

TREES FOR GLOBAL BENEFIT: EMPOWERING UGANDAN WOMEN WITH LAND CONCESSIONS AND TREE PLANTING BENEFITS

A LOCAL-LEVEL, IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVE
GENDER & REDD+ CASE STUDY SERIES



ECOTRUST MISSION:

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"To conserve natural resources
and enhance social welfare by
promoting innovative and sustainable
environment management in Uganda."

INTRODUCTION:

Forests, which comprise a total of four billion hectares of land cover worldwide, are one of nature's greatest assets—while, at the same time, effective and sustainable forest managements poses one of the global community's biggest challenges. Forests have the ability to absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂), a potent greenhouse gas and primary component of anthropogenic emissions, and act as carbon sinks. However, when forests are destroyed, they release CO₂ into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change. Forest loss produces 12-15% of total annual greenhouse gas emissions, which is why it is essential that forest management be integrated into effective climate change solutions.

REDD+, which stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation plus conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, is a framework that seeks to provide financial incentives for developing countries that are making those reductions and conserving forests. The ultimate aim of REDD+ is to foster sustainable forest management, which is not only a smart economic decision, but a smart decision for the environment and the people who depend on it.

Women from forest-dependent communities—communities that are often among the poorest—play an integral role in the management of forests, yet are frequently sidelined in decision-making processes and leadership roles. This exclusion is detrimental, as gender equality is essential for undertaking sustainable forest governance and achieving the goals of REDD+. In order for REDD+ to become a successful mechanism to combat climate change, and in order for it to provide concrete environmental solutions, gender-responsive standards and safeguards that incorporate gender equality and women's rights must be at the core of REDD+ policies and programmes.

Integrating gender considerations into REDD+ policy, planning, and implementation is a key issue for numerous countries. Leveraging learning and knowledge sharing for gender and REDD+ is essential in moving toward harmonized policy reform across relevant sectors, including natural resource management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, land use and tenure reform, and benefit sharing. This case study identifies and consolidates existing tools and best practices for greater access and applicability in mainstreaming gender considerations into REDD+.



WHY GENDER MATTERS IN REDD+ :

Every day in their roles as farmers, foresters, fishers, caretakers, and household providers, women use and manage natural resources. Women have unique experiences and knowledge with respect to their environments and offer important perspectives in natural resource governance. Specifically, women and men from rural communities often have differentiated knowledge of forest resources and diverse roles in its management. Given their responsibility for meeting food, water and energy needs for the household, women's work and time burdens are increased by the depletion of forest resources. Not only does women's equitable participation and representation in REDD+ uphold commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality, it also makes for better development, more effective and efficient climate change solutions, and stronger sustainability and livelihood outcomes.

CASE STUDY BACKGROUND:

Integrating gender considerations into REDD+ planning and implementation is a key issue for numerous countries. Leveraging learning and knowledge sharing for gender and REDD+ is essential in moving toward harmonized policy reform and is relevant across many elements of climate change adaptation and mitigation, natural resource management, land use, and benefit sharing. This case study identifies and consolidates existing tools and best practices for greater access and applicability in mainstreaming gender considerations into REDD+.

FORESTS IN UGANDA:

In Uganda, forest cover stands at approximately 49,000 km² or 24% of the total land area. Despite the country's small size, with only 0.02% of the world's total dry land area, Uganda remains a cultivator of biodiversity with over 11% and 7% of the known total of species of birds and mammals respectively in the world. However, weak governance and political strife over the past three decades has led to the destruction of people, infrastructure, and the economy, and the country has experienced poverty, low levels of human development, and environmental

degradation. The main source of livelihood in Uganda is subsistence agriculture, and it is sustained by more than three quarters of the rural-based population.

Although there has been a long period of upheaval and considerable damage to some of Uganda's forests, there is still a solid ecological basis from which sustainable forestry can operate. Development strategies in Uganda recognize that forest resources play an integral role in maximizing positive impacts on poverty. Uganda's Forest Policy recognizes that forests and woodlands are central to the three pillars of sustainable development—economy, society, and environment—and the country's vision for the forestry sector is "a sufficiently forested, ecologically stable, and economically prosperous Uganda." In order to meet local, national, regional, and global needs, and keeping in mind present and future generations, a national forestry program for Uganda is being developed which will ensure the conservation, management, and sustainable development of forests is central to natural resource policy and programming.

"In Uganda, not very many women own land. They till the land, they manage the land, but they do not control access and they don't own the land, so you find that mechanisms, such as REDD+ they are contract based mechanisms, and you go into contract with the person who has the title to the land, so you find that many of the processes leave out the women."

PAULINE NANTONGO KALUNDA,
Executive Director of ECOTRUST

TGB BACKGROUND:

Trees for Global Benefit (TGB), an initiative of the Environmental Conservation Trust of Uganda (ECOTRUST), is a cooperative community carbon offset scheme developed to enable poverty reduction through effective management and protection of forestry ecosystems on which local people depend. TGB seeks to reduce unsustainable exploitation of forest resources and the decline of ecosystem quality, while diversifying and increasing incomes for rural farm families. This is most often achieved through Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), decreasing unsustainable pressure on natural resources, reducing CO₂ emissions, and building community resiliency. Small-scale landholders in rural areas have been involved in tree planting activities since TGB's inception in 2002.

CURRENT STATUS OF REDD+ IN UGANDA:

In Uganda, REDD+ is part of the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) that aims for a unified and coordinated approach towards a climate-resilient and low-carbon development path for sustainable development. Uganda became a participant of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) in 2008 and received its first grant to prepare the REDD Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) in 2009, which was approved in 2012. The Readiness Preparation Grant Agreement was signed in July 2013. The R-PP process is being coordinated by the Ministry of Water and Environment through its Forest Sector Support Department. A National Steering Committee and a National Technical Committee serve as platforms for stakeholder engagement in the National REDD+ process.

Development of a National REDD+ Strategy is also underway in Uganda, as well as a national forestry monitoring system. The process is currently soliciting technical support for the elaboration of various components of the strategy, data collection for establishment of forest reference levels, and development of a forest monitoring system. The Uganda government views the National REDD+ Strategy as a long-term measure for tackling deforestation and forest degradation, while also meeting demands for energy and other forest products. The intended REDD+ Strategy is being developed with a view to enhancing positive impacts for REDD+ while reducing any negative social and environmental effects on forest-dependent communities. A National Forestry Inventory is already in place and implemented by the National Forestry Authority, with technical support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

“We are looking into our systems and approaches to find ways of raising awareness that the success of the project, for both biodiversity and livelihoods improvement, depends upon the active participation of all stakeholders.”

PAULINE NANTONGO KALUNDA,
Executive Director of ECOTRUST

OBJECTIVES:

TGB is a tree-planting project that aims to produce long-term, verifiable Voluntary Emission Reductions (VERs) by combining carbon sequestration with rural livelihood improvements through small-scale, farmer-led, forestry and agroforestry projects while reducing pressure on natural resources in national parks and forest reserves. By increasing local and international visibility of communities to decisionmakers and governments, strengthening recognition of communities' rights and promoting gender equity, as well as creating new job opportunities in rural areas, TGB strives to have a positive social impact. Both men and women are given an opportunity to attend trainings, plant trees, and access carbon finance through TGB and program recruitment involves the entire household. Women who have purchased or inherited or been granted access to land by their spouses are encouraged to plant trees and TGB has also put in place provisions for inheritance of the program by the spouse or children in case of death.

TGB partners include ECOTRUST, which coordinates the generating of VERs certificates, trains participants, provides extension services, and manages carbon assets; the Plan Vivo Foundation, which manages the system through which carbon emissions are verified and VERs certificates are issued, as well as carbon buyers that pay for the ecosystem services, and farmers groups such as Bitereko Women's Group, which mobilizes farming households, particularly women, to participate in the enterprise.

Women lead 25% of TGB projects

OUTCOMES & FUTURE IMPLICATIONS:

TGB reduces unsustainable exploitation of forests through planting of native and indigenous and naturalized trees—including mixed native woodlots, agroforestry and fruit orchards that provide high revenues—and then producing VERs certificates that are generated and sold. All activities are technically specified, making it possible to calculate the carbon credits expected from each farm or plot. The Plan Vivo Foundation then issues certificates in advance through the environmental market registry. Farmers in the region rely on payments generated from TGB to improve their quality of life and many use the supplementary income to pay for their children's education.

Farmers participating in TGB are organized and evaluated according to a standard called “Plan Vivo”, which is designed to encourage farmers in developing countries to manage land responsibly by paying them for the ecosystem services their farms provide. Local communities are intimately involved in the process of establishing and executing forest carbon projects. TGB aims for equity in benefit sharing—its model recognizes the contribution made by the various players and ensures that each is rewarded accordingly. Even though farmers aggregate their credits and sell as a cooperative offsetting scheme, each individual farmer enters into a contract with the project specifying clearly what their performance targets are and the corresponding expected payments. The pricing model ensures that the producer gets at least 60% of the carbon income and the remainder meets the cost of project administration, project audit, and certificate issuance. Further, each carbon credit sold makes a contribution to a community fund that addresses the needs of the wider community in which the carbon farmer lives.

TGB takes a “rights-based approach” to REDD+ and a number of strategies have been employed in order to ensure that women and men participate equally. This gender mainstreaming approach involves recognizing the needs and potential roles of various stakeholders, as well as ensuring project design harnesses their potential and makes their concerns and experiences integral to planning and implementation. Strategies to ensure this kind of equitable participation include recruiting farmers through marginalized groups and effective representation of women, men, elderly and youth in leadership.

“Over the years, Trees for Global Benefit has created awareness about climate change, we have tested out models of quantifying carbon dioxide and paying farmers based on the technical specifications, and we think that the nation can benefit from our work.”

ADRINE KIRABO KAMUHANDA,
Programme Coordinator, ECOTRUST

The main strategies employed that support TGB activities include:

- Undertaking and applying gender-sensitive socio-economic analysis before introducing the program in a new community
- Working with all members of a households, including in situations with multiple spouses
- Designing activities around time-sensitive events during the day and within the community to include different groups of stakeholders
- Raising awareness of the potential extra workload the project may impose on some members of the household, especially women and youth
- Involving women in leadership responsibilities
- Working with organizations focused on vulnerable groups, including women's networks
- Utilizing a variety of income-generating initiatives
- Providing avenues for marginalized groups to access social services (e.g., those without assets are able to use carbon purchase agreements as collateral for loans)

Significant barriers remain to thoroughly mainstream gender and engage women, including:

- Difficulty mobilizing women to participate in project activities due to roles, responsibilities, and cultural norms (e.g., women usually need permission to leave home and the burden of their household duties do not allow them to participate in awareness meetings and trainings)
- Increased cost of conducting gender-sensitive meetings (e.g., separate meetings; meetings in locations convenient for women; etc.)
- Women do not usually have land rights, thus participating in land use planning requires the consent of the man
- Breaking gender roles and stereotypes, as tree planting historically has been seen as men's work
- Despite evidence at the community level that engaging women improves outcomes, project staff need more sustained gender capacity building

Results to date include:

- Recruited, trained, and supported over 2,000 farmers to invest in sustainable management of their land, leading to improved management of at least 3,000 hectares of private land
- Mobilized over 3,000 households to participate in sustainable forest management, with 25% of the project activities led by women
- More than 400 of these women have been able to use their carbon purchase agreements as collateral for loans
- 520,000 tonnes of CO₂ sold on the voluntary carbon market in the past 10 years of the project using the Plan Vivo Standard
- Activities regularly verified to ensure that the project continues to meet the Plan Vivo requirements

CONCLUSION:

By striving to provide long-term, sustained funding for the conservation of biodiversity and environmental management in Uganda, TGB hopes to attain its vision for "a healthy environment with prosperous people." Over its 20-year lifetime, TGB is expected to sequester more than 50,000 tonnes of CO₂, as well as provide significant economic and environmental benefits to the smallholder farmer community, local wildlife and ecosystems.

Ultimately, TGB will allow Uganda as a whole, and specifically the regions that it works in to recover some of its native highland tropical vegetation via the many farms involved in the program. Today, the project sites are currently a patchwork of subsistence agricultural lands where farmers plant banana, corn, coffee, sugar cane, sweet potatoes and other crops. As of the 2014 verification, these plots cover 2,753 hectares and are planted with native and naturalized trees that range from one to five years in age. The project's focus on agroforestry systems and small-scale plantations will help local farmers increase and diversify their incomes, gain access to fuelwood and basic building materials, and reduce deforestation pressures on nearby forests.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue to develop in-country capacity for future studies related to tree planting benefits
- Educate youth about the benefits of planting native species, which will help garner support for the project in the future
- Establish solutions for transportation challenges that pose potential barriers for individuals who may wish to sell timber at city markets
- Expand capacity in terms of financial planning and fixed payments

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This case study is part of the Gender and REDD+ Case Study Series. It was prepared for IUCN with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) via the Gender Equality for Climate Change Opportunities (GECCO) initiative. GECCO leverages advancements in women's empowerment and gender equality through, and for, the benefit of climate change and development outcomes and is designed to provide an array of support options for national, regional, and global activities that advance women's empowerment and gender equality.

More information about GECCO can be found on the IUCN Global Gender Office's website at <http://genderandenvironment.org/>; more information about gender and REDD+ can be found on the REDD Desk at <http://theredddesk.org/>; and more information about USAID's climate change work can be found at www.usaid.gov/climate.