Uganda’s Health and climate stakeholders’ Pre-COP 28 position statement.

Preamble

The twenty eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement known as COP28/CMP18/CMA5 will be held from, 30 November-12 December 2023 in UAE, Dubai.

Uganda’s climate has been changing over time, with the average temperature across the country rising and the frequency of hot days increasing. These changes in the climate have contributed to significant extreme weather events including increased frequency and intensity of droughts, floods, heatwaves, and landslides. Climate change has significant direct and indirect health impact on the health and wellbeing of the Ugandan people and poses a threat to the health system. Climate change has for example aggravated the occurrence of water-borne diseases such as dysentery, cholera, hepatitis E; vector-borne diseases especially malaria; respiratory diseases; and malnutrition-related illnesses further straining the health system and hindering access to health services by populations, constraining achievement of universal health coverage.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, health systems are fragile, weak, and inadequately funded with less potential to contain shocks and stresses due to health emergencies and climate change as has been demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The health system should thus be climate resilient so that despite an unstable climate, it should anticipate, respond to, cope with, recover from and adapt to such shocks and stresses, to bring sustained improvements in population health.

On the 14th of November 2023, ahead of COP28, stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, and private sector convened at the inaugural Health and Climate Change symposium at Protea Hotel in Kampala and identified priority actions that will contribute to building a low carbon, climate adaptive and resilient health system. Incorporating these recommendations into Uganda’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and advocating for them under the UNFCCC negotiation processes will continue to increase the visibility of health and contribute to building resilient health systems in Uganda and across the globe. Below are our recommendations.

- Reduce health sector emissions through solarization of health care facilities and health care services such as refrigeration of vaccines, proper management of medical wastes e.g sorting at the source and adopting smart waste management approaches.
- Incorporate health considerations including Sexual Reproductive Health Rights in Uganda’s planned National Adaptation plan (NAP) based on outcomes from the VAA and HNAP.
- Advocate for health to be maintained as a standalone theme in the global goal for adaptation (GGA) framework planned for adoption at COP 28.
• Strengthen climate resilience of health infrastructure and integrate nature-based solutions that modify the micro-environment around health facilities and protect against natural disasters such as storms, strong winds and rains.
• Leverage and build capacity for the Community Health Workforce to promote changes in health behaviour at household level for climate change mitigation and adaptation while collecting data for health impact of climate change and evidence for actions / intervention providing health co-benefits.
• Invest in climate surveillance, improved early warning, and response systems for climate sensitive health hazards.
• Formulation of a national health insurance policy should take into consideration and have coverage for climate related health risks and disasters.
• Broaden Uganda’s ‘unconditional’ actions with domestic financial resources to include mitigation and adaptation actions in the health sector.
• Allocate ear marked climate and health finance domestically and supplement this with funding from multilateral channels such as GEF, GCF, Adaptation fund and private finance.
• Advocate through the G77+China and Least Developed Countries negotiation groups for developed countries to fulfil climate finance commitments and ensure that these are additional and not re-allocation from other health / climate focused allocations.
• Advocate for streamlining the financial mechanisms making them more accessible and predictable.
• Foster policies that promote ecological farming which ensures healthy farming and healthy food for today and tomorrow, by protecting soil, water and climate, promotes biodiversity, and does not contaminate the environment with chemical inputs or genetic engineering.
• Foster a health centred just transition that maximises the health benefits of transitioning to cleaner energy sources and protects the planet from emissions that contribute to global warming.