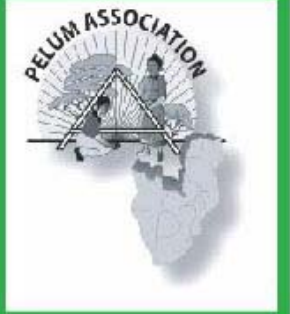


PELUM Uganda

Networking for a Greener Africa



Quarterly E-Newsletter

Issue 9: March 2010

Climate Change Adaptation Mechanisms among Small Scale Farmers

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the March 2010 issue of the PELUM Uganda e-newsletter. This issue is focusing on 'Climate change adaptation mechanisms among small scale farmers; *the case for Uganda*'



Innovative run off water harvesting for food production. (Photo by ALIN-Kenya)

Climate change can be defined as a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. (Source: UNFCCC, 2009).

Uganda is a climate sensitive country with over 90% of the population dependent on climate sensitive sectors. Gradual and sudden variations in climatic parameters have rendered the livelihoods of Ugandans very vulnerable. The major challenge is that although the government of Uganda has put in place strategies for adaptation mechanisms through policies like the National Action for Adaptation Programme (NAPA), the general public lacks awareness about them hence making adaptation less effective.

While the impacts of climate change are negative, there are also potentially beneficial outcomes such as increased grazing area for livestock in the cattle corridor and increased rainfall which presents opportunities to grow more profitable crops. There is also carbon credit facility that some farmers have exploited to earn a living, especially in Western Uganda.

Small Scale Farmers are slowly working towards adaptation to climate change but factors like limited affordability of inputs and technologies for production, limited access to credit facilities, limited access to drought resistant seeds and the disappearance of traditional seeds are bottle necks towards their adaptation.

Small Scale Farmers need more sensitization on climate change though naturally they have already taken to indigenous practices like; use of food reserves like granaries, growing of food crops that stay in the garden for a long

time especially tubers like cassava, sweet potatoes and yams; and kitchen gardens where they grow vegetables and fruits to improve nutrition.

There's need for the government to ensure that the Ugandan metrological department gives accurate and timely information on likely weather and rainfall patterns. It should also provide funding for irrigation systems, avail drought resistant crops, improve infrastructure, have contingency plans and ensure mainstreaming climate adaptation impacts.

Civil Society Organizations like PELUM Uganda should among others, enhance their engagements and participation in climate change policy processes at all levels. They should mainstream climate change and development policy advocacy in their work and help small scale farmers to develop resilience against climate change adverse effects.

In this issue, PELUM Uganda members share their actions towards adaptation to climate change. Articles published are from Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE) and Youth Association for Rural Development (YARD).

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Tapping into Indigenous Knowledge in Combating Climate Change Effects amongst Small Scale Farmers

By Grace Kanweri,
Joint Effort to Save the Environment, Uganda



Dead livestock in Kenya a sign of Climate Change in Africa (Photo by ALIN Kenya)

While it is right to mention climate change mitigation at global level (through reduction of emissions of green house gases into atmosphere) and lobbying for additional funding by super powers to developing countries and Uganda in particular for climate change adaptation; it is not worthwhile neglecting and throwing to the recycle bin the pool of indigenous knowledge that exists within small scale farmers. This can be explored and tapped to enable farmers make a fortune amidst drastic weather conditions.

Prior to formal agricultural extension and on-farm advisory services, small scale farmers at micro level used to have signals that would

notify them about the different weather variations. They were able to tell that the rainy season or dry season is approaching.

They would also tell the soil water retention capacity of different areas from the type of vegetation that such areas would support. Therefore, since there is no doubt that the first step in adapting to climate change is availability of knowledge and access of information on the potential weather variation, there is need to compliment the already existing knowledge in line with more research-based information to enhance the farmers' knowledge on weather variation predictions and related responsive planning.

As nearly every Ugandan, if not every one of African heritage would acknowledge, growing more than one crop in one garden was a form of insurance that our fore grandfathers and grandmothers put in place to ensure that all their eggs were not in one basket. They would mix crops of different gestation periods such that if one failed due to either too much rain or drought, the other would survive and at least save the household from starvation.

There are indigenous drought resistant crops or all seasons known to the local farmers. Such crops, for example yams, used to be grown to provide households with food security just in case of drought or abnormal rains. As champions of agricultural development, we need to move to the local farmers at grass root level and facilitate them to re-adopt the farming of such crops.

Following the background on the existing link between climate change and indigenous knowledge amongst farmers at a local scale, it is justifiable that helping small scale farmers to adapt to climate change needs to involve these farmers in the development of the adaptation plans. We don't have to wait for special donor funding nor do we have to target climate change adaptation specific programs but rather mainstream climate change in all agricultural interventions, aimed at improving the production capacity and improving the livelihoods of small scale farmers. This mainstreaming could involve integration of climate adaptation messages in farmer trainings, extension and following as well as lobbying for and facilitating the development of complimentary partnerships with agricultural research institutions and meteorological department for weather forecast information and responsive technologies.

Accepting Climate Change: Youth Association For Rural Development (YARD)

By Shem Nsibirwa: Focal Person.

Sensitization about climate change has been done all over the world. In 2009, Denmark hosted an international conference to address the challenge at a global level. From the community context, food security and climate change are inseparable and interrelated. PELUM Uganda has been an eye opener to YARD about who is doing what across its member organizations. Information covers details of how they do what they do which would have been reserved if PELUM Uganda as a medium was not coordinating it well.

YARD actively participated in a training workshop on sustainable agriculture and climate change organized by PELUM-Uganda. YARD felt it adequate to adapt to the effects of climate change. As a result YARD has adopted promotion of indigenous food crops in the 3 year strategic development plan (2010 -2013) to help address food security in the event of harsh climate change.

Indigenous yams have been traditionally produced in Bukunja for decades. These are rarely attacked by pests and diseases. Even with the weather changing drastically from intense rain



to severe and prolonged droughts, there is still a meal for each household.

YARD has increased awareness on the importance of the indigenous crops. Spread out through the next three years are plans of setting up ten demonstration gardens, enabling small holder farmers access seeds and planting indigenous crops. The more the seeds are improved, the more intensive the care they should be given during growth. They may not withstand the severity of the heat stress.

Apart from what is already with YARD, there is a whole range of indigenous cereals and oil seeds to be introduced. Along these lines, a pilot project designed to develop water saving techniques will be undertaken.

PELUM Uganda continues to bear impact on the ground all the way down from the Country Desk. Participatory concerns through YARD staff trickle down to the end-user in a well managed chain.

From PELUM Uganda publications such as newsletters, we have learnt that cross cutting issues such gender, environment and HIV/AIDS were inseparable from mainstream programmes. These components were significantly reflected in 2010/2013 Financial Budget about creating awareness and sensitization.

All in all YARD has been nurtured & inspired to tap her potential through communication and networking by PELUM Uganda.

Upcoming Events

- Workshop on Sustainable agriculture(11th-12 May 2010)
- Workshop on Policy development, analysis and advocacy (26th-27th May)
- Workshop on entrepreneurship and marketing (June 21st -25th)

For more information about the work that PELUM Uganda Country Desk does, please contact ,

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Member organizations should also use the above email address to submit articles for the next issue **under the Theme -'Improving lives through Sustainable agriculture'**. Articles should be submitted before 20th June, 2010.