

How cooperatives in Uganda are battling climate change

Climate change in Uganda

Climate change is currently a threat to sustainable development in Uganda due to drastic changes in weather patterns or unpredictable weather changes. Uganda has experienced increased adverse weather patterns such as devastating floods in some parts of Eastern and Mid-western Uganda, prolonged drought in the North, Landslides in the eastern Uganda, the raising levels of lakes Victoria and Albert that has caused mass displacement of people near and around the lake shores.

With cooperatives across the country in different sectors of the economy including Agriculture, Energy, Finance (SACCs), Health, Housing and Mining. All the mentioned cooperatives have in one way been affected by Climate change in Uganda.

With support from government and development partners, cooperatives have played a critical role in finding climate change adaption solutions and fostering drastic action given their nature of collective collaboration where people are united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

Case scenario of the effects of Climate change in Uganda

Over 50 farmers in Kasese municipality are counting losses in the millions of shillings after all their fish ponds were swept away or covered up by flash floods that ravaged the entire Nyamwamba valley from uphill Kilembe to Kasese town in the western part of Uganda. This is because of poor farming practice around the mountain (**New vision newspaper**). According to World Bank report since 2013, the District has been grappling with floods that often cause river banks to burst. The increase in heavy rainfall is attributed to the changing climate patterns and rapid loss of forest cover, due to trees being cut down to be used as fuel.

Climate change effects like Increase of water levels in the lakes across the country especially Lake Victoria has led to displacement of agriculture mainly fishing activities

near the lake and their crops being submerged in water. This is a huge threat to food security and will have a negative impact on their social economic development in the area.

In the Eastern part of Uganda, farmers are struggling with landslides that have buried most of crops and peoples' homesteads. Agricultural cooperatives in Eastern Uganda mainly deal in coffee, maize and tourism. However, their businesses have adversely been affected by rampant landslides which has greatly affected their life style.

On the other hand, Northern parts of Uganda have been badly hit by prolonged drought which has destroyed crops and livestock hence creating food insecurity.

What cooperatives in Uganda are doing?

Uganda Cooperative Alliance in partnership with development partners and Government have worked on modalities to mitigate some of the risks brought by climate change in the country. Some of the interventions by cooperatives include:

Every year while celebrating the international Cooperative day, Uganda Cooperative alliance and other Cooperatives in partnership with the National Forestry Authority (NFA) plant over 50,000 within communities per year to trap carbon emissions that negatively affect the environment.

Uganda Cooperative Alliance in partnership with GIZ and DGRV have supported Energy Cooperatives to go for study visit on renewable energy usage, energy storage, solar energy solutions, amongst others in Germany. After the study visit and other training programs, Energy Cooperatives have increased power connections mostly in rural areas hence reducing environmental degradation in the rural communities who were previously using charcoal and fire wood. According to World Bank Uganda's homestead solar system coverage is now at 28.9%," compared to 2012, which was at 3% while for improved energy saving cook stoves, usage is at around 26.7%."

UCA in partnership with VI Agroforestry has built capacities of cooperatives to handle climate change. Cooperatives have included activities which address climate change in their annual operating plans. They practice agroforestry, adopt soil and water conservation technologies and support farmers to adopt energy saving technologies.

Some Communities around forest reserves have formed cooperatives and these cooperatives were allocated big chunks of land by the National Forestry Authority and have planted a lot of trees. The cooperatives and the National Forestry Authority signed agreements on the forest management including the time when to harvest the trees. Under this arrangement, cooperatives conserve the environment and also make forestry a business.

Agricultural Technology and Agribusiness Advisory Services (ATAAS) Project: With a \$120 million IDA credit and 7.2 million Global Environmental Facility Grant, the country's national agricultural research and extension systems were strengthened. Farmers through cooperatives were supported to improve productivity and incomes in an environmentally friendly manner for their growth and sustainability.

Cooperatives especially SACCOs in partnership with solar companies are extending solar loans to their members at more favourable terms. Solar usage greatly contributes to conservation of the environment.

The Government of Uganda through the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) and in partnership with UCA have supported communities to form Energy Cooperatives. The cooperatives were given license and support to distribute Hydro-Electricity from the National grid to the communities. This has boosted electricity distribution especially in rural areas where majority of people have been depending on fire wood and charcoal as a source of energy.

Institutionalization of climate smart Agriculture in UCA programs: As a matter of fact, most of UCA programs that are implemented through cooperatives have a component of climate smart agriculture. Most of the cooperatives we support have also institutionalized this program under cross cutting issues. This greatly contribute to addressing issues of environment: How human activities can be implemented without adversely affecting the ecosystem.