

Exploring gender differences in household food security and implications for climate change adaptation in East Africa

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Introduction

- The potential impacts of climate change on food security in East Africa, while complex and variable due to highly heterogeneous landscapes, are a cause for concern.
- Significant knowledge gaps still exist, especially regarding the assessment of adaptation options in different environments and how these might be appropriately targeted to different types of households to reduce food insecurity.
- This study aims at addressing this challenge by learning from households that are doing better than others across different areas.

Materials and methods

- We use household survey data collected through a detailed farm characterisation tool called 'IMPACTlite' and implemented in 2012 in East Africa (data.ilri.org/portal/dataset/).
- The surveys took place in the following three sites: Rakai (Kagera Basin, Uganda), Wote (Makueni, Kenya) and Lushoto (Usambara, Tanzania). It covered 68 villages and 600 households.
- We use a logistic regression model to analyse the factors influencing household food security. The selected factors were: income, assets, labour, crop and activity diversification, agricultural yield and market orientation.

Results

There are (too) many food insecure households in all the sites. Female-headed households are less food secure than male-headed households.

For the female-headed households, access to productive assets is key, as is receiving extension support and information regarding agricultural and marketing practices that encourage crop diversification and enhanced productivity and sales.

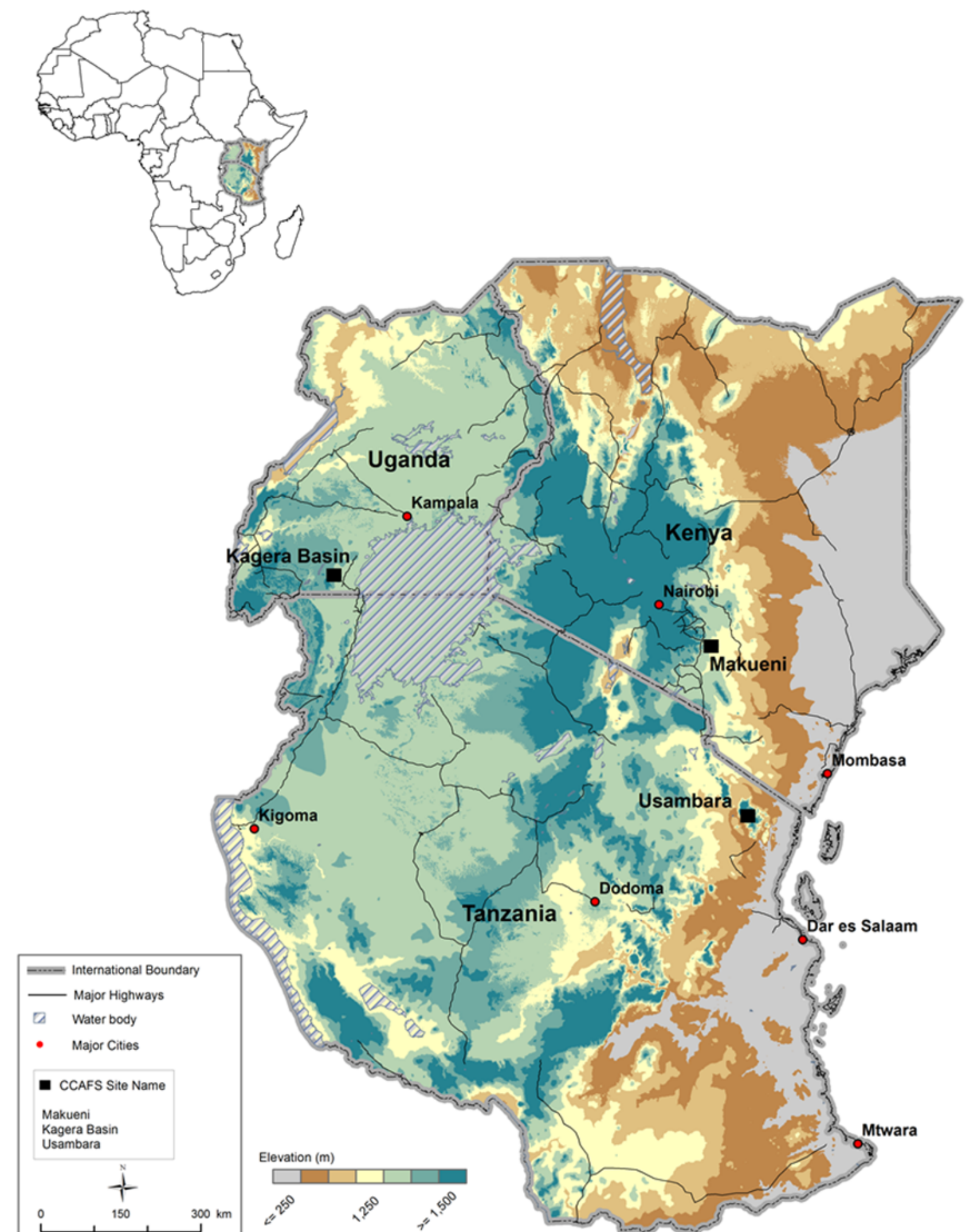
Crop diversification, productivity (i.e. crop yields), and incomes are positively correlated with increased food security.

Actions that address underlying inequalities in governance systems and institutions supporting food systems, and the social norms that perpetuate them are elements that could make the biggest difference in terms of households food security.

Research into use

Understanding the key factors that contribute to households food security and applying a gender lens in doing so, has practical implications in terms of:

- Agricultural interventions, options and management strategies that are likely to benefit female-headed households as well as male-headed households.
- Targeted interventions that consider site-specific characteristics and factors (agro-ecological zone; type of production system; socio-economic conditions, institutional environment, etc.).



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