

Building Climate Resilience with Rural Women of Kasese District, Western Uganda Workshop Highlights



Group photo, presenters Clovis (seated in front with colorful shirt), Violet (front row left in red), Jostas (last row, far right in white shirt) and Doreen (second row on right in white shirt)

On April 7, 2022, the Rwenzori Center for Research and Advocacy ([RCRA](#)) and [1,000 Women's Gardens for Health and Nutrition](#) hosted a workshop in Kasese Town for 25 women (among them, 8 adolescent mothers) and 5 men from villages in five sub-counties. Participants were invited based on the interest and leadership they have shown as active organic vegetable gardeners and community members.









Through expert presentations, experience-sharing, small group work and brainstorming, participants learned about the global and local causes of climate change, and local actions to mitigate negative impacts on their environment, livelihoods and family health. Most communities in Kasese District are already experiencing changes in the climate such as delayed rains, irregular rainy seasons, and hotter temperatures (see weather predictions, Rwenzori region).

All invitees attended despite heavy rainfall and delayed travel by public transport, and all remained to the end, enjoying light breakfast at arrival, lunch, and farewell tea, as well as a t-shirt and notebook.

PRESENTATIONS (in Luganda, Rutoro and local Lukonjo, translated as needed by RCRA team)

1. **Dr. Viola Kyisakye, Dean and Lecturer, School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (SAES), Mountains of the Moon University (MMU), Fort Portal** provided a broad overview on the topic of global warming – What is it? What are the causes? How does it affect climatic conditions globally and locally?
2. **Mr. Clovis Kabaseke, Lecturer, Director Toro Botanical Gardens and Food, Feed and Forest Project, SAES, MMU** presented on climate resilience – What does that mean? What local actions can we take to build resilience related to water, energy, soil, and organic food production?

Prediction for Rwenzori region

Season	Historically	Prediction
Dec, Jan & Feb		
March, April & May		
June, July & Aug		
Sept, Oct & Nov		

Resilience: Ability to bounce back from the natural disaster or any other adversity and adapt well to changes in your life.

3. **Ms. Doreen Kansiime, Horticulturalist and Coordinator, 1,000 Women's Gardens for Health and Nutrition, RCRA** presented on the roles that women play in building resilience to climate change and supporting healthy families, providing examples of agroecological gardens, tree planting and water harvesting.

"We need to join hands together to protect and conserve the natural resources around us and use them sustainably for the health of our families."

4. **Mr. Jostas Mwebembezi, Executive Director, RCRA** presented on how good health and family planning build resilience to climate change impacts. How are family planning, good health and climate change resilience related? Why do we need an integrated approach to improve family and community welfare?

"Women should be given rights to land access and plant their trees for future benefits as they play a big role in building climate resilience." – participant comment

5. The Kasese **District Environmental Officer** attended and fielded questions from participants.



GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group A Question: You and your community are facing delayed rains and longer dry seasons. What can you do keep your gardens and trees healthy? How can the community work to conserve water?



- ⇒ Intensive mulching of soil to keep it moist and control erosion.
- ⇒ Planting on raised beds to maintain moisture content in the soil.
- ⇒ Use organic manure and composts to add nutrients into the soil and maintain its moisture holding capacity.
- ⇒ Practice reforestation to increase and maintain the patterns of rainfall.
- ⇒ Harvest rainwater and avoid farming in wetlands.

Group B Question: Your family and community sometimes do not have enough to eat, and children are ill too often. Life is hard and it may get harder with the changing climate. What can you do as a household to improve the nutrition and health of your children? How are gardens, nutrition, health and the environment related?

- ⇒ By feeding children on all types of food, mostly vegetables, from a kitchen garden,
- ⇒ Maintaining sanitation and hygiene at home,
- ⇒ Taking children for immunization programs, if any,
- ⇒ Sleeping under a mosquito net,
- ⇒ Drinking clean boiled water,
- ⇒ Planting fruit trees to get fruits for both the children and the adults in the family,
- ⇒ Using neem as pesticide and a medicine for sick people,
- ⇒ Minimize usage, dumping and burning of plastics and polythene.

How are gardens, nutrition, health and environment related? (participant comments)

"Gardens lead to good nutrition and healthier lives, and good nutrition and healthier lives lead to conservation of the environment. If people have what to eat and are not diseased, they will not need to encroach on the environment like excessively cutting down trees for charcoal or wetland draining for farming."

"Kitchen gardens provide healthier foods that we eat to get energy and improve nutrition that keeps our body healthy in a good environment."

"Conserving the environment is a key to good health."

"If we eat organic vegetables and fruits, we will have fewer pressures on clinics and hospitals."

WORKSHOP ACHIEVEMENTS

1. RCRA and 1,000 Women's Gardens pioneered and successfully carried out an entirely local workshop on urgent and complex issues related to climate change impacts and mitigation strategies for rural communities of Kasese District, creating a model for adaptation and replication throughout Uganda.
2. Participants gained knowledge, awareness and action plans to take back to their communities to share and implement.
3. Participants, including adolescent mothers, felt empowered to face climate change with strategies that will protect their livelihoods and families.

NEXT STEPS

⇒ Commitment by all participants to raise awareness of friends and neighbors on climate change and concrete actions they can take to build resilience at household and community levels.

'I have transferred the information of climate resilience to my fellow youth during church choir practices and at the community garden to other young mothers, and tried to share home to home on the dangers of activities like deforestation for charcoal burning, firewood, wetland reclamation for agriculture. Most have come to realize why the weather patterns have changed.' participant comment post-workshop

"As a young mother of two children, I have decided to go for family planning, and sensitizing fellow village youth about how our environment is put under pressure through river bank encroachment and deforestation in search for farming space, especially if there is no proper spacing and planning of births, especially with the young generation." participant comment post-workshop

⇒ Continuation and expansion of organic gardening, tree planting, rainwater harvesting and peer education on reproductive health by RCRA/1,000 Women's Gardens for Health and Nutrition.

⇒ Strengthen RCRA-MMU collaboration on multiple levels – student internships, future staff recruitment, collaborative action-research projects, MOU.

"Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the workshop. I was inspired by how much you (RCRA/1,000 Women's Gardens) actually do for the women farmers in Kasese. I know we can do so much if we formalize this collaboration and I am really looking forward to the future. Dean Violet Kisakye, MMU

**Please contact RCRA for more information or copies of the workshop presentations:
rcrauganda@gmail.com.**