

Healing the Land Through **Climate**-Smart Agriculture in Refugee Settlements

By: *Namatovu Stella, guest writer*

Uganda grapples with land degradation, a harsh reality fueled by climate change, unsustainable practices, and deforestation. This burden falls even heavier on refugee settlements since rapid land clearance for housing disrupts ecosystems, straining local resources due to heavy reliance on trees for fuel. In the end, deforestation creates a vicious cycle; increased soil erosion, reduced biodiversity, and boosted greenhouse gas emissions. Left unchecked, degradation

disrupts weather patterns and weakens soil fertility, jeopardizing food security for these already vulnerable communities.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) recognizes these challenges and has been a champion for climate-smart agriculture in Ugandan across the settlements of Palabek, Adjumani, Palorinya, Kyangwali and Kamwenge. This approach promotes agricultural productivity, resilience against climate change, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions – a perfect fit for these communities.



LWF utilizes the Farmer Field Schools approach, a hands-on learning experience in the field, to equip farmers from both refugee and host communities with the knowledge and skills for sustainable farming. This includes techniques like cover cropping (improving soil health and suppressing weeds) and water-efficient irrigation systems (maximizing yields while minimizing water waste).

A cornerstone of this approach is agroforestry, the integration of trees into farms. These practices not only enhance food security but also heal the land. Farmers learn to cultivate responsibly, ensuring stable crop yields and reducing food insecurity. Furthermore, these sustainable practices empower refugees with the knowledge and skills to become self-sufficient, fostering a sense of ownership over their new environment and improving their livelihoods. The positive impact extends beyond food security, promoting healthy soil, water conservation, and reduced environmental pressure.

LWF maintains central tree nurseries which support the distribution of seedlings to households, communities, and institutions such as schools for woodlot establishments. The distributed species include timber trees like teak, eucalyptus, and Gmelina arborea, alongside fruit trees like cashew, citrus, jackfruit, mango, and papaya. Additionally, multipurpose trees like Senna, Moringa, Markhamia lutea, Vitex, and Azadirachta indica (neem).

Recognizing the limited land access for refugees, the program encourages planting fruit trees for them, while the host community focuses on wood



45

YEARS
in Uganda



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Since 1979

Empowering communities & transforming lives

For 45 years, LWF has been uplifting the lives of Ugandan and refugee communities through development initiatives and life-saving humanitarian assistance. Our efforts encompass protection, access to food, water, sanitation, shelter, health services and education.

Contact us:

-  uganda.lutheranworld.org
-  lwf.uganda@lutheranworld.org
-  +256-708145707
-  @LWF_Uganda

Thank you for your support



trees. This not only provides additional income for farmers but also offers a multitude of environmental benefits. The trees improve soil fertility, reduce erosion, and help recover the land cover.

In 2023, a remarkable collaborative effort resulted in planting close to half a million trees. Seedlings came from both National Forestry Authority (NFA) and LWF nurseries. A total of 469,427 seedlings were distributed and planted, with an impressive 74.4% survival rate. "We are incredibly grateful for the partnerships and unwavering support we've received from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Bread for the World, and Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) whose support has been instrumental in our progress towards environmental recovery through reforestation efforts," said Adriana

Franco Chitanana, LWF country representative.

LWF understands that land degradation is not solely an agricultural issue. They promote the use of Lorena energy-saving cooking stoves in households. These stoves are significantly more fuel-efficient than traditional three-stone fires. By reducing firewood usage, Lorena stoves help conserve existing trees and contribute to reforestation efforts.

LWF's dedication to climate-smart agriculture serves as an inspiration. It's a beacon of hope for a sustainable future, even in the face of immense challenges. "By embracing climate-smart agriculture, I believe we can cultivate a food system that is productive, resilient, and in harmony with the environment. By working together, we can transform agriculture from a contributor into a solution for climate change," said Adriana.