

Use of Weather and Climate information for planning purposes and disaster preparedness in Buduba District



WISER Senior Project Officer having a table discussion with the Chairperson of Bushika Farmers group

Bushika Farmers group which is located in Bushika sub-county in Buduba started in 2010 as a small trade and cooperative registered organization. The land that the group tills was voluntarily given by three community members who are paid a small premium annually. The group has now manifested into a district farmers umbrella organization of Community Based Organizations with; **22 primary cooperatives, 11 CBOs, 3 SACCOS, 2 primary schools and the membership has grown to about 3,040 members comprising of 1,689M, 1351F, that includes 494 youths and** . The group's major enterprises are coffee, dairy, bananas, onions and vegetables. "We used to suffer from low market prices for our produce especially bananas (matooke) during times of dumper harvests and due to the bad weather roads and this made the buyers opportunity to cheat us,"but now we have gone an extra mile to add value to our products and fetch better prices than before. Local wine is now made out of our own bananas and local coffee is also produced for sale. They harvest some honey from the beehives and sell to different customers locally and in supermarkets in Mbale town".

Mr. Namwenye also indicates that Bududa district is now popular worldwide as a disaster prone area due to the frequency of occurrence of landslides and mudslides which recently wrecked Bukalasi sub-county leading loss of lives and property. Bududa district is over populated and the households are heavily depending on very small pieces of land and on the natural Environment.

In the pics. Mr. Namwenye showing the MAAIF, UNMA and sub-county extension workers their Fish pond



Bushika farmers group has embraced mainstreaming environment and climate change programmes in their activities and therefore, the group has formed the environment and climate change sub-committees who are currently sensitizing communities to promote energy saving technologies for example use of energy cooking stoves, use of biogas and solar. The group is currently constructing a biogas digester through the support from other development partners.

The Chairperson of the group, Mr. **Namwenye Mereth**, reported that Bushika youths are also playing a key role in creating awareness to the communities in the area to plant trees in their compounds and garden boundaries in order to reduce dependence on the existing natural forest reserves. Modern Water and Soil conservation practices are used during the wet and dry seasons and the advisories provided in the Seasonal Forecasts “have become more significant in our farm management and that is many local farmers regularly visit us for free knowledge and practical skills”, the Chairperson boasted.

When asked how they receive weather and climate information, the Chairperson responded by saying that they usually get this information from the local radio station, open gate FM and some of them receive from their phones through the Office of the Prime Minister and a USAID project which ended in 2017. He also acknowledged the fact that last year’s Weather Forecast for the SOND was about 80% accurate as predicted and some of them were able to use and benefit from this information.

He also recalls that during the WISER project training of the district champions which took place in Mbale town last year 2018 in the month of October, there was a discussion on Radio Open Gate FM which informed the people of Bududa to be watchful of the expected heavy rains and the likely impacts. Consequently, 10 days later the heavy rains led to mudslides in Bukalasi sub-county and killing more than 60 people and its evident many people did not take this information seriously.

How do you think this Weather and Climate information is useful to your daily activities as a farmer group?

In response, Mr. Namwenye said that this information is very useful to them especially in planning the different farming activities during the rain seasons for example this helps them to prepare their gardens and agricultural inputs for early planting, preparing for harvesting and post-harvest activities, on farm management. Bushika has now become a local community resource. He noted that many farmers nowadays come to their group to get information on the predicted Weather Forecast free of charge. The group also offers free agricultural advisories services free of charge to locals but charges some fair fees for farmers or visitors who come from other districts. He acknowledged the fact that there is increasing demand for the weather forecast particularly from the commercial farmers. The is willing and can also afford paying for the SMS platforms on weather updates but they are currently getting it free of charge from the Buduba district production department which usually gets a copy of the forecast from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Pics. Showing building community resilience with action



Bushika Farmers Group Apiary Farm



Fish Pond inside the Farm

Exploring opportunities for Micro Irrigation during the dry season



Farmer demonstrating to the WISER team how he pumps water from the under tank for irrigation.



Farmer explaining how they have used the Agricultural advisories to improve on farm activities