

# WOMEN LEADING CLIMATE ACTION IN UGANDA, TANZANIA AND DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

A Reflection Report



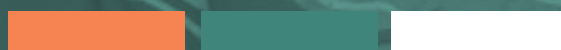
Women's  
International  
Peace Centre

# WOMEN LEADING CLIMATE ACTION IN UGANDA, TANZANIA AND DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

**GLOBAL  
FUND  
FOR  
WOMEN**



**Supported by Global Fund for Women  
and the Africa Climate Justice  
Movement (ACJM)**



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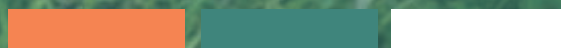
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ISBN: 978-9913-613-86-6


















# ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASM	Artisanal Small-Scale Mining (ASM)
BUDWA	Bwera United Women with Disabilities Association
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDO	Community Development Officer
Club Zaida Catalan	Club Zaida Catalan Pour La Pai el La Securite
COP28	28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAO	District Agriculture Officer
DFO	District Forestry Officer
DMC	Disaster Management Committee
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EACOP	East African Crude Oil Pipeline
EEMPS	Engaruka English Medium Primary School
ENCO	Engaruka Community Initiative Organization
FMNR	Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GFW	Global Fund for Women
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication.
KAWUO	Karamoja Women's Umbrella Organization
KIDP	Karamoja Integrated Development Plan
KJN	Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle
LC	Local Council
MDD	Music, Dance and Drama
NARWOA	Nakere Rural Women Activists
NFA	National Forestry Authority
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRO	Natural Resources Officer
NUWOG	Namayingo United Women Group
PDM	Parish Development Model
TASO	The AIDS Support Organization
ToT	Training of Trainers
UBC	Uganda Broadcasting Corporation
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UWONET	Uganda Women's Network
WAEHEAL	Women Action on Eco Health and Legal Rights
WAHDi	Women in Action for Human Dignity
WEP	Women Entrepreneurship Programme
WOGEM	Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda



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# OVERVIEW

This reflection report captures the journey and outcomes of the Women at the Centre of Climate Justice Initiative. Implemented between June 2024 and May 2025 in Uganda, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the project focused on empowering women and girls to lead climate response and adaptation efforts in their communities.

Women in these countries, as in many parts of the world, disproportionately suffer the consequences of climate change because of entrenched gender roles that position them as primary caregivers responsible for household survival, gatherers of water, food, and fuel. Their dependence on natural resources for subsistence farming and daily domestic needs makes them highly vulnerable to droughts, floods, and environmental degradation leading to food insecurity, displacement, loss of livelihoods. Yet, despite being the most affected, women are responding effectively to climate resilience and adaptation.

The initiative, spearheaded by the Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC) with support from the Global Fund for Women, worked through 10 women-led organisations to strengthen grassroots women's capacity and collective agency. Anchored with financing and technical support; activists, community groups, and collectives were able to design early warning systems, improve response actions, and amplify women's strategies for managing climate shocks.

As a result, the initiative contributed to enhanced action and voice for collectives of women (grassroots, activists) responding to the climate crisis. Across rural and urban communities, women led reforestation initiatives, adopting and promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, championing sustainable energy alternatives such as clean cooking technologies, and influencing local decision-making to ensure more inclusive and sustainable responses.

By April 2025 the initiative had facilitated the planting of 150,000 trees, trained more than 1,236 women and girls as climate leaders, introduced sustainable agriculture and clean energy solutions, improved access to water for entire communities, and influenced local policy frameworks. Beyond these tangible achievements, the initiative challenged harmful gender norms, positioned women as decision-makers in climate governance, and built regional solidarity across three countries. This demonstrates that when women are resourced and supported, they drive transformative, sustainable change for their communities and the planet.

This report reflects on the strategies and milestones of implementation showing accomplishments like enhanced women's leadership, adoption of new community resilience practices, and better networking among partners. It also identifies per-

sistent gaps and makes a call for continued investment in gender-sensitive climate initiatives to secure climate justice, durable peace, and equitable development across Africa.

The Peace Centre is grateful to the Global Fund for Women for their commitment and support in seeking durable solutions to climate crises in the different communities. We also extend our gratitude to the numerous institutions and individuals whose contributions have been vital to the success of this project. Together we make a meaningful and lasting impact.

# INTRODUCTION

The Women's International Peace Centre (The Peace Centre) is a feminist organization with over 30 years of experience advancing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Founded in 1974 as Isis-WICCE and rebranded in 2019, The Peace Centre seeks to ignite women's leadership, amplify their voices, and deepen their activism in creating sustainable peace.

Guided by the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000), the African Union (AU) – Agenda 2063 for Africa, Sustainable Development Goals, the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy 2022-2032; The Peace Centre works in conflict and post-conflict settings across Africa and Asia to ensure that women not only powerfully contribute to peacebuilding processes and outcomes but also transform these spaces to be more inclusive and gender-responsive.

Our work is driven by the WEAVE model that serves as a catalyst for women's empowerment in peacebuilding. This unique approach integrates research, documentation, holistic healing, skills-building, movement building, and advocacy, setting the Peace Centre as a catalyst for women's empowerment and gender-responsive peacebuilding.

The Peace Centre's Strategic Plan (2024–2028) focuses on countries in fragility, including South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Nepal, and Uganda. It seeks to drive women's transformational leadership and amplify their voices in shaping equitable, just, and inclusive peace processes in the 21st century.

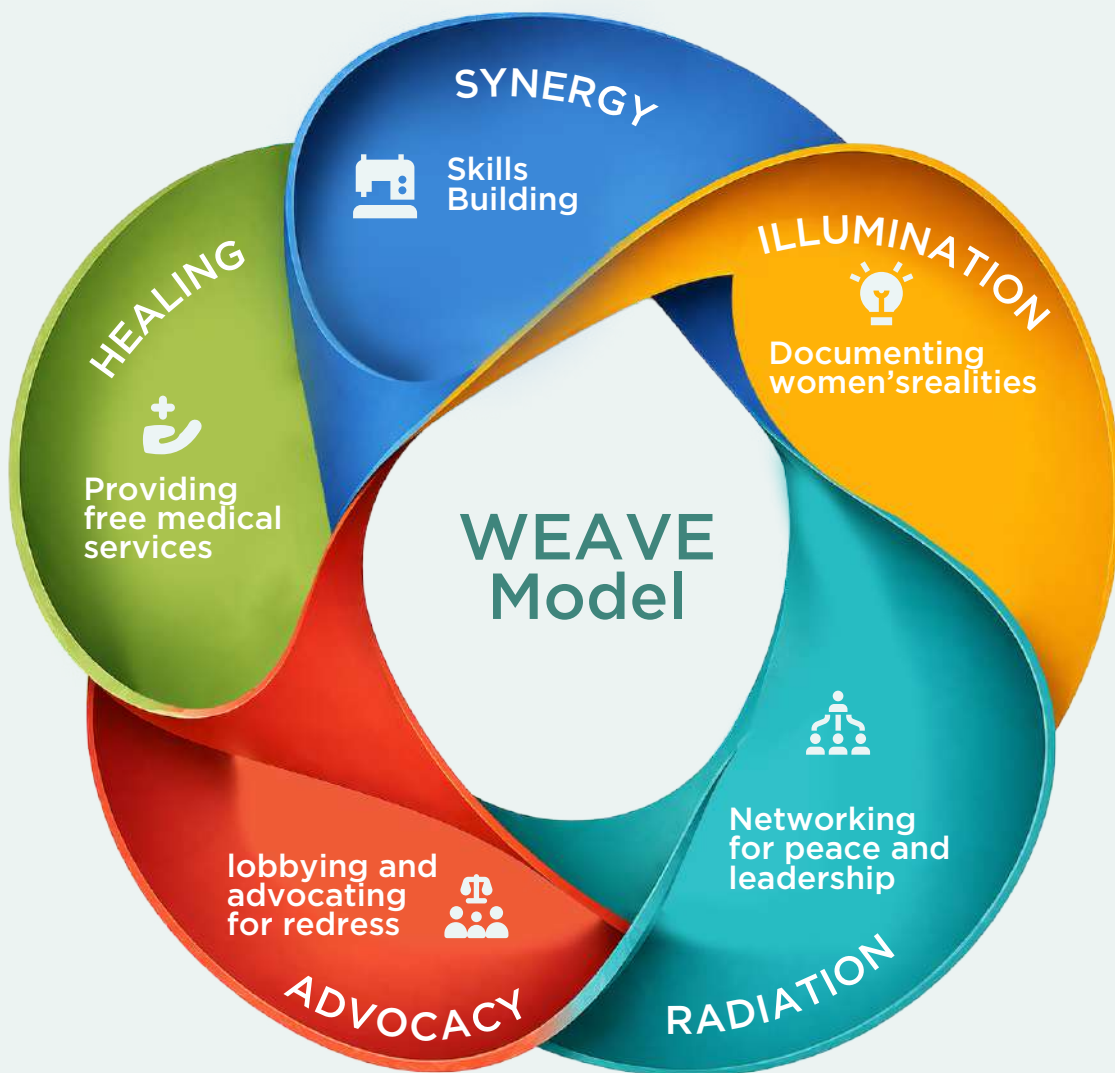
This Climate Action Initiative contributed to The Peace Centre's Strategic Plan (2024–2028) by addressing the intersections of climate change, gender equality, and peacebuilding. The initiative centered women and girls as leaders in climate education, climate adaptation, and community-led responses. It strengthened the collective voice and actions of grassroots activists in addressing the climate crisis.

This report captures the key achievements, success stories, challenges, and lessons learned, highlighting the contribution to advancing both climate justice and women's meaningful engagement in transformative peace processes.

# WEAVE Model

The Peace Centre restores hope and renews the spirits of women abused in armed conflict situations through its core programs of skills building (**SYNERGY**), documenting women's realities (**ILLUMINATION**), networking for peace and leadership (**RADIATION**), lobbying and advocating for redress of the spoils of armed conflict (**ADVOCACY**) and providing free medical services (**HEALING**).

This WEAVE illustrates the impressive integration of the Peace Centre's efforts, coordinated towards realising the overall goal of creating a vanguard of women with the capacity to participate in processes that influence gender equality and women's empowerment.



# CONTEXT

Across the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and Uganda, communities are increasingly confronted by complex environmental challenges driven by both climate change and unsustainable human activities, which critically threaten livelihoods, food security, health, and safety, especially for women and girls. The region has experienced significant climate-induced pressures such as prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and extreme weather events including floods and landslides.

These phenomena have severely undermined agricultural productivity by accelerating soil degradation and diminishing soil fertility, leading to widespread declines in crop yields. For instance, in East Africa, maize and millet yields have decreased by up to 30% as a result of changing rainfall patterns and droughts, exacerbating widespread food insecurity (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, the DRC's eastern provinces have reported substantial agricultural declines linked to unstable precipitation and soil erosion (FAO, 2020).

Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities, particularly in semi-arid regions of Tanzania's drylands and Uganda's Karamoja sub-region, have been subjected to desertification and dwindling natural resources, intensifying competition and conflicts over land and water. These dynamics are manifested, with desertification in Tanzania's semi-arid areas reducing available grazing lands and prompting disputes between communities (UNCCD, 2021), while in Karamoja, climate variability and resource scarcity have exacerbated inter-community violence, further threatening pastoral livelihoods (USAID, 2023).

In the eastern DRC, prolonged conflict and displacement place additional stress on fragile ecosystems, compounding these environmental and socio-economic challenges.

Women bear a disproportionate burden from these environmental stressors, as they are primarily responsible for food production and household water collection. The degradation of land and decreasing availability of water resources have significantly increased women's workloads, while their access to land, credit, and participation in decision-making remain limited. Research indicates that rural women in East Africa dedicate four hours per day collecting water, an activity becoming increasingly arduous as water sources dry up or move to more unsafe and distant locations (UN Women, 2022).

This increased labour not only compromises the ability to secure essential resources but also heightens exposure to gender-based violence during the collection of firewood or water, especially in insecure or remote areas (UNHCR, 2021). In areas with large populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly the eastern provinces of the DRC, the environmental degradation is compounded by the heavy reliance of displaced communities on forests for fuel and land for settlement, which accelerates deforestation, pollution, and over-extraction of resources (Relief Web,

2020; WWF, 2022). Comparable patterns are evident around refugee and IDP settlements in Uganda and Tanzania, where women and girls face increased vulnerabilities due to the risks encountered while accessing natural resources.

Natural disasters such as floods and landslides further exacerbate the vulnerability of communities across these countries. For example, the Kasese region in Uganda has experienced severe floods and landslides that displaced thousands and destroyed agricultural lands, thereby substantially worsening food insecurity (OCHA, 2020). In Tanzania, flood-prone areas such as Morogoro and coastal zones are repeatedly affected by flash floods and seasonal inundation, which destroy infrastructure and homes, aggravating existing humanitarian needs and limiting recovery efforts (IFRC, 2021).

Such disasters disproportionately affect women and girls by increasing their exposure to exploitation and violence during crisis and recovery phases, deepening existing gender inequalities and necessitating inclusive disaster preparedness, resilience building, and gender-responsive recovery initiatives.

Extractive industries including mining and oil exploration, make environmental and social issues even more complicated. In Tanzania, the expansion of oil extraction and artisanal mining has led to significant deforestation, pollution, and displacement of farming communities, which undermines rural women's ability to sustain agricultural livelihoods (Environmental Research Letters, 2021). Similar trends occur in Uganda's Albertine Graben and parts of Tanzania's Lake Zone, where mining and oil activities drive habitat destruction and community displacement (IUCN, 2019).

Women involved in artisanal mining often work under hazardous conditions, lacking adequate safety protection and modern tools, exposing them to toxic substances and occupational health risks, yet economic necessity compels their continued engagement in these livelihoods (ILO, 2022). These intersecting challenges highlight the need for comprehensive measures that support environmental protection and sustainable livelihoods, with particular attention to women's economic empowerment.

In response to these multifaceted challenges, The "Women at the Centre of Climate Justice" Initiative was implemented to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Uganda, where environmental degradation, erratic weather patterns, and resource scarcity have severely undermined livelihoods and food security, particularly for women who are primarily responsible for farming, water, and fuel collection. Despite facing heightened vulnerabilities due to limited access to resources, decision-making, and increased exposure to gender-based violence, women have demonstrated unique leadership and innovative capacity in managing natural resources and responding effectively to climate crises.

By providing targeted financing, capacity building, and platforms to amplify women's locally rooted approaches, the initiative strengthened women's agency, enhanced community resilience, and promoted sustainable, gender-responsive climate solutions

that are essential for mitigating environmental threats and fostering equitable development across these highly vulnerable regions.

The Women at the Centre of Climate Justice Initiative sought to strengthen women's agency in responding to the climate crisis. It aimed to ensure that grassroots women, activists, and collectives who are often on the frontlines of climate crises are not only better equipped to respond but are also recognized as leaders and decision-makers.

## **Approaches employed included:**

### **i. Providing direct grants to grassroots women to support localized climate crisis response.**

The initiative was anchored on direct support to women-led organizations through a grant-making mechanism managed by the Women's International Peace Centre. A total of 11 women-led organizations across Uganda, the DRC, and Tanzania received funding to implement climate-smart initiatives in their communities as they respond and adapt to climate change crises. Partners were selected based on their capacity need, reach, track record in women's leadership, and relevance of their work to climate justice.

## **Partner Organisations:**

- Uganda (5 Partners): Nakere Rural Women Activists (NARWOA), Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization (KAWUO), Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WOGEM), Namayingo United Women Group (NUWOG), Bwera United Women with Disabilities Association (BUDWA)
- DRC (3 Partners): Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle (KJN), Zaida Catalan Club for Peace and Security (Club Zaida), Women in Action for Human Dignity (WAHDi ASBL)
- Tanzania (3 Partners): Women Action on Eco-Health and Legal Rights (WAEHE-AL), Engaruka Community Initiative Organisation (ENCO), Women Action Towards Economic Development (WATED)

## **II. Capacity building for women leaders and organizations on early warning and response mechanisms, documentation, and communication.**

Alongside grants, the initiative placed strong emphasis on strengthening the institutional and technical capacity of women-led organizations.

- Documentation and communication skills were imparted to ensure women's solutions and initiatives are visible and recognized. Partner organizations benefited from tailor-made trainings which focused on key areas such as reporting and documentation, communication and social media management.

Specifically, the Peace Centre supported partners in strengthening their digital presence by equipping them with the tools and skills needed to effectively showcase their work online. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical hands-on sessions, partners learned how to create compelling content, refine their messaging and effectively engage their audiences. This significantly enhanced their communication strategies and online visibility.

- Training in financial management to strengthen institutional capacities. These sessions were designed to help partners accurately track and report financial activities while addressing organisation-specific gaps. The support contributed to improved financial accountability, greater transparency, and strengthened reporting mechanisms, ultimately reinforcing the institutional stability of participating organizations.
- Networking and peer-learning opportunities to foster cross-country exchange of practices.

### **III. Amplifying and sharing women-led climate solutions at community, national, and regional levels.**

The initiative built collaborations between grassroots women's organizations, local communities, and broader movements advocating for climate justice. Partnerships extended to local government actors, traditional leaders, and community structures, ensuring that women's innovations were recognized and integrated into broader climate action efforts.

The role of the Women's International Peace Centre as a capacity-builder created a strong platform for solidarity and cross-country learning among women leaders in Uganda, DRC, and Tanzania.

These efforts enabled grassroots women to scale their impact, build resilience, and secure stronger influence in local decision-making processes around climate and environmental issues.

# MEET OUR CO-CREATION PARTNERS

## Uganda

### **Namayingo United Women Group (NUWOG)**

Namayingo United Women Group (NUWOG) is a grassroots women's rights Community-Based Organization supporting people living with HIV/AIDS and addressing the intersecting challenges of gender inequality, health, and environmental degradation. NUWOG's focus was on empowering communities against climate change to build community resilience, promote environmental conservation, and strengthen women and youth with sustainable livelihood skills.

The initiative was implemented in the fishing communities of Mutumba and Buhemba sub-counties, areas facing widespread deforestation, wetland degradation, water scarcity, and declining agricultural productivity. By integrating climate education, tree planting, and community mobilization, NUWOG promoted a shift towards sustainable, climate-conscious practices in Namayingo District.

### **Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEM)**

Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEM) is a Community-Based Organization promoting women's participation in building a greener and fairer economy through advocacy, skills development, and community organizing.

WOGEM centered her intervention in Kijumba and Kyakaboga villages, Kikuube District (Uganda's fossil fuel hotspots) —communities severely affected by oil extraction, displacement, and climate shocks. WoGEM amplified women's voices in climate justice advocacy, strengthened their economic resilience through green livelihoods such as briquette making and apiculture and supported communities to address the climate impacts of deforestation, floods, and food insecurity.

### **Nakere Rural Women Activists (NARWOA)**

Nakere Rural Women Activists (NARWOA) is a women-led organization in Kotido district working to address gender-based violence, food insecurity, and environmental degradation in the Karamoja sub-region.

NARWOA focused on "Reducing Risks and Vulnerability to Climate Change" in Kotido and Panyangara sub-counties in Kotido district. They enhanced community capacity to anticipate, respond to, and adapt to climate-related risks through awareness creation, community dialogues, and disaster risk reduction training.

## **Karamoja Women Umbrella Organisation (KAWUO)**

Karamoja Women Umbrella Organisation (KAWUO) is a women-led network established to amplify women's voices in governance, justice, and economic empowerment in the Karamoja region.

KAWUO focused on "Agroforestry for Livelihood Resilience" in Nadunget and Loputuk sub-counties, Moroto District. They addressed drought, deforestation, and land degradation by promoting agroforestry and climate-smart agriculture.

## **Bwera United Women with Disabilities Association (BUDWA)**

Bwera United Women with Disabilities Association (BUDWA) is a women-led organization advocating for the rights and inclusion of women with disabilities in Kasese District.

BUDWA's focus was on "Empowering Women for Climate Justice: Bridging the Gap for a Sustainable Future."

Kasese District, frequently affected by floods and landslides, faces severe climate impacts that disproportionately affect women with disabilities. BUDWA aimed at increasing women's capacity to engage in climate action, raised community awareness on environmental conservation, and fostered inclusive participation in climate leadership and resilience efforts.

## **Tanzania**

### **Engaruka Community Initiative Organisation (ENCO)**

Engaruka Community Initiative Organisation (ENCO) is a women-led nonprofit based in Arusha, Tanzania, supporting sustainable development among pastoralist Maasai communities.

ENCO implemented "Empower Her Climate: Women Leading Resilience" in Engaruka Ward, Monduli District.

In response to droughts, land degradation, and water scarcity, ENCO promoted women-led ecosystem restoration, community education, and household adaptation practices, strengthening both environmental and social resilience among smallholder farmers and pastoralists.

### **Women Action on Eco-Health and Legal Rights (WAEHEAL)**

Women Action on Eco-Health and Legal Rights (WAEHEAL) is a women-led organization advancing gender equality, environmental justice, and legal empowerment, particularly for women in mining communities.

WAEHEAL focused on “Empowering Women and Girls Small-Scale Miners for Climate Justice and Environmental Protection” in Geita District, Tanzania.

The initiative enhanced environmental awareness, promoted safer and greener mining practices, and advocated for women’s participation in climate decision-making. It addressed issues such as mercury exposure, deforestation, and water pollution while strengthening women miners’ rights and economic empowerment.

## **Women Action Towards Economic Development (WATED)**

Women Action Towards Economic Development (WATED) is a NGO promoting women’s economic empowerment and leadership in sustainable development in Tanzania.

WATED’s initiative “Hadithi Zetu: Women and Girls for Environment and Climate Resilience in Tanzania” reached six regions—Lindi, Mtwara, Mafia, Simanjiro, Kiteto, and Dar es Salaam.

Implemented amid severe floods and Cyclone Hidaya in 2024, the project used participatory storytelling and community mobilization to highlight women’s experiences and advocate for gender-responsive climate policies.

## **The Democratic Republic Of Congo (DRC)**

### **Club Zaida Catalan**

Club Zaida Catalan for Peace and Security is a women-led organization in Bukavu, DRC, promoting women’s political participation and environmental protection as pillars of peace and sustainable development.

CZC focused on “Enhancing Women’s Participation in Climate Justice for Environmental Peace” in Kabare, Kalehe, and Bukavu, in South Kivu.

Responding to deforestation, floods, and food insecurity, the initiative empowered women to lead reforestation and environmental advocacy while linking climate justice to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

### **Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle (KJN)**

Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle (KJN) is an organization promoting youth and women’s leadership, environmental protection, and entrepreneurship.

KJN focused on “Mobilising Youth and Women for Climate Action” in Bukavu City and the territories of Kabare, Kalehe, Walungu, and Idjwi, South Kivu.

KJN mobilized young people and women to lead awareness campaigns on climate change, reforestation, and sustainable resource management, positioning them as key actors in protecting the Congo Basin’s ecosystem and promoting environmental peace.

## Women in Action for Human Dignity (WAHDI)

Women in Action for Human Dignity (WAHDI) is a national organization in North Kivu dedicated to advancing women’s rights, peacebuilding, and environmental justice. WAHDI focused on “Mwanamke Mlinzi Wa Ikologia” translated as Women Protecting the Environment in Goma, North Kivu.

Operating amid conflict and displacement, the initiative empowered women and girls to take leadership in environmental conservation, clean energy advocacy, and climate resilience, positioning them as protectors of both community well-being and ecological balance.

### KEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE

The project delivered significant results that combined measurable outputs with transformative outcomes.

#### Project Key Themes

#### Key Results

Strengthening Women’s Climate Leadership

- Strengthened 500 Women in Climate Leadership

Environmental Restoration and Afforestation

- 150,000+ trees planted across communities, schools, hospitals, and post-mining sites, restoring degraded ecosystems and reducing deforestation.
- Women’s cooperatives developed income-generating activities linked to tree planting, such as beekeeping and vegetable cultivation.
- In DRC, cultural taboos that restricted women from planting trees were broken, enabling 100 women to lead reforestation campaigns.

### Innovations in Waste Management and Clean Energy

- 100 women trained in briquette-making, turning agricultural waste into clean fuel and new income streams.
- Introduction of waste management systems in Engaruka, Tanzania, including 10 public bins and a legally enforced by-law on cleanliness.
- In Uganda, the Butebei Women Climate Change Ambassadors Group established a stove-making enterprise and chicken project, sustaining women's livelihoods.

### Improving Water Access and Food Security

- Installation of a 6 km water line and storage tanks in Engaruka, Tanzania, benefiting 75 households with safe and reliable water.
- Introduction of drought-resistant cassava and banana varieties improved food security and created surplus for market sales in drought-prone areas.
- Reduced conflicts over water use as women-led groups worked with local leaders to mediate disputes.

### Policy Influence and Advocacy

- Development of a climate adaptation strategy for women in small-scale mining in Tanzania, shaping safer and more resilient livelihoods.
- Women's advocacy secured a legally binding environmental cleanliness by-law in Tanzania, enforced by a 30-member environmental committee.
- In DRC, campaigns reduced plastic waste along Lake Kivu, restoring biodiversity and strengthening local food systems.

### Wellness and Resilience of Activists

- Wellness guide was developed by WAEHEAL and WATED
- Partners integrated wellness sessions and a self-care guide into organizational practices, improving resilience and ensuring sustained feminist activism.

Overall: 1,500+ direct beneficiaries (women, youth, school children), broader indirect impacts across households and community structures. Women were the majority of direct participants, with youth actively engaged through school clubs and awareness initiatives.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS THEMATIC AREAS

This section highlights stories of adaptation and women-led solutions as responses to the climate crisis within their communities.

### **Advancing Climate Education.**

A reflection on community-led learning, women's leadership, and pathways to resilient futures

Through the Women at the Centre of Climate Justice Initiative, advancing climate education emerged as a cornerstone for empowering women and communities with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to respond effectively to climate change.

The initiative recognised that awareness alone is not enough—education must translate into agency, enabling women and girls to critically engage in decision-making processes, advocate for equitable climate policies, and lead adaptation and mitigation efforts in their communities.

To achieve this, applied community-centered and participatory approaches that deepened understanding, built capacity, and inspired collective action were adopted. Climate education was positioned as both a tool of empowerment and a pathway to resilience, combining feminist learning principles with local knowledge systems to create spaces for reflection, dialogue, and action.

Implementation under this theme followed four complementary strategies that formed a continuous cycle of learning, leadership, and local innovation:

1. Targeted Trainings
2. Community Sensitization and Mentorship
3. Environmental Education Campaigns
4. Establishment of Environmental Clubs in Schools

## STRATEGIES EMPLOYED FOR ADVANCING CLIMATE EDUCATION AS A PILLAR OF THIS PROJECT

			
<b>Targeted Trainings</b>	<b>Community Sensitization and Mentorship</b>	<b>Environmental Education Campaigns</b>	<b>Establishment of Environmental Clubs in Schools</b>

### 1. Targeted Trainings: Strengthening Local Capacity for Climate Adaptation

Targeted trainings were the cornerstone of this theme. They aimed to equip women, youth, and community leaders with practical knowledge and skills to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

1,146 women and girls and 470 men and 210 boys were reached across Uganda, Tanzania, and the DRC. These sessions deepened understanding of:

- Climate change concepts and gendered impacts
- Climate justice and environmental peace
- Disaster preparedness and early warning systems
- Climate-smart agriculture and sustainable land use
- Women's leadership in climate governance

The trainings adopted participatory learning, combining knowledge exchange, dialogue, and field practice to ensure that participants could not only understand new concepts but also apply them in their communities.

Practical trainings were tailored to local contexts: in Uganda, the DRC and Tanzania, participants focused on agroforestry, drought-resistant crop cultivation, water conservation, disaster management and energy-efficient technologies, while women small-scale miners were trained on land rehabilitation and reclamation.

These sessions increased awareness of climate change and adaptation strategies, strengthened communities' capacity to take action, and empowered women and girls to become advocates and leaders in climate adaptation.

Many trained women have since become ambassadors promoting environmental protection and sustainable livelihoods, fostering resilience and environmental stewardship within their communities

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**“In our Maasai community, farming is not something we grew up with; we are pastoralists. As a result, we farm haphazardly to avoid starvation because our livestock no longer produce enough milk, and their market prices are poor. However, I have greatly benefited from learning these modern farming techniques, especially for those of us farming in the lowlands. Now we are seeing the value of farming, and we have even started educating other women in the village.”-**

A community member from Kiteto, Tanzania, shared her experience of how accessing modern agricultural techniques improved her crop yields and resilience against pest outbreaks through the training she received from one of the partners.



## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS

### Women-led Climate Education and Action Highlights

#### Tree planting and Nursery Bed Establishment- Uganda, DRC & Tanzania

- 200+ women trained to establish nurseries and lead community tree planting drives.
- Thousands of seedlings raised for reforestation and soil care.

#### Energy-Saving Technologies- Uganda & DRC

- Women and youth trained to build Rocket Lorena & Shielded energy saving stoves.
- Women trained to convert household waste into ecofriendly briquettes. These have created new income streams for women groups.

#### Disaster Management Committees - Uganda

- 30 committee members trained in preparedness & planning. District contingency plans revived and coordination improved.

#### Drought Resistant Crop Cultivation- Uganda & Tanzania

- Women farmers trained in drought resistant cultivation and maintenance. 500 drought-resistant banana suckers were distributed in Tanzania.
- Women farmers trained on sustainable pre- and post-harvest handling practices.
- Women farmers trained on best practices for planting, maintenance, disease control, and post-harvest handling of high yield, drought resistant hybrid crops like cassava, bananas, and sorghum

#### Women small scale miners- Tanzania

- Trained on land rehabilitation and reclamation post-mining
- Trained women became Trainers of trainers amongst the small-scale mining sector advocating for sustainable mining and environmental restoration.

## Examples

### **Empowering Women in Agriculture through Training on High-Yield Hybrid Banana Cultivation**



As part of efforts to strengthen women’s role in agriculture and enhance household food security, targeted training sessions on high-yield, drought-resistant hybrid banana cultivation in Engaruka Ward in Tanzania was adopted. The trainings were designed to equip women with practical agricultural skills, improve productivity, and promote sustainable food systems in the face of a changing climate.

Through these sessions, women farmers were guided on the entire banana production cycle—from land preparation, planting, and crop maintenance to pest management and post-harvest handling. The hands-on training approach enabled participants to apply new techniques directly on their farms, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

To reinforce the knowledge gained, 500 hybrid banana suckers were distributed to participants and community institutions. Of these, 300 seedlings were provided to local farmers—prioritizing women-headed households—to boost household food production and income generation. An additional 200 seedlings were supplied to local schools to establish school gardens, creating spaces for experiential learning and environmental education among young people.

The hybrid banana varieties were carefully selected for their resilience to drought and disease, as well as their capacity for faster growth and higher yields compared

to traditional varieties. By combining training with access to improved planting materials, the initiative empowered women with both the knowledge and resources needed to manage their farms more effectively and profitably.

#### Impact/Outcomes:

- **Enhanced Food Security and Household Nutrition:** The introduction of hybrid banana varieties gave women farmers a dependable and nutritious crop that contributes directly to household food supplies. As the bananas mature, families are expected to experience improved dietary diversity and reduced vulnerability to hunger, particularly during dry seasons.
- **Increased Income-Generating Opportunities for Women Farmers:** In addition to meeting subsistence needs, the anticipated surplus banana harvests offered women farmers the opportunity to engage in local markets and generate income. This added revenue stream supports women's economic independence, enabling them to invest in other aspects of household welfare, such as education, healthcare, and savings.
- **Knowledge Transfer and Long-Term Capacity Building:** The technical training provided alongside the seed distribution equipped women farmers with the skills necessary to manage hybrid crops effectively. Many participants have already expressed confidence in their ability to sustain and replicate the banana cultivation process in subsequent planting seasons, indicating strong potential for scalability and sustainability of the initiative.



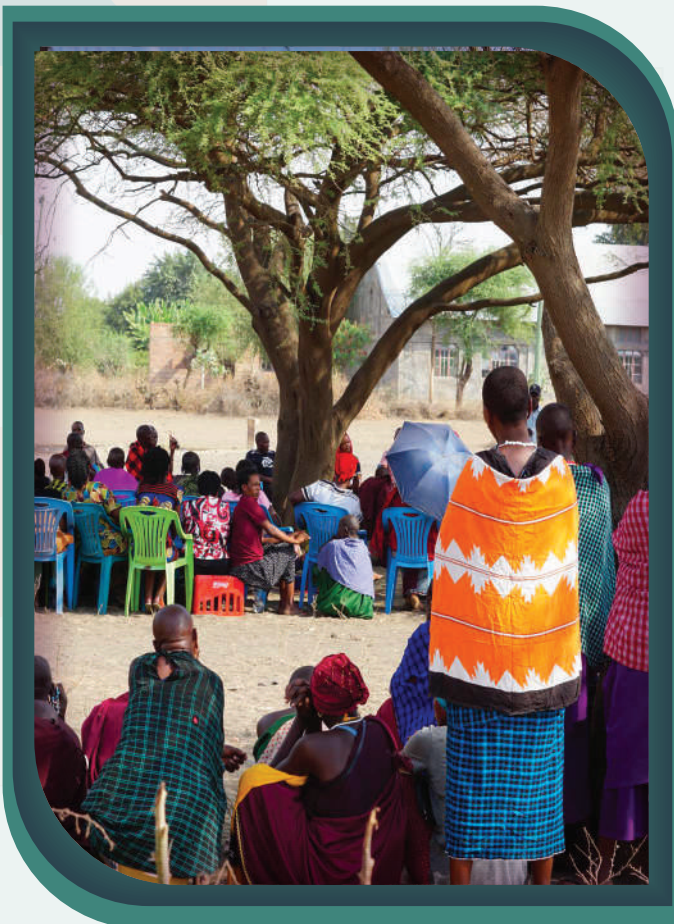
## 2. Community Sensitization and Mentorship: Nurturing Local Leadership

Across the implementation locations, community sensitization sessions brought together women, men, youth, and local leaders to collectively reflect on the increasing risks posed by climate change, including prolonged droughts, food insecurity, deforestation and growing local conflicts over natural resources.

These dialogues created space for communities to identify the root causes of environmental degradation, such as charcoal burning, uncontrolled grazing, and poor land-use practices and to co-design local solutions rooted in traditional knowledge and modern adaptation techniques.

During these sessions, community members learned about sustainable land management, tree planting, and the importance of protecting natural forests. The sensitizations also served as platforms for practical learning on disaster preparedness and early response introducing communities to early warning systems, water harvesting and diversion techniques, and energy-saving technologies as tools for local resilience.

Importantly, the conversations went beyond environmental issues to embrace peacebuilding. For example in Karamoja and Engaruka, communities recommended inter-community dialogues and joint peace initiatives to address resource-based conflicts such as cattle raids, demonstrating how climate adaptation and conflict prevention intersect at the local level.



Complementing sensitization were mentorship programs that strengthened women's capacity and leadership in environmental management. Through continuous guidance and peer learning, women's groups were trained in woodlot management, tree nursery establishment, and sustainable forestry practices.

Many of these women have since become mentors in their own right, leading community reforestation drives and promoting alternative livelihoods that reduce dependency on forest resources.

The mentorship also linked women to government development initiatives such as the Women Entrepreneurship Program and the Parish Development Model in Uganda, helping them access funding and markets for climate-smart enterprises. These linkages not only enhanced women's economic empowerment but also embedded sustainability by aligning local action with national frameworks.

### **3. Implementing Environmental Education Campaigns: Inspiring Youth Climate Leadership.**

To strengthen public awareness and youth engagement in climate action, wide-reaching environmental education campaigns were conducted across schools, communities, and media platforms. These campaigns served as an avenue for both knowledge sharing and advocacy, encouraging individuals to become agents of change in their own spaces.

In Engaruka, Tanzania, a large-scale campaign under the theme "Plant Trees, Save Tomorrow" was implemented in partnership with four local schools—Oldonyo-Lengai Secondary School, Engaruka Chini Primary, Engaruka Juu Primary, and Engaruka English Medium Primary. The campaign engaged over 600 students, equipping them with knowledge on climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management.

Interactive methods such as debates, discussions, and hands-on activities allowed students to grasp environmental concepts and translate them into practical action. After the campaign, students established and began maintaining school gardens and woodlots, cultivating vegetables such as sukuma wiki, maize, and cassava. These gardens not only contributed to environmental education but also improved school nutrition and food security. The produce grown supplements school meals, and the gardens have become demonstration sites for experiential learning on sustainability.

By directly engaging young people, these campaigns nurtured a generation of youth climate ambassadors—students who now actively advocate for environmental protection within their schools, households, and wider communities. Their leadership continues to inspire inter-school environmental debates, peer sensitization sessions, and ongoing conservation efforts.



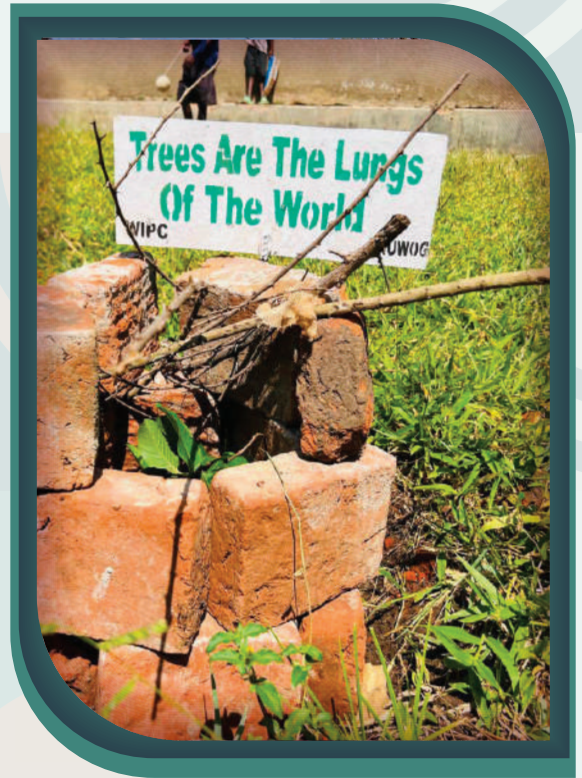
#### 4. Establishing Environmental Clubs in Primary Schools: Sustaining Change

Recognizing the critical role of continuous engagement, 10 environmental clubs in primary schools across Uganda and Tanzania were established. These clubs empower both girls and boys to take part in environmental conservation and climate education as a practical, ongoing process.

Each club adopted activities tailored to its school's context—ranging from tree planting, watering and protecting woodlots, composting, and establishing fruit and vegetable gardens. Students actively tend to young trees during dry seasons, fence off gardens to protect them from animals, and lead peer-to-peer awareness sessions on conservation practices.

Through the formation of active environmental clubs, Eco-Schools were established in four selected schools in Namayingo District, Uganda. Students were engaged in practical afforestation initiatives, resulting in the establishment of four woodlots—one in each school—with a total of 1,881 assorted tree seedlings planted on school land. The species included Musizi, Pines, Eucalyptus, Mvule, and fruit trees such as jackfruit, mangoes, guavas, and avocados.

Beyond tree planting, the clubs championed climate change awareness through school debates, assemblies, and radio talk shows, creating platforms for peer learning and community sensitization on environmental conservation.



Through these initiatives, the clubs have:

- **Strengthened Youth Leadership:** Club members have been trained as Climate Change Ambassadors, leading environmental conversations within their schools and communities. Their proactive initiatives, such as organizing school debates and inter-school sensitizations have amplified climate awareness and inspired replication in neighbouring schools.
- **Enhanced Sustainability of Gains:** The clubs ensure that the benefits continue beyond implementation. The woodlots, gardens, and learning materials established remain in active use. Regular club membership renewal guarantees that new students are continuously inducted, keeping the spirit of environmental stewardship alive across generations.
- **Promoted Environmental Stewardship:** Pupils have developed a deep sense of responsibility for the environment. Under the guidance of their teachers and patrons, they continue to protect trees, manage gardens, and promote recycling and reforestation. The survival rate of trees planted by the clubs has significantly increased due to their consistent care and follow-up.

Established sustainable school woodlots: Over 15,000 seedlings raised through the

school nursery beds were successfully transplanted into woodlots across the four schools, turning bare compounds into thriving green spaces. These woodlots consisting of indigenous trees as well as fruit-bearing trees such as mango, guava, and jackfruit will, in the coming years, provide nutritious benefits for pupils, improving food security within the schools.

Beyond ecological gains, the school woodlots have become practical learning sites and demonstration grounds. Pupils are actively engaged in their care, watering trees, mulching, weeding, and fencing them off from stray animals. Through these hands-on activities, learners are gaining practical knowledge and skills in tree management, nursery care, and environmental conservation.

Teachers and patrons also integrated the woodlots into lesson plans, turning them into outdoor classrooms where pupils learn about biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable land use.

The woodlots additionally serve as models for replication, inspiring pupils as they carry home the practices they learn, such as tree planting, soil preparation, and care techniques. Over time, this ripple effect extends the impact far beyond the school grounds, fostering a culture of environmental stewardship across Namayingo District.

**Example:**

**Learning Pathway & Impact Flow: Women at the Centre of Climate Justice**

This diagram represents the learning pathway and impact flow of the project's climate education approach, showing how knowledge translates into tangible outcomes and community resilience

a) Knowledge – The pathway started with awareness and capacity-building. Through participatory trainings, women, youth, and local leaders gain understanding of climate justice, adaptation, sustainable agriculture, disaster preparedness, and environmental stewardship. Knowledge is the foundation for informed action.

b) Practice – Knowledge was reinforced through practical application. Demonstration plots, school gardens, energy-efficient stove and briquette making allowed participants to apply what they've learned in tangible, community-relevant ways. This hands-on engagement strengthened skills and built confidence.

c) Leadership – As participants gained competence, they stepped into leadership roles. Women became trainers, led community initiatives, creating spaces where climate action is guided by those directly affected. This stage showed how education fosters empowerment and agency.

d) Institutionalization – Practices that proved effective were integrated into local systems. Schools, District Management Committees (DMCs), and local government

structures adopted climate education programs, ensuring that knowledge and practices are sustained over time and scaled beyond individuals.

e) Resilience – The ultimate impact is enhanced community resilience. For food security to improve, sustainable livelihoods to be strengthened, and communities to be better equipped to respond to disasters and environmental shocks. This stage reflects the long-term outcomes of women-led climate education

### Key Achievements at a Glance

- 1,200+ community members sensitized on climate adaptation
- 200+ women and girls mentored in woodlot and nursery establishment.
- 4 woodlots were planted by 4 school clubs
- 600 students trained under “Plant Trees, Save Tomorrow”
- 10 school environmental clubs established and functional
- School gardens supplement meals with vegetables and fruits
- 100+ youth climate ambassadors leading peer education
- 4 woodlots/eco schools established by the environmental clubs.

### WOMEN AT THE CENTRE OF CLIMATE JUSTICE LEARNING PATHWAY & IMPACT FLOW



# AFFORESTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

Afforestation and environmental restoration are central to building climate resilience and sustaining livelihoods in communities that are most affected by the climate crisis. Recognizing the urgent need to restore degraded ecosystems and reverse the effects of deforestation, the Women at the Centre of Climate Justice initiative prioritized efforts that put women and communities at the forefront of environmental restoration.

Through these interventions, women not only became key actors in conserving and regenerating the environment but also gained access to knowledge, tools, and resources that enhance their economic and social well-being.

## Tailored Strategies and Localised Practices

The afforestation efforts were implemented through diverse, context-specific strategies, reflecting the unique environmental, cultural, and social needs of each community. Each partner organization designed localized approaches that addressed specific challenges—ranging from restoring degraded landscapes and challenging harmful cultural norms to enhancing food security and sustainable livelihoods. The following examples illustrate how these tailored interventions advanced environmental restoration while promoting women’s leadership in climate action.

### 1. Community-Centered Tree Planting Initiative - Engaruka, Tanzania

In Engaruka, Tanzania, the community-centered tree planting initiative was designed to meet both immediate and long-term needs by addressing deforestation, food insecurity, and the sustainability of livestock rearing. The initiative established a community tree nursery with over 100,000 seedlings featuring drought-resistant species selected to serve multiple community purposes such as:

- **Construction and Fencing:** Tree species suitable for timber and fence posts were introduced to reduce dependence on indigenous forests.
- **Fruit Trees for Nutrition and Income:** Fruit-bearing trees provided food and alternative income for households.
- **Fodder Trees for Livestock:** Fodder trees offered sustainable feed sources, reducing grazing pressure and preserving land.
- **Medicinal Trees:** Indigenous species with medicinal properties supported community health.

Through this participatory approach, trees from the nurseries were distributed to households, schools, churches, hospitals, and mosques, contributing to increased

green cover, improved vegetation density, and the restoration of degraded semi-arid landscapes.

By integrating local knowledge, community priorities, and ecological considerations, the Engaruka initiative demonstrated that community-led afforestation can simultaneously address environmental restoration, socio-economic needs, and resilience to climate change.

This exemplifies a localized, inclusive, and multi-purpose strategy for afforestation, where active participation, skill-building, and resource ownership empower communities to protect ecosystems while enhancing livelihoods. This model provides a replicable framework for semi-arid regions facing similar environmental and socio-economic challenges, highlighting the role of integrated community-based approaches in achieving sustainable environmental impact.



## 2. Restoring Post-Mining Areas - Geita, Tanzania

In Geita, Tanzania, tree planting emerged as a flagship initiative for rehabilitating severely degraded post-mining areas, building directly on the outcomes of the Training of Trainers (ToT) conducted in Nyarugusu and Lwamgasa. Mining activities in the region had left large tracts of land barren, prone to erosion, and ecologically depleted, presenting a pressing need for targeted environmental restoration.

This initiative demonstrated that even landscapes profoundly altered by human activity can be restored for productive and sustainable use, creating both ecological and socio-economic benefits.

Central to this initiative were women and girls engaged in small-scale mining, who had been trained as climate change adaptation champions. Equipped with knowledge and leadership skills, they mobilized their communities to participate in restoration efforts, demonstrating the power of localized, women-led approaches in addressing environmental degradation.

A total of 1,300 trees were planted across abandoned mining sites, carefully selecting species that were both drought-resistant and ecologically beneficial, including *Acacia nilotica*, Ironwood, *Azelia quanzensis*, and *Senna siamea*.

At the household level, 350 fruit trees (guava, mango, avocado) and 250 shade trees (primarily mustard) were planted to enhance food security, improve microclimates, and support sustainable livelihoods.

By actively participating in tree planting, women and girls provided visible evidence to their communities that degraded land can be successfully reclaimed. Beyond ecological restoration, this approach fostered community engagement, strengthened local capacities, and demonstrated that reforestation can be both an environmental recovery and socio-economic development strategy.

Through the Geita initiative, it was evident that targeted training, women's empowerment, and strategic tree planting in post-industrial landscapes can transform degraded areas into thriving ecosystems, providing a replicable model for integrating climate adaptation, gender inclusion, and ecological restoration in resource-impacted regions.



### 3. Demystifying Myths and Empowering Women in Tree Planting – Kalehe & Kabare, DRC

In Kalehe, Democratic Republic of Congo, the tree planting initiative addressed deep-rooted cultural myths and gender norms that historically discouraged women from engaging in tree planting.

Common beliefs included notions such as “women who plant trees will not marry” or that “menstruating women bring misfortune to seedlings,” which effectively excluded women from participating in environmental restoration. Recognizing that these misconceptions were a significant barrier to both gender equality and local afforestation efforts, the project implemented a targeted, evidence-based community engagement strategy.

This approach combined sustained sensitization campaigns, inclusive dialogues, and practical demonstrations to raise awareness about the ecological and social benefits of tree planting while debunking harmful myths.

A key feature of the initiative was cross-generational learning and mentorship. Older women, including those who had successfully participated in tree planting while married, were brought into dialogue sessions to share their experiences with younger women and girls. These exchanges served as living examples that the myths had no basis in reality and encouraged active participation even during menstruation, effectively demystifying the belief that trees would dry up if tended by women during this period.

The results were both immediate and transformative. Over 100 women and girls became actively engaged in tree planting activities, many of whom have emerged as local leaders in environmental advocacy, championing gender-inclusive conservation in Kalehe.

Beyond the expansion of tree cover, the initiative contributed to a cultural shift, fostering broader acceptance of women’s roles in environmental management and community decision-making.

By deliberately confronting cultural barriers and empowering women with knowledge, confidence, and mentorship, the approach demonstrated that challenging harmful myths is a powerful localized strategy for advancing both gender equity and sustainable environmental restoration.



## 4. Integrating Cultural Heritage into Environmental Action - The Akiriket Restoration Approach, Moroto, Uganda

In Moroto, located in Uganda’s Karamoja region, tree planting was conducted at the ‘Akiriket’, a sacred shrine and gathering place specific to the Karamojong people.

The Akiriket is a culturally and spiritually significant site where initiated men, particularly elders, meet to perform rituals, make communal decisions, resolve conflicts, and address issues related to land and governance. It serves as a cornerstone for both religious and political life, linking the community to its spiritual beliefs and maintaining social cohesion.

Traditionally, women are not allowed within the sacred grounds of the Akiriket, instead observing from the sidelines as the elders conduct their deliberations.

The “Akiriket Restoration Approach” represented a unique and culturally sensitive integration of environmental action with traditional heritage.

Recognizing the sacredness of the site, women engaged the elders from the outset, explaining the purpose and benefits of planting trees at the Akiriket, not only for environmental restoration but also to provide shade, improve the surrounding, and benefit the community and as well as the elders as they made deliberations and decisions for the land.

A total of 4,000 trees that thrive in semi-arid Karamoja, (based on research conducted by the district authorities and the National Forestry Authority (NFA)) were planted on two demonstration gardens, provided by the elders—one in Loputuk where (2,000 seedlings) and one in Nadunget (2,000 seedlings) were planted. Over 100 women and young women, men and elders actively participated in this activity, marking a rare and powerful moment of cross-gender collaboration in a traditionally male-dominated space. Women continued to care for the seedlings through weekly watering and protective fencing.

The initiative also engaged men and district officials—including the Natural Resources Officer (NRO), District Agriculture Officer (DAO), sub-county agriculture officers, Community Development Officers, and parish chiefs—in the planting process to foster shared ownership, set an example for the women, and demonstrate



collective commitment to environmental restoration.

This approach was significant on multiple levels. It respected cultural protocols while promoting environmental stewardship, demonstrating that traditional institutions can be leveraged to support climate action.

It also empowered women to participate in meaningful ecological interventions in a context where they are often sidelined, showing that engagement, dialogue, and respect for local customs can bridge gender and generational divides.

The initiative successfully reinforced community ownership of restoration efforts, promoted intergenerational learning, and provided a model for localizing climate action through culturally grounded strategies.

By linking afforestation to the Akiriket, the initiative not only restored the environment but also strengthened the social fabric, highlighting how environmental and cultural preservation can advance hand in hand.



## 5. Linking Afforestation to Sustainable Livelihoods - Namayingo, Uganda

In Namayingo District, Eastern Uganda, a sustainable, income-driven tree planting model that positioned afforestation not only as an environmental intervention but also as a means of improving women's economic resilience was introduced. A total of 1,900 tree seedlings were distributed to women specifically, two widows and two other community women who owned an acre land each, establishing a vibrant green corridor along community land and selected road reserves.

The initiative focused on planting pine trees, chosen for their cost benefit when sold and regenerative capacity—they can regrow even after being cut, making them ideal for sustainable harvesting. Women were trained on responsible tree management practices, including how to harvest branches instead of cutting down entire trunks, ensuring continuous productivity and forest regeneration.

As the trees grew, women practiced intercropping by cultivating vegetables such as; green peppers, sukuma wiki, and tomatoes between the trees. This

practice not only maximized land use but also generated seasonal income and improved household food security. Over time, the initiative proved highly successful, leading the District Local Government to donate 3,000 additional tree seedlings for the women to expand the plantation on community land.

This model highlights how afforestation can be localized to strengthen women's livelihoods, linking environmental restoration to economic empowerment. By promoting sustainable harvesting, intercropping, and market-oriented production, the Namayingo experience demonstrates how women-led conservation efforts can simultaneously protect ecosystems, support income generation, and inspire community-wide environmental stewardship.

**“In Namayingo district, we’re the first group of our kind. Where this project found us is not where we are now.”**

Betty Nabwire, Chairperson of the Butebei Climate Ambassadors Group, Namayingo – Uganda.

**“For us women, all we knew was selling Mukene (Silver fish). Now we’re given an opportunity to plant trees and our mindset has changed greatly. We’re now thinking of starting a bee keeping project”**

Night Phoebe, a member of the Butebei Climate Ambassadors; Namayingo-Uganda

**“I have been able to educate my children, buy their books for school from the money I get from selling the vegetables that i have been intercropping in the trees”**

Nankwanga Baker, one of the beneficiaries of the tree growing. Namayingo- Uganda.



# Afforestation Key Results

**Total Trees Planted: 150,000 seedlings**

**Locations: Schools, hospitals, communities, road reserves, post-mining areas**

Country/Location	Approach/Model	Trees Planted	Unique Impact
Engaruka, Tanzania	Community-Centered Tree Planting	100,000+ seedlings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established community nurseries, with drought-resistant, fruit, fodder &amp; medicinal trees distributed to households, schools &amp; public spaces.</li> <li>Strengthened food security &amp; ecosystem restoration.</li> </ul>
Geita, Tanzania	Restoring Post-Mining Areas	1900 trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women small-scale miners led reforestation of degraded post mining sites; demonstrated land reclamation and ecological recovery.</li> <li>Fruit trees planted in homes and within community areas were highly demanded for those women independently started buying for their households.</li> </ul>

Kalehe & Kabare, DRC	Demystifying Myths & Empowering Women	6000 trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressed cultural taboos against women planting trees; inspired gender-inclusive environmental action.</li> </ul>
Moroto, Uganda (Karamoja)	The Akiriket Restoration Approach	4000 trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elders donated sacred Akiriket land; intergenerational, cross-gender collaboration; culturally grounded environmental restoration.</li> </ul>
Namayingo, Uganda	Linking Afforestation to Livelihoods	4,900 trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women-led income-driven model; sustainable pine harvesting &amp; intercropping; improved food security &amp; income.</li> </ul>
	Eco-Schools & Youth Engagement	1,881 assorted tree seedlings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 woodlots established in schools; environmental clubs led debates &amp; awareness activities on climate action.</li> </ul>

# WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENERGY PRESERVATION.

As the impact of climate change intensify, effective waste management and sustainable energy practices have become central to protecting the environment and enhancing community well-being. Recognizing that poor waste disposal and unsustainable energy use are key drivers of environmental degradation, The Peace Centre, championed initiatives that inspired behavioural change, innovation, and local ownership of eco-friendly solutions.

Community-led efforts that reduced pollution, improved sanitation, and fostered economic empowerment—especially among women and youth were supported. These interventions went beyond environmental action; they strengthened women's leadership in conservation, advanced community health, and built climate resilience through sustainable livelihoods.

## Approaches

### 1. Community-Led Waste Management for Cleaner Environments

#### Transforming Public Spaces through Waste Collection and Disposal

In Engaruka town, Monduli District, located along the tourist route to Ngorongoro and Lake Natron—improper waste disposal had become a growing public health threat. To address this, the town's first structured waste management and recycling system was introduced.

Through consistent community sensitisation sessions for residents and business owners, to promote proper waste disposal, reduce single-use plastics, and encourage recycling and composting, ten (10) public waste bins were installed in high-traffic areas—marking the first time Engaruka had accessible waste collection points.

To sustain the effort, a 14-member Environmental Committee was formed, drawing representatives from women's groups, youth, schools, and local leaders. The committee oversees monthly community clean-up days, now held every last Saturday of the month, and enforces a newly established local by-law on cleanliness, which includes fines for improper waste disposal.

Awareness materials and posters placed across the town reinforce key messages on waste management and recycling, while continued collaboration between the community and local authorities ensures accountability and shared ownership.



#### Impact:

- Reduced littering and pollution in public spaces, markets, and riverbanks.
- Improved community hygiene and public health.
- Strengthened civic pride and responsibility through active participation in clean-up exercises.
- Institutionalized sustainable waste management practices through the by-law and Environmental Committee.

This small yet impactful intervention not only reduced littering but also created a visual and practical reminder of the community's shared responsibility toward a clean environment.

The initiative strengthened local collaboration and inspired town residents to maintain hygienic surroundings, linking environmental cleanliness directly to human health and community pride.



## 2. Turning Waste into Wealth: Women Innovating for a Circular Economy

### Empowering Women to Transform Household Waste Into Eco friendly Briquettes and Plastic Materials



Through the initiative, women embraced innovative local solutions to address the challenge of improper waste management. Across Bukavu, Walungu, Kabare, Idjwi, and Kalehe in DRC, women and youth were trained to convert household waste into eco-friendly briquettes as an alternative energy source. Using locally available materials—such as charcoal dust, sawdust, paper, and crop residues—participants learned to create clean, affordable, and sustainable fuel that reduces dependence on firewood and charcoal.

The process begins with the collection and sorting of household waste, followed by drying and grinding to ensure uniform texture. Clay soil and cassava starch are used as natural binders to hold the mixture together, while water helps achieve the right consistency. The blended material is then molded into briquettes, sun-dried or oven-dried using locally made dryer bags, and later used as an affordable and sustainable energy source for cooking and heating.

**“Field waste that we neglected, that we couldn’t even imagine using one day, serves us today as precious raw material for ecological embers. After the training, I went to make my own briquettes at home and in an hour, I made 300 of them. I dried them in 5 days and tried to cook the beans. I didn’t believe it. While I could use more than 2000 FC to cook the beans, to the great surprise, only 6 briquettes were enough to cook the beans. And I made it in front of my neighbours who are all curious about making their own. Thank you very much to the Zaida Catalan Club and its partners for this training.”-**

Eunice Balihamwabo, a participant from Kabare, DRC

This innovation addressed multiple challenges: reducing waste, curbing deforestation, cutting household fuel costs, and generating income. By turning waste into an economic opportunity, women and youth became both environmental stewards

and entrepreneurs, leading their communities toward circular economy practices.

## Recycling Plastics into Reusable Household Products



In addition to briquette production, women's groups explored creative recycling methods—transforming discarded plastic bottles into reusable dustbins and household items. Using simple locally available tools, participants repurposed waste plastics into durable and practical products, demonstrating how innovation can turn pollution into productivity.

The process involved collecting and sorting plastic bottles, then using simple locally available tools such as tying threads, pliers, cutting pliers, scissors, saw blades, and controlled heat to shape and assemble the bins. On average, 48 bottles were used to form the outer structure of a bin, while an additional 14 bottles were used to make the base. The bottles were cut, shaped, and securely connected using wires that were trimmed and tightened with pliers to ensure durability and stability.

Beyond the tangible outputs, the activity fostered a mindset shift: waste was no longer seen as a nuisance but as a valuable resource. This new perspective strengthened environmental consciousness, stimulated innovation, and expanded livelihood opportunities for women and youth.

## Eco-Friendly Basket Weaving

In addition to recycling and briquette making, eco-friendly basket weaving as an innovative response to plastic waste and unemployment among women was promoted. Women were trained in the art of weaving using locally available, biodegradable materials such as banana fibers, papyrus reeds, sisal, and palm leaves—natural alternatives to plastics commonly used in polythene bags.

In Kyakatemba, Uganda, a hands-on training session led by experts equipped women with weaving techniques and start-up materials. The training not only built practical skills but also reconnected participants with indigenous craftsmanship rooted in sustainability. The women now craft and sell beautiful, functional baskets in local markets, reducing reliance on plastics while generating steady income.

What began as an environmental initiative evolved into a source of economic empowerment and social transformation. The income from basket sales has improved livelihoods and boosted household stability. During weaving sessions, women exchange stories of resilience and support, finding community in their craft.

One participant, Hope, shared that basket weaving helped her leave an abusive relationship, gain independence, and support her children. Her story mirrors that of many others who have found both dignity and purpose in the craft.

Through this initiative, waste management became a pathway to empowerment, healing, and sustainable livelihoods. By transforming local materials into eco-friendly products, the women of Kyakatemba are not only reducing waste but also weaving a future where environmental sustainability and women's economic freedom go hand in hand.



### 3. Collective Action along Lake Kivu

#### Community Mobilisation for Plastic Waste Reduction

In South Kivu, The Peace Centre supported women-led efforts to address the growing threat of plastic pollution along the shores of Lake Kivu in Bukavu and Idjwi in DRC. The initiative mobilised women and youth in a month-long clean-up campaign aimed at improving water quality, safeguarding aquatic ecosystems, and preserving fish biodiversity, an essential resource for the community's food security and livelihoods.

Beyond cleaning the environment, the initiative created space for ongoing awareness and learning. Through this collective action, communities were sensitised about the importance of maintaining clean and healthy ecosystems to promote the reproduction of fish larvae and protect aquatic life. By the end of the campaign, between 500 and 1,000 kilograms of plastic waste had been collected, significantly reducing environmental hazards and restoring the lake's natural beauty.

To complement the clean-up, a community-driven media campaign was launched to raise awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution. This campaign, led by local volunteers, promoted behavioural change and encouraged sustainable waste management practices. It emphasised the link between environmental health, livelihoods, and peacebuilding, underscoring that a clean and healthy environment is key to the wellbeing and resilience of communities.

Through community dialogues, interactive talks, and training sessions, participants deepened their understanding of individual and collective responsibility in environmental protection. The initiative also strengthened local ownership by using accessible communication channels, including posters in local languages, radio programmes, and social media messages to reach diverse audiences. This multilingual and multi-platform approach ensured inclusivity and encouraged community-wide participation in environmental conservation.



This experience demonstrated the transformative power of local action when women and youth are placed at the forefront of environmental protection. It not only enhanced environmental awareness but also reinforced community solidarity and stewardship of shared natural resources. As expressed by one local leader:

**"I am excited with this initiative taken by KJN. I would like to thank KJN and its partner WIPC for bringing this plastic waste collection activity to the shores of Lake Kivu, specifically to the MUHANZI market. This activity directly contributes to the protection of Lake Kivu's biodiversity and the multiplication of fish. As the head of this entity, I will be able to raise awareness among the entire population living along the shores of Lake Kivu, especially the traders at the MUHANZI market, to keep the coastal areas clean and protect the environment by combating pollution in Lake Kivu."**

- Mr. Serge Munganga, the Manager of the Muhanzi Market

**"Thanks to the efforts of Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle (KJN ASBL) and the Peace Centre, our environment has become much cleaner, and we have seen a significant reduction in plastic waste that polluted the shores of Lake Kivu and our surroundings. Previously, plastic waste posed an important challenge for us. It accumulated, causing discomfort and threatening public health. But today, thanks to the regular collection activities carried out by Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle and its partner, we see a tangible change: our market and its surroundings are healthier. This work has not only improved the quality of life in our community but also contributes to the preservation of Lake Kivu, a precious resource for all of us. I warmly thank KJN and its partners for their commitment and for this initiative, which has a positive and visible impact on our environment. We hope that such actions will continue for an even better future"**

- Mme Docile Mulumederwa, a business woman from Bondeko Market said. Bukavu- DRC



## 4. Clean Energy for Healthier and Sustainable Homes

### Training in Energy-Saving Stove Construction

In Mutumba and Buhemba sub-counties in Namayingo district - Uganda, 30 women and youth were trained in constructing and using energy-saving stoves—the Rocket Lorena and the Shielded Stove. The Rocket Lorena stove is a fixed mud stove made from clay and sand. It uses less firewood by directing heat straight to the cooking pot and includes a chimney that channels smoke outside, keeping the kitchen clean and healthy. The Shielded stove, also made from clay, has built-in walls that surround the pot, helping retain heat, cook food faster, use less firewood, and produce minimal smoke for a safer, healthier cooking experience.

These models significantly reduce firewood consumption, direct heat efficiently, and channel smoke outdoors, creating cleaner and safer kitchens.

The training combined theory with practice, allowing participants to build and install stoves in their own homes. This intervention addressed critical issues of deforestation, health, and gendered labour burdens, as women spend less time collecting firewood and are exposed to less smoke during cooking. It showcased how renewable energy technologies can transform household practices and promote dignity, health, and environmental protection.

**“Before, I would cook early and the food would get cold. If my husband came home late, he would beat me for serving him a cold meal. But now, with this energy-saving stove, I can cook in the morning, spend the day building stoves for others, and return to find the food still warm. These stoves retain heat for hours and because of that, my home is more peaceful. My husband no longer beats me.”**

— Woman trained in energy-saving stove construction, Namayingo District

## 5. Integrating Awareness and Behavioural Change Communication

Throughout all interventions, The Peace Centre and its partners used community dialogues, media campaigns, and local radio programmes to raise awareness about sustainable waste management and energy conservation. These platforms encouraged public participation, inspired behaviour change, and ensured inclusivity by communicating in local languages.

By linking environmental health to peacebuilding, these campaigns strengthened collective responsibility and fostered a culture of care—anchored in the belief that a clean environment is essential for lasting peace, well-being, and community resilience.

# INFLUENCING POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Under the Women at the Centre of Climate Justice Initiative, influencing policy and advocacy was a key approach to ensure that women’s voices, experiences, and priorities shape climate action at all levels. Through this component, partners worked with government institutions, local councils, and community structures to integrate gender and climate justice concerns into decision-making spaces.

The advocacy work focused on creating awareness about women’s role in climate action, promoting inclusion in local and national environmental dialogues, and influencing existing climate and environmental policies. Across countries, women leaders, youth, and grassroots groups were supported to engage in consultations, policy dialogues, and campaigns that addressed gaps in environmental governance and called for gender-responsive climate policies.

These efforts strengthened linkages between communities and policymakers, ensuring that climate decisions reflect local realities—such as land degradation, deforestation, and energy access—while recognizing the critical role of women in providing solutions. Through continuous engagement, partners contributed to shifting perceptions and promoting accountability among duty bearers responsible for implementing climate and environmental policies.

## Strategies Used to Influence Policy

The project applied a combination of participatory and evidence-driven advocacy strategies to amplify women’s voices, generate data for policy influence, and create platforms for dialogue between communities and policymakers.

Strategy	What We Did	Advocacy Impact
<b>1. Media Campaigns for Public Awareness and Policy Influence</b>	<p>Partners across Uganda and Tanzania leveraged both national and community media—including radio, television, and social media—to spotlight women’s experiences in the face of environmental degradation and climate change.</p> <p>In Uganda, WOGEM organised radio talk</p>	<p>Media became a powerful advocacy tool, shaping public narratives around women’s leadership in climate action. Public understanding of the gender-climate link improved, and national actors were influenced to prioritise women’s voices in environmental and resource governance.</p>

	<p>shows on Kazi Jema Radio featuring community women who shared how the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project was displacing families and damaging livelihoods.</p> <p>In Tanzania, a targeted media advocacy initiative amplified the voices of women farmers facing the impacts of drought and erratic rainfall.</p> <p>Also trained journalists in gender-sensitive climate reporting in Tanzania to bridge grassroots realities with national policy discourse.</p>	
<p><b>2. Community Dialogues and Policy Engagement Forums</b></p>	<p>Public dialogues, and community town-hall meetings were organised to address key issues like deforestation, waste management, and land evictions.</p> <p>In Engaruka (Tanzania), dialogues led to the creation of a 14-member environmental committee and the enactment of a community by-law on waste management, introducing penalties for non-compliance.</p> <p>In Uganda, women in oil host communities were</p>	<p>Strengthened community-government collaboration and increased women’s participation in local governance.</p> <p>Communities became more organised and confident in demanding climate and land justice, while local authorities adopted more transparent and inclusive approaches to environmental management.</p>

	<p>mobilised to engage directly with local authorities and government officials, presenting their grievances and demanding fair compensation and accountability from EACOP developers.</p>	
<p><b>3. Building Women’s Leadership and Advocacy Capacity</b></p>	<p>Trainings and mentorship sessions equipped women and young leaders with knowledge on climate governance, policy influence, communication, and negotiation. In Uganda, community women gained confidence to speak publicly and advocate for their rights during engagements on EACOP.</p> <p>In Tanzania, women leaders were trained on leadership, intersectionality, and the gender dimensions of climate justice.</p>	<p>Women’s agency and leadership improved across both countries. They actively participated in district planning meetings, policy consultations, and environmental by-law reforms, emerging as credible advocates for inclusive and sustainable climate action.</p>
<p><b>4. Evidence-Based Advocacy and Research</b></p>	<p>To amplify women and girls voices who are directly affected by impacts of climate change, and those who are indirectly impacted by the impacts, ensuring their voices and experiences are included in policy cycle, the WATED’s Hadithi Zetu project in Tanzania</p>	<p>Generated gender-disaggregated evidence and community narratives that informed national dialogues on the Climate Change Gender Action Plan, and highlighted gaps in gender-responsive budgeting, environmental governance, and com-</p>

conducted participatory research across Lindi, Mtwara, Pwani, and Manyara, assessing 10 climate and DRM policies and documenting the experiences of 165 women.

In Uganda, WOGEM used local testimonies, photo stories, and opinion articles to document the socio-economic effects of extractive projects on women's livelihoods and environmental health.

pensation processes for affected women.

Women developed practical local climate adaptation strategies, such as relocating to the homes of relatives or utilizing school buildings as shelters during floods as the government officials advised.

Additionally, their advocacy led to a small but significant increase in government support, where they received basic necessities like food and mattresses during emergency situations. This collaboration not only strengthened the community's resilience but also highlighted the importance of integrating women's voices in climate adaptation efforts at the local level.

Generated gender-disaggregated evidence that informed local and national dialogues on the Climate Change Gender Action Plan and highlighted the need for inclusive climate budgeting.

## 5. Storytelling for Policy Engagement

WATED documented 30 stories of women’s resilience to climate change, while WOGEM published more than 10 opinion articles and community communiqués to share women’s perspectives on climate adaptation and justice.

Through Twitter Spaces, online campaigns, and press releases, women from oil host communities shared stories of displacement, resistance, and innovation.

Elevated women’s lived experiences from local stories to national advocacy tools.

These narratives humanized the impacts of the climate crisis and extractive industries, reframing women as leaders and innovators in building climate-resilient communities.

## Partner Contributions Snapshot

Partner	Country	Advocacy Focus	Key Achievements
<b>WOGEM</b>	Uganda	Advocacy for women in oil host communities and EACOP accountability	Conducted radio talk shows, online campaigns, and opinion pieces amplifying women’s voices; mobilized communities to demand accountability for land evictions and environmental harm; contributed to public resistance that delayed EACOP implementation.

ENCO & WATED	Tanzania	Feminist environmental governance and media advocacy	Facilitated enactment of a community by-law on waste management; established a 30-member environmental committee; trained journalists and documented 30 women's resilience stories; conducted participatory research on gender and climate policy.
Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle	DRC	Women's leadership in environmental restoration	Mobilized women and youth in Lake Kivu clean-up campaigns, reducing pollution and improving food security; enhanced women's leadership in local environmental committees.

## IIINTERGRATING WELLNESS AND SELF CARE

Recognizing that climate justice work often exposes women activists and community leaders to emotional stress, burnout, and fatigue, the Women at the Centre of Climate Justice Initiative intentionally integrated wellness and self-care as a core part of its implementation.

This approach aimed to ensure that women leading climate action not only have the capacity to advocate and mobilize communities but also the emotional and physical well-being to sustain their activism.

A participatory and inclusive approach that centered the lived realities of women activists, community leaders, and implementing staff, was adopted. Recognizing that

emotional health and resilience are essential for sustained engagement, partners prioritized the creation of safe, reflective, and healing spaces for dialogue and collective care.

## **How We Did It: Creating Safe and Supportive Pathways for Wellness**

### **Organising Safe Spaces for Open Dialogue.**

For many participants and partners, we organised safe spaces to encourage sharing. The sessions provided a safe and participatory space for participants to express their lived experiences, concerns, and needs relating to personal health, emotional well-being, and workplace safety.

For the women and girls in small-scale mining, discussions revealed a range of psychosocial challenges, most notably stress, anxiety, and depression stemming from economic insecurity, harmful traditional cultural expectations, gender-based safety risks, and the social stigma attached to mining work.

### **Building Mental Health Awareness and Organizational Care**

In addition to community-based wellness activities, the project also focused on supporting staff well-being within partner organizations. A series of guided sessions led by professional wellness consultants were conducted for project teams and women participants. These sessions explored mental health awareness, the stages of psychological distress, and the importance of recognizing early signs of burnout.

Participants learned practical self-care tools, including mindfulness techniques, stress management exercises, and strategies for maintaining work-life balance. Importantly, the training helped staff build empathy and capacity to support colleagues and community members who may be struggling with mental health challenges.

The sessions also challenged the stigma around mental health by encouraging open dialogue and normalizing care as part of organizational culture. This marked a significant shift—positioning emotional well-being as a shared responsibility rather than an individual burden.

### **Institutionalizing Care for Sustainability**

Beyond one-time activities, partners such as WATED and WAEHEAL took deliberate steps toward embedding care into institutional practice. Building on the lessons from wellness sessions, WATED initiated the development of a comprehensive organizational wellness program, aimed at creating long-term systems of support for staff and project participants.

The program—represents a key milestone in ensuring that care and well-being are sustained beyond project cycles and continue to shape how organizations engage

in climate justice work.

Similarly, WAEHEAL developed a Selfcare and Wellness Guide tailored to the needs of its staff. This resource provides actionable tools and strategies to help employees manage stress, improve mental health, and sustain a healthy work-life balance.

By embedding wellness into organization structure, the guide supports increased job satisfaction, improved productivity and long-term staff retention. These self-care and wellness initiatives contributed to the Peace Centre's strategic focus on intentional wellbeing as one of our core areas of focus for our work.



# OUTSTANDING STORY

## Restoring Access to Clean Water in Lepolos Village

In Lepolos, a remote farming and pastoralist village in Engaruka Tanzania, the absence of a clean water supply had long defined daily life, particularly for women and girls. Every day, they moved long distances of up to six kilometres to collect water from a distant river in another village.

The journey was both physically exhausting and emotionally depleting, cutting deep into the hours meant for tending farms, nurturing families, or simply resting. Even still, water was never guaranteed, and when it was found, it was often shared with livestock and unfit for drinking, contributing to frequent illness, poor hygiene, and low agricultural productivity.

In response to this challenge, the Peace Centre, working with ENCO supported the installation of a 4km water line that brought clean, accessible water directly into the village. For the first time, more than 75 households can access safe water within minutes of their homes. To safeguard this new access, we also provided a 5,000-litre water storage tank, ensuring reliability even during periods of reduced flow, and two additional 1,000-litre tanks to support conservation agriculture allowing farmers to irrigate crops sustainably and improve food security.

**“Every day, we had to walk long distances in search of water, which affected our health, and daily activities. Some of the children missed out on school many times because they had to fetch water walking long distances before heading to school. With ENCO’s intervention, bringing clean and accessible water to our village, we no longer have to endure the hardship of fetching water from distant, unreliable sources. This project has transformed our lives greatly.”-**

**Joshua Mollel, a resident of Lepolos village.**

The transformation has been profound. Women, no longer burdened by the daily trek for water, have reclaimed time and energy to focus on farming, community participation, and income-generating activities. Hygiene has improved, reducing preventable disease and restoring dignity to everyday living. With water available for home gardens and agriculture, families are growing more food, earning more income, and building resilience to the climate shocks that once made survival uncertain.

This intervention has restored agency to women, dignity to households, and hope to an entire community.

## CHALLENGES

- The insecurity particularly in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, disrupted implementation. This forced communities in Bukavu and Goma to seek refuge in neighboring countries.
- The prolonged dry spells and erratic rainfall severely affected survival rates for trees planted, especially in the pastoral areas of Karamoja, despite watering efforts.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND THE FUTURE

- Changing entrenched behaviors around waste management and sustainable farming practices takes time, but consistent training, follow-ups, and community engagement drive meaningful change
- Practical, hands-on training, particularly in communities with low literacy levels, significantly improves understanding and ensures the adoption of new practices, enhancing project outcomes.
- Involving local leaders, including elders and traditional leaders, is crucial for addressing gender norms and fostering community-driven environmental solutions, enhancing project ownership and sustainability.
- Tailored mentorship for farmers, addressing specific challenges like soil fertility and tree species selection, ensures practical, context-relevant solutions that improve adoption rates of agroforestry practices.
- Including women in leadership and mentorship roles not only strengthens household resilience but also promotes equitable participation and benefits in environmental projects, enhancing long-term impact.
- Youth and women have a unique ability to influence sustainable behaviors within families and communities, making their training on climate change and environmental issues essential for broader impact.

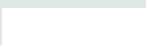
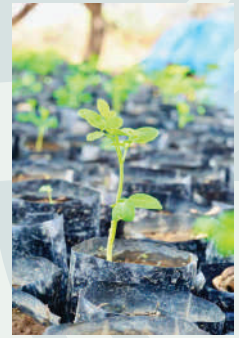
## CONCLUSION

It is evident that involving women and youth in climate action leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes, highlighting their crucial role in driving positive environmental and social change.

The importance of practical hands-on training, community engagement, and addressing socio-cultural barriers for achieving long-term impact cannot be over emphasized.

Global discussions around financing should prioritise the engagement of women and youth especially the need for tools and grants to catalysis the transition and adaptation.







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ISBN 978-9913-613-86-6



9 789913 613866