



## GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE CLIMATE-WATER-MIGRATION-CONFLICT INTERACTIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

*Project: Addressing climate - and water-driven migration and conflict interlinkages to build Community Resilience in the Congo Basin. Project Policy Brief 2*



### Background

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), emergencies like diseases, armed conflict, and market disruptions from climate-induced natural disasters (droughts and floods) have significant impact on local population<sup>1</sup>. Impacts on women—generally the most vulnerable due to lower socio-economic status and limited access to information—range from limited access to resources and neglected rights to increased burden of domestic work and family responsibilities<sup>2</sup>. Effects on men, especially in the absence of livable income, vary from inability to fulfil socially allotted role as household providers, to anxiety and stress or potential health failure.

Other issues with known long-term negative consequences on socio-economic and adaptive capacity of both women and men that also reinforce gender disparity include economic constraints, socio-cultural norms, and massive migration of livestock from the Sahel region to parts of the DRC. Disasters intensify disruption of production (animal/crops) systems, competition for natural resources, physical dispossession, and loss of livelihoods triggering human migration and conflicts, so that they are seen as direct consequences of climate change (CC).

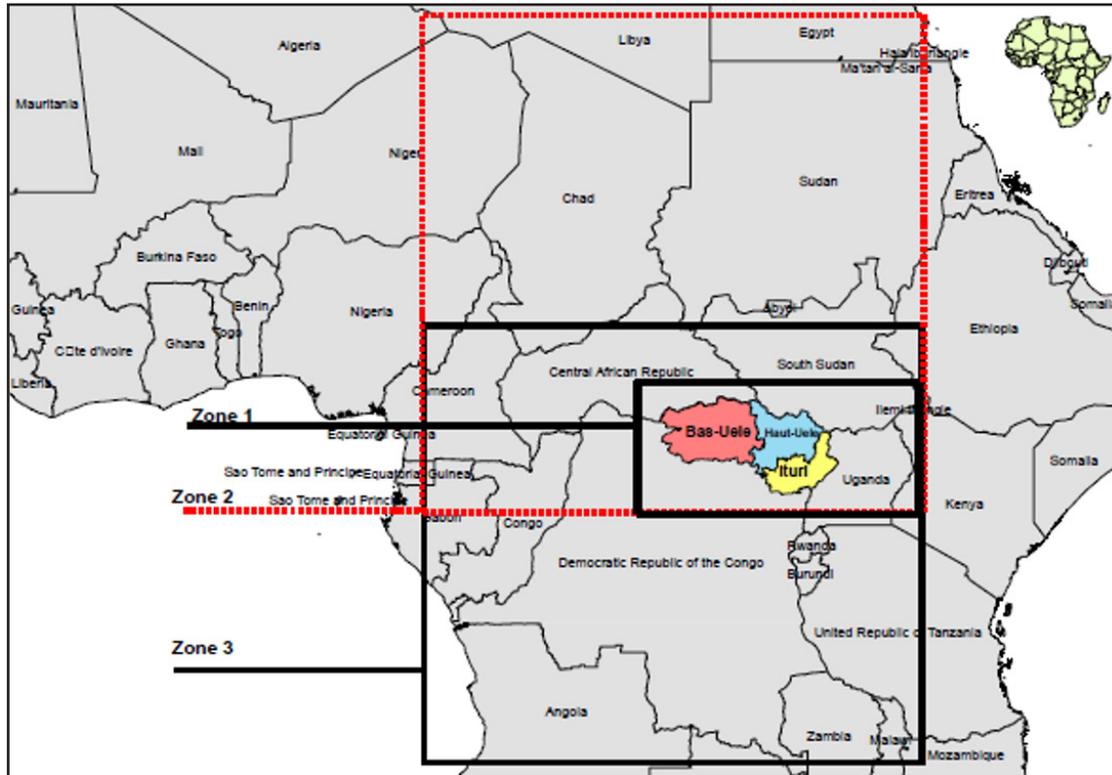
This policy brief is the second in a series of three that summarise the key messages from the Project - “**Addressing climate- and water-driven migration and conflict interlinkages to build Community Resilience in the Congo Basin**”. The Project was funded by the **International Development Research Center (IDRC- Canada)** and undertaken by the **Congo Basin Water Resources Research Center (CRREBaC)**, based at the University of Kinshasa (DRC), in collaboration with UNU-INWEH (Canada), over a period of 2019-2021. This Policy Brief is developed for attention and possible uptake by the following actors (non-exhaustive list):

- Public administration that deals with issues related to gender inequalities, such as the DRC **Ministry of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and National Solidarity Commitments**, and similar provincial gender administration services.. Elected political leaders / representatives at the national and provincial levels.
- Civil society organizations and networks such as **Nouvelle Société Civile Congolaise - NSCC** and **Groupe de Travail Climat REDD Rénové - GTCRR**, and members of women organizations in the DRC, such as **Coopérative des femmes de Haut-Uélé- COFEHU**, **Dynamics of Bas-Uélé for an integral development and the defense of the rights of women and children in rural areas - DYFEMIR**, **National Committee on Women and Development- CONAFED**, **The Women’s & Gender Studies Research Network – (WGSRN)**, **Coalition of Women Leaders for the Environment and Sustainable Development- CFLEDD**, **Women’s International League for peace and freedom**.
- International agencies (e.g. **UN Women DRC** and **United Nations Children’s Fund - UNICEF**), and humanitarian organizations.
- Intergovernmental organisations / networks that support and promote gender-equal development in Africa, such as the **African Union, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), African Development Bank (AfDB)**

## Sources and Methods

The **Project** studied three provinces (Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, and Ituri), which are recognized as the main migrant-receiving areas in the DRC (Figure 1). Five sociolinguistic groups (Fulani or Mbororo (transhumant), indigenous Pygmy peoples, Bantu, Sudanese, and Nilotic peoples of various origins) were surveyed<sup>1</sup>. Some of these settled in the 3 provinces for centuries through trade, war, and

colonization, others (Mbororo)– migrated recently; in the 1990s to 2000<sup>3</sup>. A total of 1008 individuals were surveyed in the field using household enumeration forms and survey questionnaire, focus group and semi-structured interviews. Three analytical tools - **FAO related Socio-Economic Gender Analysis, Harvard Analytical Framework**, and Gender Analysis Matrix<sup>4</sup> helped identify gender-related issues (Table 1).



**Figure 1:** Map of the study area showing the three provinces (Ituri, Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé) of the DRC. Source: modified from [5].

## Key Findings

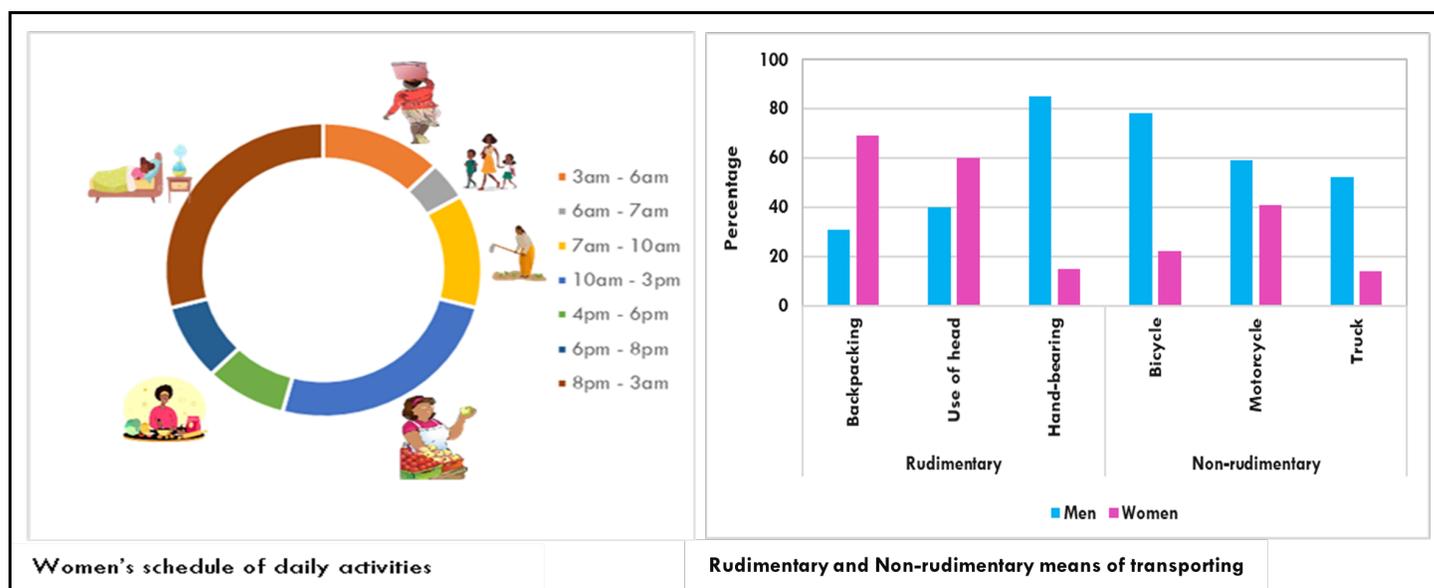
1. The observed daily women household activities in the 3 provinces (Ituri, Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé) of DRC include caring for children, the elderly and community members, provision of water and fuel, crop and livestock production, and petty trading like agropastoral and Non-Timber Forest Products - NTFP (Figure 2). Also, women use primarily rudimentary means that require sustained physical effort, resulting in negative repercussion for health.
2. The population in the 3 provinces of DRC lack access to quality water supply. The available water sources in the rural areas are drying up despite interventions while encroachment of houses and land use practices on water ways in the peri-urban and urban areas inhibits effective access. Particularly in the rural area of Haut-Uélé, collection of water (from distances of about 1 – 2 km for typical daily household water requirement of 60 – 120L), is a specific activity

of women, carried out under different climatic condition. Men's responses in Ituri (59 %), Haut-Uélé (69%) and Bas-Uélé (53%) corroborated that women play the main role in water collection.

3. 36%, 19% and 36% of women have temporary concession right to land in Ituri, Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé respectively. Women do not have same privileges as men under the customary law. Similar trend is observed for perpetual concession except for Bas-Uélé, where women enjoy same right as men. Usufructuaries; the legal right to use and derive profit from asset that belongs to another, are held more by men (Bas-Uélé (100%) > Haut-Uélé (75%) > Ituri (55%) than women.
4. Though, women are also providers of capital in households, yet, do not have same right as men because they are traditionally required to obey their husband's decisions on financial management. Most (76%) men confirmed being responsible for

**Table 1:** Description of major gender-related issues that informed the key findings in the DRC

Themes	Issues	Description
<b>Socio-economic-political practices</b> [which influences (inhibits) productivity]	Schedule of daily activities	Reflects the importance of gender roles in households and resulting vulnerabilities
	Transporting livelihood products	Via rudimentary (back packing, use of head, hand) or non-rudimentary (bicycle, motorcycle, truck) means to point-of-use
	Access to credit and income management	Inevitable for gender consideration and financial management
	Access to and control of natural resources	Natural resources (land, water, forest) are opportunities provided by nature, which are directly usable by humans to satisfy vital needs or livelihood
	Access to water supply	A basic human right, essential for achieving gender equality, sustainable development, and poverty alleviation
	Land rights	Ownership or access to land may be the underlying cause of women's limited access to water and of food security resulting in greater poverty
	Socio-political positions	The inclusion of gender in the development process of the society is a sign of governance. <i>Command</i> - a top position that involves leadership and decision making within an institution <i>Collaborative</i> - a subordinate position to Command role, in assisting management by contributing to the implementation of institution activities <i>Executive</i> - the lowest position where task is focused on implementation of decision and or directives taken by Command position.
<b>Socio-demographic and Cultural Practices</b>	Education, gender, and migratory status	Equal access to complete primary/secondary and affordable quality higher (technical/vocational) education for all is one of the strongest and most proven pillars of sustainable development.
	Household residence	The location of household residence could be contingent on migration. However, there is an interrelation between migration and gender - migration shapes socio-cultural norms (like need to adapt to new values), while gender shows 'who moves' and determines the consequences of this movement for the individual and their families
	Role of religious affiliation	Religion perpetuates gender norms in those seeking equality within religious practice. The religious institutions influence behavior of citizens and rouse disparity in the role of gender in families
<b>Reproduction, Production, and Community Life Activities</b>	Reproductive and production activities	Include household's activities such as feeding, childcare, healthcare, and resource collection
	Community life activities	Include family reunion, mourning, associative and political meetings, cultural festivities, and community work
<b>Gender and Climate Change</b>	Public perception of CC impact	CC-induced natural disasters affect all strata of the population but in different ways and to varying degrees. Public perception captures views and differential vulnerabilities.



**Figure 2:** Daily schedule of women's activities and means of transporting livelihood products in parts of DRC

managing income within the household. Also, women (33%) have less access to credit facilities than men (67%) - women are often not familiar with the culture of credit, especially, for commercial activities, and prefer to work in the field.

5. Given that achieving universal primary education (Table 1) in the DRC was troubled by myriad crises (like insurgency/political fragility, social vices, ailing economy, and other natural disasters), the level of schooling is evolving positively but slowly. However, girls are less likely to be enrolled than boys due to disparity-driven factors (such as poverty, early marriage, unwanted pregnancy, and rape victims in armed conflicts) and existing prejudices. Notable preconception is that 'schooling is a huge waste of time and financial resources' for a girl-child. Parental poverty triggers low access to basic education and drives child labor as children accompany their parents to

the field. Likewise, more men (Migrant/Non-Migrant - 100, 90%) complete higher education at all levels than women in the 3 provinces of DRC (Figure 3).

6. Both women and men belong to recognized institutions (public administration, cooperatives, and non-governmental development organizations) in the DRC. Essentially in Bas-Uélé (with the highest number of educated women), women participate in socio-political processes on the same basis as men without restrictions, and have same opportunities to study, work, resolve conflicts and contribute to provincial development. In contrast, women in other provinces are slightly less represented than men in all societal activities (Figure 4). Also, a certain balance regarding command and collaboration positions (Table 1) is noted in the provinces of Ituri and Haut-Uélé. But more women are in command positions and more men in collaboration positions in Bas-Uélé. Likewise, there

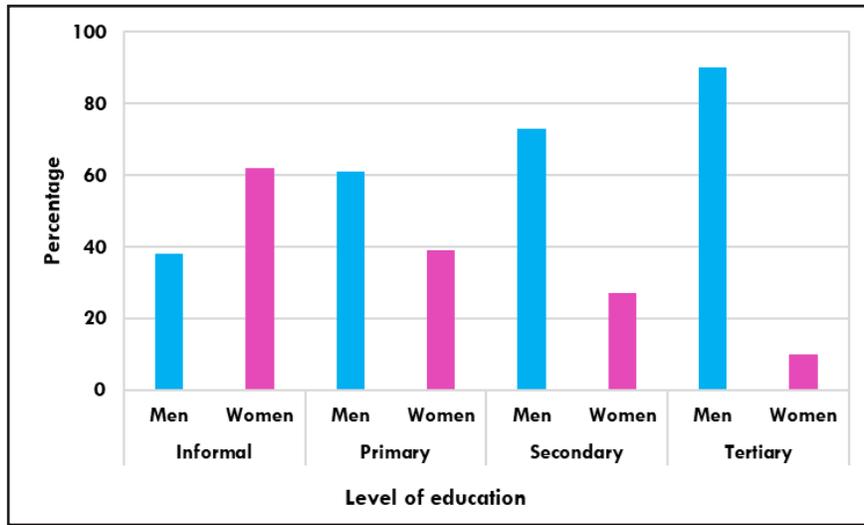
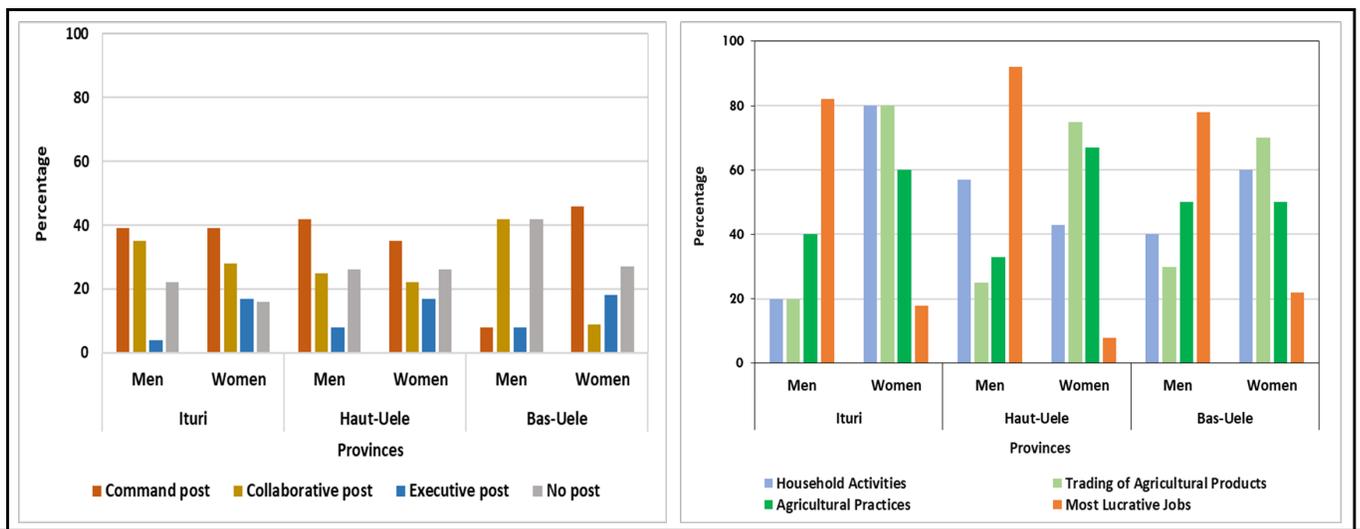


Figure 3: Levels of completed education by gender in parts of DRC



NB: Household activities (Feeding, childcare, healthcare, and resource collection); Most lucrative jobs (Gold panning, Civil service, Daily labour, and Trade); Trading of agricultural products (Non-timber forest products, honey, fruits)

Figure 4: Communal/Associative positions, Household and Productive activities by gender in parts of DRC

are more women in the provinces of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé in executive position relative to Ituri. However, there are less women without a post in Ituri province, compared to the other provinces. Indicating that Bas-Uélé shows a positive outlier as regards gender equality and women empowerment.

7. Men migrate more than women to urban or peri-urban areas in search of better livelihoods, while women, who are responsible for domestic management, remain in rural areas with the entire family burden. Also, the most lucrative production activities (gold panning, civil service, handicrafts, large scale trade and daily labour) are exclusively carried out by men while most women [Ituri (80%), Haut-Uélé (75%) and Bas-Uélé (70%)] resort to less remunerative subsistence activities – essentially trading of agricultural products - which restricts mobility, increases vulnerability to extreme natural events (climatic and random environmental conditions) and reduces employment opportunities. Thus, enforcing the power of men over women in the provinces even more (Figure 4).
8. Religious affiliation (Table 1) influences citizens' behavior and disparity in gender roles in the 3 provinces of DRC. The dominance of men in household management is supported by religious belief and more men (64%, 56%, 60%, 81%, 53%, 54% and 67%) than women attested to male dominance over women in at least seven (Catholics, Protestants, Kimbanguists, Muslims, Revivalist, Jehovah's Witnesses and Animist) religious institutions respectively, except for non-believers who were indifferent. Also, religious institutions

constitute the framework for the exchange of information, particularly, through affiliated institutionalized women group.

9. Although, both men and women participate in community and associative activities (Table 1) in the 3 (Haut-Uélé (61%), Bas-Uélé (61%) and Ituri (30%)] provinces but women's inputs are related to traditionally constructed roles (childcare, healthcare, and communal maintenance). Also, more adult women than men are involved in planning of community non-profit activities but without same prestige as men. The same is true of political activities, where women are often excluded from political decision-making but are at the fore front of mobilization. Suggesting that women participation in communal activities are limited to socially defined gender roles and there is lack of recognition for their leadership initiative.
10. On average, 62% (men) and 58% (women) responders in the 3 provinces of DRC acknowledged the effect of CC, while 38% (men) and 42% (women) did not recognize the effect. During the dry season, agricultural calendar is disrupted by increasing heat with resulting impact on health of farm workers (usually, women and children), which in turn lowers agricultural production (Figure 5). Also, the impact of CC is felt in household food supply through reduction of NTFP such as honey and fruits, which women travel long journey into the forest to obtain because men migrate seasonally or permanently to cities in search of more reliable incomes. Essentially, increasing vulnerabilities of women.

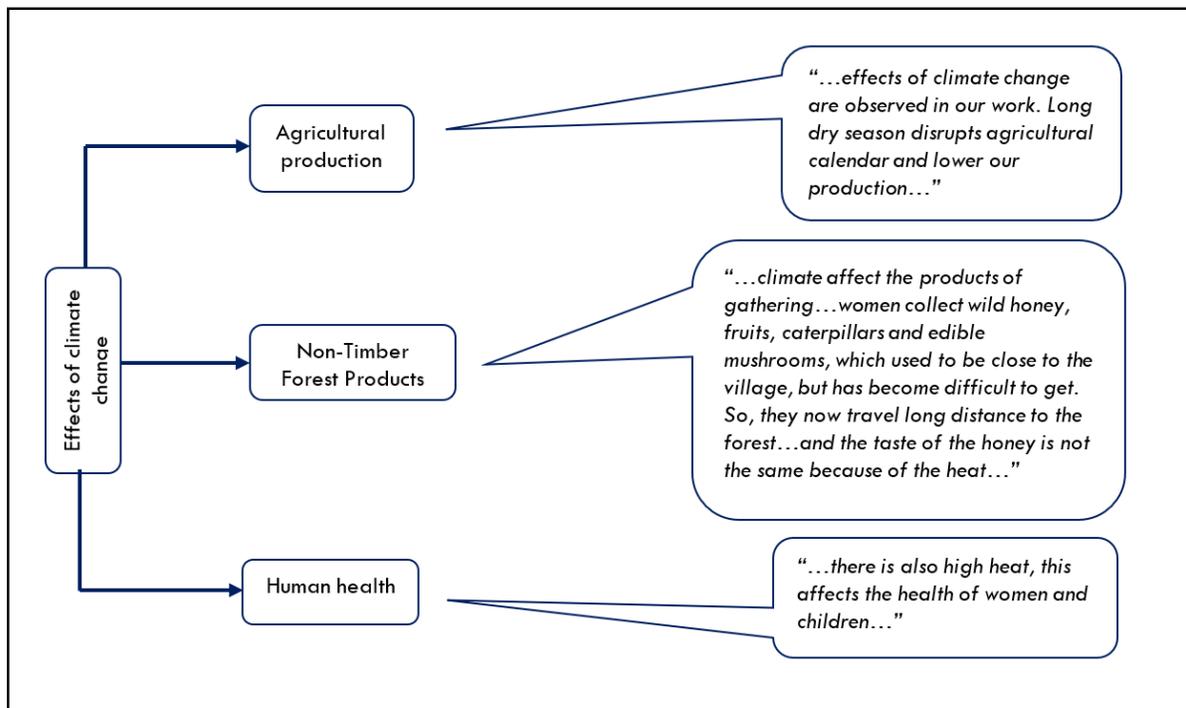


Figure 5: Public perception to the effects of climate change in the DRC

## Implications and Recommendations

Due to women and girls' engagement in a wider range of activities and use of predominantly rudimentary means of resources, they are relatively domestically overworked than men and boys. As such, exhausted, deprived of time for other productive (such as girls having time for schooling/studying) and social activities, with resultant negative impact on their health. A more even distribution of domestic chores among household members and provision of safely managed water and alternative energy production facilities, may ease workload and improve female productivity and health.

Rights to access and control of resources (land, water, labor-enhancing tools/facilities, and credit – e. g. to employ artisans) in the named provinces of the DRC are skewed. While men have unhindered concession to land (temporary/perpetual) and even the legal right to use and derive profit from asset that belongs to another, women's access and right to resources like land are limited - endangering their contribution to agro-practices and food supply, among others. Improving land tenure security and enabling women's access to resources such as credit, will likely improve food security, economic development, and women empowerment in the named provinces of the DRC. The same conclusion is supported by other relevant studies<sup>6</sup>.

Despite women's contribution to economic and political development in some cases, their influences are curtailed in household financial management and they are often excluded from political decision-making regardless of being involved in mobilization. Rural women in parts of DRC not exploring credit facilities, especially, for commercial activities – further limit their influences on household monetary matters. Again, that the most lucrative productive activities are exclusively carried out by men while most women are involved in lower profit-making ventures, worsens the limitation even more. Encouraging women/girl-child education, enlightenment on household financial management through institutionalized gender groups, and fair political/leadership engagement may be a reasonable intervention pathway.

The effect of climate change in the provinces of DRC, noted as disruption of agro practices during the dry season by increasing heat and shortage in household food supply through reduction of NTFP, intensifies women vulnerabilities. Farm workers who bear the health impact of rise in temperatures are usually women and children. Also, those involved in travelling long distances to source and trade forest products are, essentially, women. This suggests that with the risks of CC, women will have to work harder spending more energy. But the bigger implication is that effects of CC have wider consequences and are not gender-neutral in the provinces of the DRC, as all these - increase in women vulnerabilities, reduction of agro-production, and

drop in food supplies - are all linked to CC. To ease women's exposure and cushion the wider effect of CC, measures such as - apt climate and water monitoring, and improvement of women's technical capacities in agro production (e. g. crop irrigation and use of CC-resilient seeds and crops), conservation practices (crop rotation and agro forestry) and preservation techniques of agro products – may be appropriate. Investments in developing healthcare infrastructure and training adequate personnel should also be intensified in the DRC.

Overall, the highlighted current socio-economic-political-cultural practices in parts of DRC are essentially, gender discriminatory and widens differential vulnerabilities, particularly, against women. Specific measures to reduce gender inequalities, abate the need to migrate, and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities in the context of Climate-Water-Migration-Conflict nexus, may include:

- Significant improvement of basic human needs throughout the DRC including access to safely managed water facilities, alternative energy production technologies like biomass energy and access to healthcare facilities. This should help reduce domestic workload and improve productivity and health.
- Facilitation of inclusive land tenure security, and access to economic resources like credits and other agricultural inputs (e.g. labor-enhancing tools/facilities) to improve women's contribution to agro-production, food security and economic development.
- Integration of both gender in decision-making platforms as it relates to resource management like water (water management committees), education, communal and political administration. This should inform and consolidates dialogues within stakeholders, create gender sensitive communication tool and establish structures for mediation and conflict resolution – to promote gender equality.
- Sustainable improvement of climate and water monitoring for development of e. g. famine early warning systems, particularly, Uélé sub-basin (identified hotspot for drought) in Bas-Uélé province. Also, raising women's technical capacities in agro-production like use of CC-resilient seeds and crops, conservation practices and preservation techniques of agro-products, for resilient adaptation to CC.

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