

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FOR RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE | UGANDA

In Uganda, women make up a large part of the country's agricultural workforce, yet the importance of their role remains largely unrecognized. Their voices and concerns as farmers are scarcely heard at the national and global levels. The result is a disproportionate mismatch between rural women's voices and decision-making roles and their enormous contribution to rural climate change action.

"Women's Empowerment for Resilience and Adaptation Against Climate Change" has formed an association of women-led groups that collect individual-savings of at least USD 1 once a week to generate a pool of funds, from which women borrow and invest into income-generating activities that address climate change. This initiative also empowers women undertake land planning, agro-forestry and soil conservation practices and use energy saving stoves.

By integrating gender into agriculture-related climate change activities and policy, this project enables rural women to become important agents of change and innovators.

Key facts

- More than 1,600 women-led associations have so far pooled USD 2.8 million, from which women borrow and invest funds into innovative, scalable and replicable activities that address climate change.
- This project has empowered more than 250,000 women, who are now economically independent and have increased access to production resources, which has increased the power of their voices.
- About 182,000 women now own and have control over the land they use. Almost 250,000 women have and own property, and generate an income of at least USD 300 per month.

The problem

While women play an important role in agriculture and natural resource management in Uganda, they have greater financial and resource constraints, and lower levels of access to information and services than men. Because of these gender inequalities, women face unique challenges when it comes to adapting to climate change.

Rural women's workload, like biomass and water collection, is affected by natural disasters. A changing climate and scarce natural resources has consequences on family nutrition, child care and education. Cultural norms related to gender roles may limit the ability of women to respond to and make quick decisions in the face of climatic events. For example, in some households where men are working off-farm in cities, women may lack the power to make timely farming decisions and to convince their husbands to agree to new practices.

The solution

Women's participation is essential for sustainable development and climate change adaptation. This project aims to achieve women's empowerment by enabling women to achieve equal control over the factors of production and to participate equally in the development process. This includes involving women in the decision-making process to achieve balance of control between men and women over the factors of production, without one in a position of dominance.

"Women's Empowerment for Resilience and Adaptation Against Climate Change" is a community of 1,642 women-led associations, representing more than 250,000 women, that have pooled together their individual savings to generate a fund of USD 2,875,752. The initiative is run by RUCODE, a Ugandan NGO, with financial support from UNDP-GEF, CARE International, Plan International, CORDAID Netherlands, and USAID.

Women involved in this initiative borrow from this pool of savings to invest in innovative, scalable and replicable activities that catalyze action towards a low-carbon and highly resilient future.

The pool of self-sustaining funds continues to grow annually and is used to empower and inspire women as catalysts of innovation and drivers of new emerging solutions that offer concrete results-driven action on climate change.

The initiative promotes solar energy for rural domestic lighting, fruit and fish drying, water irrigation technology for dry season agriculture, and agro-processing activities to diversify and strengthen women's income-earning opportunities.

Helping the planet

The women involved in this activity have played strong role in adopting low-carbon technologies, spreading knowledge about climate change, and urging government and businesses to take action.

The activity has lobbied and advocated for the support of policies on energy systems, industrial processes and land use. It also advocates for increased research and development of animal- and crop-resistant varieties and effective technology transfer.

During the past five years, more than 1,800 hectares of wetland has been conserved. The adoption of clean energy technologies has reduced carbon emissions from bush burning, charcoal burning and tree cutting. More than 34,000 energy-saving stoves have been constructed in thousands of households, reducing deforestation by 8%.

The initiative reports, shares and verifies information on its emission reductions with NGO networks, including the Climate Action Network Uganda, UNDP Global Environment Facility Programme and joint programmes of government ministries.

Helping people

The activity has created new economic opportunities for women farmers. This has enabled women to access information and technologies, cultivate entrepreneurial and marketing skills, and gain the ability to discuss and negotiate and understand policy issues that affect them as farmers.

Women have been empowered with measures that are building their resilience to the effects of climate change. For example, as a direct result of this initiative: 218,294 women now have access to clean water; 253,644 women farmers earn an income from value-chain agricultural production and marketing; 198,640 women were able to improve their families' nutrition; 1,835 women use solar energy; and 135 women's groups harness honey from bee-hives, earning an income of USD 540,000 from honey sales annually.

All women participating in the project have equally participated in the decision-making process, policy-making, planning and administration. The involvement of women in needs assessment, project design, implementation and evaluation has helped improved the project management.

Insights from local women and men have formed the basis of the climate change adaptation and mitigation activities, enhanced self-reliance and ownership of outcomes, and have strengthened the capabilities of institutions and community-based groups to form partnerships, work together and engage in a participatory process from project inception.

Spillover effect

This activity is scalable and can grow in size by setting up new branches, increasing delivery capacity of the central team, building the staff and team capabilities, raising funds and investment and developing the organizational capacity and systems. The activity has formed strategic partnerships with other organizations that has allowed for the transfer of knowledge and a sense of common values and mission.

A strong, continued commitment to gender mainstreaming is one of the most effective means for RUCODE to support promotion of gender equality at all levels, in research, legislation, policy development and in activities on the ground, and to ensure that women as well as men can influence, participate in and benefit from development efforts.

By December 2019, the "Women's Empowerment for Resilience and Adaptation Against Climate Change" project aims to enhance sustainable land use and build a climate resilient community of 454,680 rural women and their families along the River Nile, Lake Victoria, Lake Kyoga basin and The Greater Karamoja Region to benefit 3,182,760 people.

More information

Digital assets are available for download at: <http://bit.ly/m4c-assets>

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