

USE OF WEATHER AND CLIMATE INFORMATION FOR MITIGATING WEATHER AND CLIMATE DISASTERS IN ISINGIRO DISTRICT



UNMA Official during the feedback meeting with members of Ruhimbo Tukwatanise Farmers group in Isingiro district.

The chairperson of the group Mr. Muhwezi Stephen informed the WISER project team that this group started in 2010 by a small group of modal farmers mainly dealing in coffee, beans, banana and small scale milk production. This group now boasts of having a total of 68 registered members(42 females and 26 males) and they have been recognized by the district authority as a model farm which also extends Agricultural knowledge and skills to not only the group members but to other neighboring communities and districts in the region. The chairperson of the group lamented that their district has experienced more frequent and longer drought spells in the last 12 years and therefore, making life very difficult especially to farmers. Longer droughts have manifested into unique crop and animal pests and diseases leading to low Agricultural production and food insecurity.

Over the years, the cattle keepers are forced to migrate to safer wet land catchment areas or sell their animals at much cheaper prices in order to cope up with the long drought spell. The members of this group acknowledged that predicting the start of rains in terms of onset has become more probabilistic than in the past century and farmer now enter into very bigger losses when they plant bigger acreage and the rains delay to come.

However, in order to cope up with the current worrying impacts of climate change in the district, they have been advised by the Agricultural extension workers to develop coping mechanisms like tree planting, early preparation of fields and early planting, planting early maturing crops, rain water harvesting, practicing good agronomical practices, soil and water conservation. They have also formed small Agribusiness cooperatives in order to demand for better prices for their produce and products.

In the pic 1 below. Youth member translating in the local language the advice given by the UNMA staff to the members



Pic. 2 &3. Rain water harvesting and conservation practices.





The secretary to this group Ms. Winnie Nyambizehi also reported that they have also adopted Agroforestry best practices, boundary tree planting, making of organic manure and sensitizing communities on Environmental protection, tree planting and the use of energy cooking stoves, Biogas and solar. She said that they are now partnering with solar power distribution companies to sell to them on loan or at subsidized prices. She was very excited that the UNMA Staff was able to explain to them about the Agricultural Insurance which the government of Uganda has just introduced to safe guard farmers from losses due drought, pests and diseases or floods.

The group expressed strong willingness to demand for accurate weather and climate information from UNMA and the district Agricultural office to help plan well especially in understanding the onset, peak and end or reduction of rains during the rain season. The members accepted that they have been receiving this weather information from the local radio stations but the information given is always inaccurate and misleading.

In conclusion, the group requested UNMA to directly send weather and climate information on their mobile phones and print translated weather forecast in the local language and share with the sub-county extension workers, LCs, Parish chiefs and councilors to disseminate to them during community meetings, churches, markets and ceremonies.