hand, tagging women as vulnerable makes them look powerless and it creates a certain mindset. This mindset views women as incapable of contributing and it creates further inequality as they are excluded from decision making processes (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). It all comes down to the main reason behind this narrative; *“the patriarchal nature has really hindered women's participation”*, as Christine Bwailisa says.

Similarly, Miriam Talwisa argues that this framing has a good and a bad side. She thinks that it is important to mention that women are vulnerable, yet the way they mention vulnerability in association to women can be risky for them as it lacks the intersectional perspective. Perceiving women bundled up in one package *“is not progressive in any way, it only limits potential. [...] I believe in the fact that women who are on the front lines in the countryside have a lot of contribution they're making to their communities and it can not only benefit the process for planning but it can also benefit the people, the women themselves if it were brought into perspective”* (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Another risk that needs to be considered is that this mention in policy documents may only be a lip service to women as little is mentioned of what is being done on the ground or if women are actually participating in planning meetings. Miriam Talwisa believes that it is important to go an extra mile to check the reasons women do not attend a meeting in the first place or if they actually participating by saying things in the case there is a registration of attendance indicating that there is an equal number of men and women in the room. Some women might participate but not say anything because the deep-seated vulnerabilities at individual levels are not addressed (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Many women even though perceived as vulnerable in policy documents, they are active, eager and more involved to change their own status quo. There is a lot of hard work being done by women despite the challenges they face and they are very active in development work. However, Bihunirwa Medius agrees that the majority of women in Uganda are in a vulnerable position if one checks the statistics, yet as previously mentioned one cannot just blanket women (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022).

Policymakers just like women, are not a single entity and this was highlighted by Christine Bwailisa. She thinks there are two categories of policymakers; the first category supports women and other group of policymakers are troubled by their ignorance and high ego. The latter believe that women are vulnerable and will always be inferior and subordinate to them. There are also policymakers who are against gender inequality and they actually come up and speak on behalf of women and they do not simply treat them as vulnerable. Change is partly happening because there are men who challenge the position of women and they believe they should be part decision making processes (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

#### 7.2.3.2. Alternative suggested narratives in policymaking

The important points made by all the women in the previous section explicate that there is a need for alternative narratives in policymaking. Therefore, during the interviews this question was asked in order to collect suggested proposals which could be taken as indications for improvement for the policymakers in the country.

The main problem with viewing women as vulnerable in policy documents is that it can be misleading. If someone with no previous knowledge reads the documents, they would think that women are vulnerable without thinking that they are also leaders of change and stewards of the environment. The first suggestion proposed by C4C is to refer to them as such instead as well in order to avoid the spreading of misinformation. When it comes to sections referring to the implementation of policies, Joanita Babirye believes that women should be viewed from a positive angle especially when it is about who could be responsible or lead in creating action (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022).

It has become clear by now that women should not be viewed as a homogeneous group. One alternative that is suggested is to focus on specific categories of women in policy documents. That is because:

“Some women have been empowered enough economically that they can now buy and own land. As for other women, it is really hard for them to even afford to buy land or access or own land or have a say in the policy change. [...] We (women) are different and we are faced with unique challenges that need to be clearly identified” (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

Therefore, socio-economic differences among women should be highlighted (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022). So should every unique difference in characteristics that women have. To do so, there is a need for a deeper understanding and reflection of how women contribute. Women might be vulnerable; however, they are indeed contributing in many ways as previously mentioned several times. If policy makers gain a solid understanding of that, then they will be able to support women more and create space for them in the processes of climate action at national, regional and global level. There is little documentation of what is happening on the ground; therefore, Miriam Talwisa suggests that policymakers should start with that if we want to have a better representation of women in policy documents as currently, a good number of policies are not reflective of the realities on the ground.

*“For example, if we could have a documentation of what happens to the women in in urban centres highlighting how they are affected and who they are, for example, what kind of women do we have? Do we have women living with with disabilities? Yes. How are they particularly affected by the effects of climate change? We have women that have managed to go to school and they're educated, but they are not employed. How are they? How are they vulnerable to the effects of climate change? We have women coming from different cultures and religions and beliefs. How does the crisis of climate change affect them?*

*We have women who are single parents. How are they being affected by the effects of climate change? Yeah. So that way, if we understand their struggles, if we understand their vulnerabilities, then I think we can be able to come up with programs, with initiatives that directly aligned to their strength, their plight”* (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Similarly, Bihunirwa Medius representing GEDA argues that we cannot blanket women as one category. “We must be able to categorize the levels of vulnerability on different groupings”, she says. In a more elaborate way, she explains how the grouping could be done; women who have gone to school and are employed have different vulnerability levels. Women with special needs or pregnant and lactating women, what are their vulnerability levels? (B. Medius, personal communication, August 6, 2022).

Policymakers have been “accused” of doing armchair research which affects the validity of their findings. Gertrude Kabusimbi agrees that policymakers should gain a more realistic perspective of the realities on the ground by interacting with women’s group, women activists, in order to have correct information. By not doing so, they will never know the number of women who are vulnerable or the percentage who has overcome their vulnerable position. In addition, gender equality should be institutionalized in every process. This could be done by acknowledging that men and women have different needs, roles and abilities and a positive alternative in policymaking could be the utilization of a gender lens (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022). She also believes that when women are included so that policymakers can generate data, that is a rare phenomenon. They usually depend on old data,

because they assume they know the situation on the ground. Thus, this could be changed so that policy documents can reflect what transition is taking place (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022).

According to Sostine Namanya, it is not fair nor accurate to use a narrative that labels women as vulnerable, and instead policymakers should reframe it and focus on a more active role. From her personal experience with working with women with a community in Uganda, who are internally displaced and live in a camp for the last seven years with no justice nor resources (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). However, Sostine Namanya gains inspiration from all these women because they always have a positive mindset despite the hardships they have been through. She argues that in conversations, she avoids defining women as vulnerable as much as possible because in her opinion, if women are given the right tools with the right knowledge, they can be custodians of knowledge especially when it comes to issues of environmental conservation. That is because women due to the gender roles in the country, they interact with the environment on a daily basis and they have immense knowledge and power. They understand how the ecosystem operates, and know which seeds to plant in what season, which types of trees are not to cut down because they can be used for medical purposes. If women are not given the position in society they deserve, this knowledge will remain hidden. Sostine Namanya asks herself, is this a question of power? Are they afraid that women will become more powerful? (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). Therefore, the issue in her opinion are power dynamics;

*“If we (women) are doing 76% of Uganda's agricultural work and feeding this nation. How is that weak? I think the alternative is to be seen as equals accelerators of development”* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

#### 7.2.4. Intersectionality: a theoretical approach in practice

Considering the data, intersectionality seems to be known by all women interviewed. Thus, this shows that even though research values this approach, it is actually equally respected in practice. This section refers to how women in CSO's perceive the term, what barriers or advantages they have encountered or experiencing while applying intersectionality in practice, and lastly, I will list the groups of women which are the most affected by climate change and need extra attention in policy documents, as thoroughly explained by the CSO's representatives.

One important aspect of hands-on practical project implementation is intersectionality, according to SWAGEN. That is because resource distribution needs to be fair and inclusive, and in order to do so, all different identities in a community need to be considered. SWAGEN first does *stakeholder mapping* and then they identify all the different categories of people, such as people with disabilities, the youth, the elderly, etc. Their entry point is always women, however by using an intersectional lens, men who are marginalized are also benefited. In their experience, the most vulnerable groups of women within diverse communities are poor women, people living with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous women and rural women (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022).



According to NAPE, Intersectionality starts with the conclusion that women are not homogeneous. Within the context of climate change, Sostine Namanya says, able bodied women are affected differently than women who live with a disability. In this occasion of a climate disaster, the former group of women can possibly move and react faster which gives them a clear advantage. Therefore, women with disabilities do not get the same changes and opportunities, and NAPE's work aims to highlight and address that. In addition, women who are survivors of violence are taken into careful consideration because of their past experiences. Their confidence has already been shattered, and they are viewed as victims, so NAPE tries to build their self-confidence up and include them in their projects/trainings. Similarly, women who live in refugee camps experience life in violent environments and they need specific attention. In addition, economic injustice is a wide issue as there are many poor women who struggle to put food on their table and take their children to school. Sostine Namanya also talks about an important angle of intersectionality which is about how whiteness plays a role in how black voices are heard. Therefore, NAPE makes sure to teach black women and girls that there are not enough spaces available for them, especially in international spaces and they shed light on that by having discussions, creating solutions and coming up with ideas. Therefore, Sostine Namanya believes that a problem cannot be solved if underlying traumas/issues are not acknowledged and she thinks that *"we can move far or fast without having intersectionality as part of our justice"* (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

The aspect of intersectionality recognizes that different groups of women have different opportunities, according to Joanita Babirye. In other words, different groups of women face climate change impacts differently. In order to address those diverse needs, C4C initiates partnerships with other organizations. They also work with different groups of people, more specifically women with disabilities such as people living with albinism and indigenous women. That is particularly relevant when they educate different groups of women on leaderships because they have to find together with them different solutions which work for them as every group comes with specific abilities (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022). To elaborate more on that, Joanita Babirye says that people who live with albinism are isolated in society and when working with them, they have to be engaged in a different way that makes them comfortable and safe. Similarly, the indigenous women with whom they work with as an organization usually struggle with poverty while depending on a small piece of land, and in the case of an extreme drought they risk of losing everything, which affects their food, money and shelter access. Thus, C4C works with them and together they put solutions into practice which increase their economic prospects (J. Babirye, personal communication, July 22, 2022).

Additionally, Miriam Talwisa argues that intersectionality is emphasized through their work because it highlights areas of vulnerability which have been neglected. For example, physical disability is taken into account due to the fact that people who have mobility restrictions experience different realities in the event of a climate disaster. Similarly, the elderly and the youth are not given enough attention by the government, and DNCO tries to compensation for their lack of attentiveness by including them in their agenda and they put them on the front. Miriam Talwisa also mentions people who live with HIV as an example, of a vulnerable group of women. In the instance of a flood or most recently the COVID pandemic, women with HIV were often unable to access their medication and struggled with food malnutrition. This can happen when climate change challenges the very core of food systems on which many people's livelihoods depend on (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022). Bihunirwa

Medius, also mentions teenage mothers as a vulnerable subgroup of women, especially the ones living in urban areas. She also states that women from fishing and pastoral communities are particularly vulnerable. Women living in urban areas have more advantages compared to women living in rural areas, however there are also women who live in slums in cities and they are placed in camps due to climate change.

At this point, it is important to mention and highlight that even women within a certain categorization (e.g., poor women, rural women, urban women, women with disabilities) are unique in their own way. Intersectionality according to Christine Bwailisa means that *“everyone is unique, everyone has different discriminations, different experiences. And then also, we are at different levels in this society. So, as you're planning, you should take this into mind”*. She also mentions an example to clarify her argument; when the target group is people with disabilities one has to understand that people within this category are unique. Therefore, intersectionality invites us to surpass our normal comforts, avoid assumptions, and go deeper in order to not leave anyone behind. Christine Bwailisa agrees with all the respondents who mentioned that women with disabilities, indigenous women, mothers, illiterate women, the youth are particularly vulnerable minority groups. Yet, she also adds on that by including LGBTIQ+ people (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

#### 7.2.4.1. Barriers & Difficulties

Intersectionality applied in practice often comes with certain difficulties along the way, as explained by the respondents. Every organization interviewed uses an intersectional approach in their work, and through their experiences they have encountered certain barriers which are all thoroughly explained in this section.

Approaching people with different and intersecting identities can be challenging at times, yet the reason behind is actively challenged back by the organizations. Intersectionality as an approach is not flawed. As Gertrude Kabusimbi mentions, when an organization can be in control of their process such as SWAGEN, they do not encounter any barrier because they take into account all the different identities. However, the lack of resources to reach out to everyone or accommodate specific needs is what creates any (additional) challenges (G. Kabusimbi, personal communication, July 25, 2022). To put that in simpler words, most venues hosting meetings or trainings even in Kampala, do not have ramp services, therefore this makes accessibility not available for women with disabilities. Even when an organization wishes to accommodate this need, most donors are not willing to resource disability support which also applies to the opportunity of having a sign language interpreter and guides” (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022). It often the case, that visually impaired and/or muted women have the wish to be included at a workshop, however the financial resources available cannot ensure that. Another challenge is met when programs are organized in communities where English is not widely spoken. Therefore, a translator needs to be hired to have everyone on included. *“It is really not the awareness of it, but the resources for us to be able to have everyone on board and not leave anyone behind”* says Miriam Talwisa (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Therefore, organizations have to find other ways to overcome these practical challenges. DNCO tries to include everyone at proposal level, however if the funders remain restrictive, then they have to come up with alternatives at implementation level. Miriam Talwisa mentions that they usually come in contact with people within the community itself who can help by being the local language translator when there is a language barrier. For their interpretation services, they either provide them with a small remuneration or when financial resources do not allow that, they highlight them as champions (M. Talwisa, personal communication, July 24, 2022).

Despite all the practical difficulties that were mentioned, everyone organization is eager to continue applying intersectional as an approach. They are willing to keep practicing it, in order to not leave anyone behind. In order to achieve gender justice, women with disabilities, survivors of GBV, women with different sexual orientations, poor women, indigenous women, and the list goes on, must be included.

*“We do not want to leave anyone behind. We want to make sure that the world we are in serves every woman however different she is. And that is the justice that we are talking about. Justice is not for a few, but it is for everybody who is living on this planet”* says Sostine Namanya (S. Namanya, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

Intersectionality brings many challenges in terms of resources and time and financial implications. However, *“at the end of the day it pays off”*, says Christine Bwailisa, *“because you are able to make a change in somebody's life”* (C. Bwailisa, personal communication, July 30, 2022).

## 8. Discussion

In this section, the three sub-questions are answered and discussed in relation to the literature and theory. In the following paragraphs, limitations and reflections upon conducting the research are highlighted, as well as, recommendations for further research.

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*How do policymakers frame the position of women and/or gender in climate change policy documents in the Ugandan context?*

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Gender mainstreaming is in fact integrated in climate policy documents in Uganda and adopted by policymakers in their discourse. Not to forget, that Uganda is one of the African countries with the highest number of references of gender issues in policies. However, the findings of the research show that there is an implementation gap and the language used to refer to women and gender in policies can be problematic and limiting.

First and foremost, gender and women are terms used interchangeably, and women are highlighted for their greater vulnerability to climate change as a homogeneous group. This, of course, leads me to discuss the lack of an intersectional approach in the policies.

Intersectionality as mentioned above, aims to deepen one's understanding of human beings as they follow multidimensional and complex lives and they encompass various identities which intersect (Hankivsky, 2014). By perceiving women as a single entity, policymakers fail to address the roots of gendered vulnerability. In addition, gender is not defined in clear terms and it appears to be a synonym to women, therefore, it excludes men for the discussion. In this case, since gender is seen as a women's issue, little to no attention is given to men's vulnerability as they are also seen as a homogenous group which has to perpetuate often unattainable gender roles and expectations (Ampaire et. al., 2019). This is linked to what was mentioned by Dioudi et. al. in regards to the "feminization of vulnerability" (Djoudi et al., 2016).

This reality is persuasive in all the documents mentioned in the findings, with only an insignificant number viewing women as active and major actors which leads to further marginalization that should be avoided. One could say that this reparative example of generational of women relates to what Van Dijk mentioned when dominant groups such as policymakers communicate their power. According to Van Dijk, a common discursive strategy which can have a significant influence is the "generalization" of a group which manipulates their social representation (Van Dijk, 2004).

Climate policies perceive gender mainstreaming as a key strategy which is a positive finding. However, the lack of an actual plan or the non-specified budget to implement gender activities creates an implementation gap. This is an issue that many policies, if not all, face and needs to be addressed. The way gender and women are viewed in policy documents makes obvious the patriarchal reality in Uganda and the existing hierarchical relations, as well as, power imbalances (Lazar, 2007).

To sum up, intersectionality is not an approach valued nor used in policy documents which interferes with the way women are viewed. Gender is seen as a "women's issue" which unfortunately implicates things further by not only creating a simplified image of women, but also discriminating men, as well. Women are treated as a homogeneous group and there is no reference to all the different subgroups existing, or the various identities that women have in reality. Finally, gender mainstreaming is incorporated into policy documents, it fails to be implemented.

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*How do women in CSOs interact with or counteract the policymaker's gender and climate change discourse?*

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Hereby, the second sub-question is discussed in relation to the theory. Following the findings section, one can argue that the discourse of women in CSOs becomes clear. However, due to the differences and mismatches which are thoroughly addressed in the last paragraph of this section, it seems that a counter-discourse to the dominant discourse has emerged. According

to the theory, the people who are normally spoken for and spoken about, may begin to develop a counter-discourse as an act of resistance to the power oppressing them (Foucault, 1970; Ehrlich et al., 2017). The women in CSOs are highly aware of the limits that a patriarchal country such as Uganda places upon them, thus they challenge the status quo by taking the reins and re-claiming their power and agency. Of course, it becomes evident that through their work, they try to empower women through the opportunities they create for them. These could manifest into trainings, workshops, business opportunities and ideas and support.

Intersectionality is an inseparable aspect of their work, and they treat women not as homogeneous group. Instead, they view every woman as a unique entity with different identifies. They also highlight that even women who hold a similar identity due to their characteristics and qualities, they still differ in their own special way. This perspective of course brings several challenges; however, intersectionality is still practiced because women in CSOs believe that no one should be left behind.

When talking about gender, women in CSOs refer to gender roles and power dynamics which links to the definition offered by Dankelman (2012, see 4.1). The discourse of policymakers carries discursive power which in modern society is often 'invisible' since it is legitimized (Foucault, 1970; Bourdieu, 1991). The reality however shows that women are aware of how women are viewed in Uganda and they do not take a passive role. As highlighted by the CSOs, even the women on the ground who are seen as victims, they do not view themselves in those terms. Of course, certain groups (e.g., indigenous, poor women, teenage mothers, etc.) are marginalized and highly vulnerable, however when are shown how to improve their livelihoods they are eager to learn and be more involved. It is also often the case, that the women who are actively engaging with the environment and are seen as vulnerable by policymakers, are the ones holding immense knowledge about the earth and the ways to protect it and themselves. The challenges that they face are due to societal expectations regarding their gender, as the findings show which are related to the patriarchal ideology that dominates the country (Lazar, 2007; Van Dijk, 2004).

Despite the development of a counter-discourse, it does not seem to have caused any polarization between policymakers and women in CSOs. This is also extended to the "dichotomy" of men and women. Women in CSOs are trying to also engage men, and address their vulnerabilities. In addition, policymakers are thought be included in two different categories. The first one seems to act according to the status quo, and the second one is supportive of a more progressive view of women. Therefore, it seems that even the dominant group (policymakers) engages with the counter-discourse and that goes to show us that one should avoid dichotomic assumptions (Ehrlich et al., 2017).

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### *What are the mismatches and/or synergies of the two discourses?*

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The gender and climate change discourse of women in CSOs and the one produced by policymakers acknowledges that women are more vulnerable compared to their male counterparts. Both support that the reasons behind their greater vulnerability are gender roles, expectations and the patriarchal environment in the country. Nevertheless, women in CSOs have raised the standards of their work by treating women as not a homogeneous group which is something that goes against the way women are treated by policymakers in documents.

As proposed, CSOs have constructed a counter-discourse which of course, shares some similarities with the dominant discourse, yet it is built by a different belief system. It seems that policy documents follow international guidelines, and thus have indeed incorporated gender mainstreaming as a tactic to address gender inequality, however women in CSOs create a better balance by following the transition happening on the ground and – at the same time – at international level. An example of that is that they use intersectionality as an approach, and they actually apply it in practice while always considering the various ways in which a community might differ. Policymakers have adopted gender relevant terms; however, they are vaguely used (Nhamo, 2014).

In addition, the discourse of women in CSOs is mostly based on a feminist ideology, yet the discourse of policymakers is based on a patriarchal ideology which sees women mainly as a vulnerable group. It is also important to note, that the discourse of CSOs has of course attempted to move beyond the framing of women as inherent victims of climate changes, yet at the same time, they also avoid portraying women as virtuous because they acknowledge the complexity of their lives (Arora-Jonsson 2011). In addition, it supported that most women who are vulnerable are struggling financially, and it is often that indigenous women face this problem. However, vulnerability is multifaceted, as it supported that even though indigenous women are most often poor, their constant interaction with the environment puts them in an advantageous position of immense knowledge which challenges their vulnerability (Arora-Johnson, 2011).

Lastly, the discourse by policymakers views as women as a single entity which is described as a vulnerable. The female representatives of CSOs agree that women are vulnerable, yet, they have provided some positive alternatives to the “victimization discourse” (see. 7.2.3.2.). These recommendations should be considered in order to make the policy documents of Uganda more reflective of the real situation on the ground.

#### **8.1.1. Limitations and reflections**

In this paragraph, I deem important to highlight all the limitations of my research accompanied by some personal reflections.

First, the most important limitation that impacted the data collection was the limited timeframe provided. Even though I extended my studies to deepen my knowledge, and give myself the opportunity to conduct more interviews, I had to unfortunately limit them due to health issues. My expectation was to conduct more interviews with female representatives from CSOs, however, I am satisfied with the data I collected through the interviews given the circumstances. In addition, I had the intention to conduct an interview with a policymaker and another interview with a scholar in order to enrich the process of collecting data which would have helped me construct the discourse by policymakers. Due to the health issues, I mentioned earlier, I was unable to proceed with those interviews.

In addition, COVID-19 restrictions hindered any potential travelling to Uganda or fieldwork in the country which I think would have been extremely beneficial. All the interviews were done online, and I believe that even though the environment created was friendly and accommodating, I would have preferred to have conducted the interviews in person in order to receive more extensive data.

These limitations can be addressed by further research, thus in the following paragraph, I mention all my suggestions for scholars who are interested in the same topic.

#### 8.1.2. Recommendations for further research

After conducting this research, some recommendations should be highlight. The most important suggestion that I would like to mention is the need for more research which will include the voices of women who are active in different areas where climate change and gender is relevant. In this research, voices from CSOs were included, however, I believe in the need to conduct further and extensive research with more female representatives from CSOs. Their voices are neglected in research and it is high time, we as scholars, unite to highlight them and make them mainstream in research in order to facilitate positive change.

In addition, more research on the ground should be conducted in order for us to further understand how different groups of women are affected by climate change, such as indigenous women, teenage mothers, poor women or women who belong in certain communities like the LGBTIQ+ community or pastoral communities. As suggested by the findings, policy documents lack real information which can only be found on the ground. This data can be collected by either policymakers themselves or other scholars interested to extend the research. Sustainability assessments could potentially be an important and useful tool to collect more accurate data about the vulnerable levels of women in order to move beyond their generalization as one group.

Lastly, one of the main considerations of FCDA is self-reflexivity. Given the circumstances mentioned, one aspect of that was not fully addressed. The findings of the research represent the data that were shared, however, in to avoid a problematic interaction with the community, one should consider collaboration with local or native scholars. Therefore, one last recommendation is to take that into consideration when conducting further research.

## 9. Conclusion

This research explored the gender and climate change discourses in Uganda through a critical feminist & intersectional lens. The focus is shifted mainly on the discourse produced by policymakers in climate change policy documents, and the discourse by female representatives of CSOs which predominantly focus on the environment, climate justice and the have a gender aspect. This thesis is deemed highly relevant and interesting because the discourse of the latter group is significantly neglected in academic research, and I personally hope to collectively facilitate change by highlighting their unique perspectives and experiences.

The strong foundation of feminist theories of this research revealed the patriarchal structures that still influence the way gender is viewed and how women are treated. Gender roles, and power dynamics within the different spheres of the Ugandan society have to be reflected upon in a careful manner in order to address them accordingly. The findings show that the discourse of policymakers is influenced by international standards which have contributed into making gender mainstreaming a standard tool in policymaking. However, there is a significant implementation gap which have to be addressed. The female representatives acknowledge the significance of the policy documents and they actually believe that they offer a strong foundation which can facilitate further change. On the other hand, viewing women as a single entity is how climate change policies treat them, and this is seen as an issue by the female representatives. They unite under the same belief that women are not a homogeneous group and there should be sub-categories of women such as indigenous women, poor women, women with disabilities/special needs. However, they also believe that despite the fact that women may belong in the same sub-category, every person is unique and every for-example disability, has to be addressed or facilitated in different ways. Gender is also treated as a women's issue which is also something that finds women from CSOs opposed to. The binarity of gender is generally perpetuated by both discourses, with one exception. A female representative from a CSOs supports the existence of many genders and helps transgender people feel seen in the trainings and workshops of her organization. This seems very interesting and progressive given the dominant ideology of the country and should be examined further.

Women's vulnerability therefore, seems to be more complicated than how policy documents present it to be. This research concludes that it is high time to start including women working on the ground in the discussion because they hold so much knowledge that could benefit the marginalized populations of the country. In addition, policymakers should avoid doing armchair research and engage more with local communities to understand deeply their struggles so as to produce policy documents that reflect their different realities.

Overall, the use of an intersectional lens has shown the following things. Intersectionality as an approach is unfortunately not utilized by policymakers as seen by the language used in policy documents. However, it seems to be a standard practice for CSOs which not only benefits women but also men who struggle with unattainable gender expectations and are marginalized themselves. CSOs seem to extremely eager to challenge all the barriers that arise when using an intersectional approach when trying to address gendered vulnerability. These barriers are usually met due to lack of capacities and insufficient funding. Nevertheless, CSOs are willing to go beyond their ways to find a solution and accommodate everyone's needs. The strong



ambition behind that is the belief that no one should be left behind, and climate justice should be intersectional in order to have a positive impact.

This research concludes that inclusive, intersectional and gender responsive climate policies need to be promoted in order to address societal embedded gender roles and expectations. Patriarchy is the main reason behind women's greater vulnerability and the demand for a stronger cooperation between CSOs and policymakers is inevitable under an intersectional thinking in order to combat the challenges of climate change. The findings of the research are rather hopeful since women's CSOs have a long history and experience in the field, and policymakers can only benefit through such a collaboration. Therefore, I believe that this should be seen as an opportunity to engage in a fruitful dialogue, on how feminist and intersectional thinking can become more central to climate policymaking and possibly address the implementation gap of gender mainstreaming in the future.

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## 11. Appendixes

### 11.1. Interview Guide

#### Interview with representatives from CSOs

## Introductory questions

- How would you yourself describe your role/ purpose/ biggest achievement
- At which level are you mostly working? (International,national,local)

After attending a training organized by the WGC at the Climate Change Conference in Bonn this year with other people from CSOs, we realized that we all have different definitions for certain concepts. So, I'd like to start off by discussing these concepts which are most relevant to this research. The reasons I am asking this question is because I do not want to define those concepts for you, because we all carry personal biases depending on our position. I'd therefore be interested to hear how you define:

- Gender (is gender seen as a women's issue in your opinion?)
- Patriarchy (**follow up**: How is it experienced in Uganda from your experience?)
- Feminism (**follow up**: Do you think that your organization follows a feminist approach, if so in what way?)

## Questions in regards to vulnerability

It is argued that women are disproportionately affected by climate change compared to men. Therefore, women are considered to more vulnerable to climate disasters and crises.

- From your experience, do you agree that women are more vulnerable compared to men?
- If you agree, where do you assign women's vulnerability to climate change? In other words, what are the **causes** of their vulnerability?
- **How** does the organization you represent **addresses** all the causes you mentioned for women's vulnerability? In others words, in what way are you trying to provide women with opportunities despite their vulnerability?

After reading literature about the policy documents in Uganda and going through them myself, I noticed that policymakers overemphasize women's vulnerability. Also, research has shown that women are largely portrayed as marginalized and vulnerable and only a small percentage of documents in Uganda describe women as major actors in agriculture, natural resource managers and agents of change.

I also shared an example in the document I sent you, we can also repeat it here:

**For example:** In the National Climate Change Policy of Uganda, the word "women" appears in association with the term "vulnerability" in six out of eight sections. Some scholars have supported that representing women in such manner, creates a simplified image for them.

- I would like to ask you what your thoughts are on that? (**Follow up**: Has your organization tried to address this framing? In what way?)
- Are there any **advantages** or **disadvantages** in regards to the position of women within the climate context caused because of this framing? (**For example**: women receive more benefits, or women are excluded from climate discussions)



- Do you think viewing women as vulnerable in that sense **perpetuates a (negative) stereotype?** (**Follow up:** If yes, does your organization try to challenge this assumption? what would you consider a **positive alternative?**)
- Have you observed any **other gender stereotypes** in the climate change discourse of policymakers?
- From your experience, do you think women **have internalized this narrative** that views them as vulnerable on the ground? If yes, in what way? If not, why? Do they know they are more vulnerable?
- Through your interaction with **policymakers**, do you think sufficient attention is given to **women's agency?** (**Follow up:** if not, do you think there a possible way to address the lack of attention?)

Follow up questions depending on the flow of the conversation:

- Do you think policymakers are making efforts to move beyond viewing women simply as vulnerable?
- Where they think this **vulnerability narrative come from** and why it is so popular?
- Why do you think women are put in this one box?

### Questions in regards to intersectionality

- Are you familiar with the term intersectionality? How would you define it?

If not: Adopting an intersectional lens means that the researcher looks at the gender and climate change nexus in a more complex analysis and moves beyond the treatment of gender as a binary where men and women are homogenous and universal groups/categories. It acknowledges that there are different identities intersecting with gender, for example: **ethnicity, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion.**

- So, in most climate change policies both men and women are reflected as a homogeneous group delinked from other dimensions of intersectionality
- When thinking of the climate change and gender nexus, do you think there are any aspects of **women's identities** that are often neglected or deemed insignificant in Uganda?
- Are you considering intersectionality in practice and in your advocacy work? (**Follow up:** if not, why not? /If yes, how and have you encountered any **barriers**)
- Is it difficult to apply an intersectional approach in practice? What would be needed to do this?
- Do you think there are any **advantages/disadvantages** when adopting an intersectional approach in practice?
- Which elements are important when adopting an intersectional approach?
- Which identities related to gender/women influence **women's vulnerability** in your experience? (For example: being poor, or pregnant)
- Would you consider **intersectionality** as an important aspect of **policymaking?** Why?
- Which groups of people and with what intersecting identities are valued the most within the climate context by policymakers? How can we bring women into this category?

- o Which women do you think are more vulnerable? Why do you think they are more vulnerable? What kind of challenges are they facing?
- o Why are you willing to continue including all people even though it is so challenging?

## 11.2. List of Codes on Atlas.ti

Code Group Manager					
Transcripts					
			+	🗑️	No Grouping
			New	Delete	Grouping
Name	Comment	Creator	Creation Date	Modifier	Modification Date
Alternative narratives		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Causes of Vulnerability		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Challenges of CSOs		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Definition: Feminism		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Definition: Gender		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Definition: Intersectionality		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Definition: Patriarchy		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Female Empowerment		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Gendered Vulnerability		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Intersectionality in Practice		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Intersectionality: Barriers & Solutions		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Quotes		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Views on Policy(-makers/ing)		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Vulnerable Sub-groups		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Ways to address Vulnerability		Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023	Eleni Georgiadi	31 Jan 2023
Result: 15 of 15 Group(s)					