

AUGUST 2024

# Climate Change & Health

## Integration for Positive Sexual and Reproductive Health Outcomes



PATHFINDER

USAID/Uganda  
Family Planning Activity

*Mr. Herbert Kamuhanda, environmental officer for Ntoroko district, participates in a USAID/Uganda FPA training on building climate-resilient health systems. Photo: Joshua Busiinge*



PATHFINDER

Healthy Tim

# “Floods destroyed our home, submerged latrines, and threatened disease outbreaks.”

Mr. Kisungu Zakayo is the principle assistant secretary in the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). He is also the disaster management focal person in **Bundibugyo** district. In 2019 Mr. Kisungu was among those affected by the floods that hit the district.

During the USAID/Uganda Family Planning Activity (FPA) district training on building climate resilient health systems, Mr. Kisungu shared his experience on the impact of climate change.

## Tell us about yourself.

I come from Amtiti village, Mutiti parish in Bundibugyo subcounty. My home consists of 11 family members, and previously we were living near River Tokwe.

## What happened then?

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, our district was hit by severe floods resulting from flooding of River Tokwe. During this flood, 17 people died in the district, 1,200 people were displaced, property was destroyed including destruction of my house.

## Were any people hurt in your home?

No. We were just lucky. It was school holiday time, and all **my children** were at home. However, we were able to escape before the water could surround us.

## Where did you find shelter?

My sister sheltered us at her home. I thank God for having such a caring and loving sister.

## Were there any threats to health?

Yes. Several latrines were submerged, and our water sources got contaminated. We were just lucky that no cases of cholera were reported.



Mr. Kisungu Zakayo  
Principle assistant secretary,  
Bundibugyo Local Government.

## How were you able to take care of your family?

My wife is hardworking and was running a small retail shop in town. The small income from the shop enabled us secure basic needs. We also received some donations from the government and well-wishers. These included food supplies, mattresses, and jerricans among others.

Also, because I am a government worker, I was lucky that I still received my monthly salary. I don't know what I could have done if I was not employed by the government.

## What needs to be done to prevent these floods from happening again?

Desilting the river. This will make it easy for the water to flow minus breaking the riverbanks. Planting of bamboo trees along the riverbanks so that the banks do not erode.

The government also needs to gazette the riverbanks and lake shores like it does for wetlands so that people don't settle along them.



## OVERVIEW

# Pathfinder in Uganda

Pathfinder has been operating in Uganda since 1957. We envision a future where everyone, even in the most challenging environments, has what they need to be healthy, thrive, and live to their full potential.

Our key thematic areas include **reproductive, maternal & child health; women-led climate resilience; adolescent and youth economic empowerment; and integrated communicable and non-communicable disease control.**

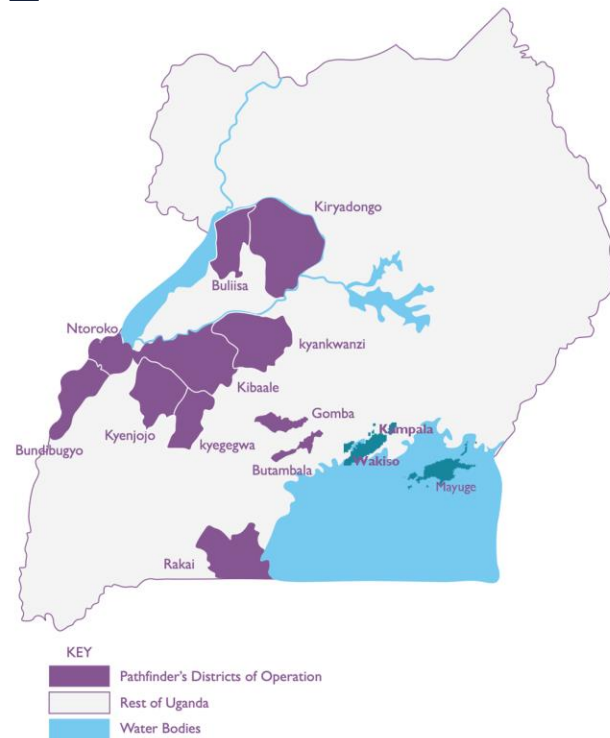
**Climate change integration** has been at the core of our SRHR programming. Since 2012, Pathfinder's Health of People and the Environment on Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB) project and USAID/Uganda Family Planning Activity (FPA) have addressed climate-responsive leadership and governance, climate-smart health workforce, and management of environmental determinants of health.

## CLIMATE AND HEALTH FOCUS

1. Strengthen leadership and coordination for climate-resilient health systems.
2. Build climate-resilient health care facilities.
3. Facilitate community resilience.

## ONGOING ACTIONS

- Supporting district local governments to develop climate risk mitigation and adaptation plans for district health systems.
- Supporting MoH to establish and operationalize the Climate Change and Health Technical Working Group (TWGs).
- Enhancing multi-sectoral collaboration among health, gender, youth, sexual and reproductive health, and climate change actors on joint efforts and actions.



## GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Pathfinder has supported 14 district local governments to promote the integration of climate and health.

## CLIMATE HAZARDS TO HEALTH IN UGANDA

- Drought
- Floods
- Storms
- Water level rise
- Heat waves
- Lightning
- Landslides

# Strengthening Leadership and Coordination for Climate-Resilient Health Systems



*Dr. Ritah Waddimba Nakigudde, Country Director for Pathfinder Uganda welcomes State Minister for Health in charge of general duties, Hon. Anifa Kawooya Bangirana, to an event on Women-Led Climate Resilience.*

Photo: Bridge Films.

**PATHFINDER**

## OVERVIEW

# Strengthening Leadership and Coordination for Climate-Resilient Health Systems

Through engaging different stakeholders such as donors, development partners, private sector, government, local and international organizations and individuals, Pathfinder has promoted climate resilient health systems.

Pathfinder has strengthened leadership and coordination for climate-resilient systems through engagements at the national, district, and community levels.



*Dr. Ritah Waddimba (left) and Hon. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng (right), Minister of Health.*  
Photo: Uganda Ministry of Health

## NATIONAL LEVEL

- ✓ Supported country participation in COP28 and World Health Assembly engagement on climate and health.
- ✓ Provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to launch and disseminate the Climate Health National Adaptation Plan (H-NAP).
- ✓ Supported the National Population Council to develop the training guide on Population, Health and Environment picking lessons from our health of people and environment on the Lake Victoria basin (HoPE LVB) project.
- ✓ Hosted a high-level stakeholder event on integration of climate and sexual reproductive health with representation from the government agencies, private sector, philanthropies, development partners, UN agencies and the media.

## DISTRICT LEVEL

- ✓ **107** health supervisors and district leaders trained in 4 districts in Uganda.

## COMMUNITY LEVEL

- ✓ **2,021** conservation advocates empowered in communities along the climate fragile Lake Victoria.
- ✓ **63** community conservation by-laws signed by communities along the Lake Victoria basin. For instance: every pregnant woman was required to go for antenatal services accompanied by her husband and deliver from a health facility.



## INSIGHTS FROM OUR PARTNERS

# Ministry of Health

“Our leadership is highly committed to supporting the climate change and health agenda.”

Climate Change has had tremendous impact on our health systems, including increased incidence of **malaria** which is the leading cause of morbidity among pregnant women and children under 5 years, **destruction of health facilities** in Apac, Karamoja and Kasese, **pollution**-related deaths and illnesses, **sanitation challenges**, and **food insecurity**.

With support from different partners, coordination and collaborations, Climate Change can be effectively addressed.

### CALL TO ACTION

1. Advocate for transformative leadership and financing for integrated climate and health interventions.
2. Support development of resilient health systems.
3. Support communities to sustainably integrate conservation efforts in routine chores for better health and climate outcome.
4. Promote zero carbon emissions, better waste, and environmental management practices in our workplaces and services.



**Dr. Herbert Nabaasa**  
Commissioner, Department of  
Environmental Health  
Ministry of Health, Uganda

### MOH CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH (CC&H) INTERVENTIONS

1. High level commitment on CC&H.
2. Support to building a resilient health system through improved WASH, Energy, Skilling the workforce, waste management and public awareness, among others.
3. System strengthening, coordination and networking.
4. Implementation of COP26 Commitments, Declaration on health at COP 28 (VAA, HNAP and beyond).
5. Financing for CC&H including CC&H mainstreaming into development planning.
6. Environmental health surveillance and preparedness to emerging and re-emerging diseases.

## INSIGHTS FROM OUR PARTNERS

### Embassy of Netherlands

**We are all impacted by climate change, but we are all impacted differently.**

**Q.** Development partners have been key in supporting reproductive health programs in the country. Women need access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH), including family planning (FP) to enable them to make their own SRH decisions while navigating the climate crisis. **As a donor in the health and social empowerment space, what things do you advise government and implementing partners to prioritize to effectively address the heightened vulnerability of women and girls? .**

**A.** The vulnerability of women and girls is often more heightened by climate change. For instance, women menstruate and give birth, and therefore need more water during certain times than men.

Climate change is also threatening to widen the existing gender-based health disparities. Therefore, there is need to have an intersectional lens when we talk about women and gender.

Poverty, gender-based violence and access to health services including maternal, family planning, gynecological services for women and girls will always be heavier on women due the effects of climate change.



**Judith Adokorach**  
SRHR Policy Officer  
Embassy of Netherlands

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Climate adaptation needs to be emphasized in everything we do.
2. Integrate gender perspectives in policy and programs across all sectors.
3. Build more climate-resilient health facilities. Embrace new technologies and leverage on community health systems.
4. Focus on family-centered programs and approaches to care.
5. Address factors that contribute to high fertility, for instance, inadequate household income and limited access to family planning services.
6. Address child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

## UN Women

“Male involvement is key in all interventions.”

**Q. Why is gender relevant to tackling climate change?** Tell us about the gender climate nexus and how can we position rural women in the driver's seat to climate resilience.

**A.** Women are primarily responsible for tasks such as fetching water, fuel wood collection, involvement in agriculture, among others.

Women have limited access to resources including land, credit, technology, and information. This undermines their ability to cope with climate change and contribution to sustainability.

Uganda being a patriarchal society, Women in certain communities are excluded from decision making processes on issues such as land use. This has hampered their ability to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions.

UN Women through its “BREAKING THE GENDER BARRIERS” project in Bugiri district, works with over 1,400 women in aqua culture (cage fish farming on Lake Victoria). This was traditionally a male dominated activity. On this project, women can make decision and take up leadership roles.



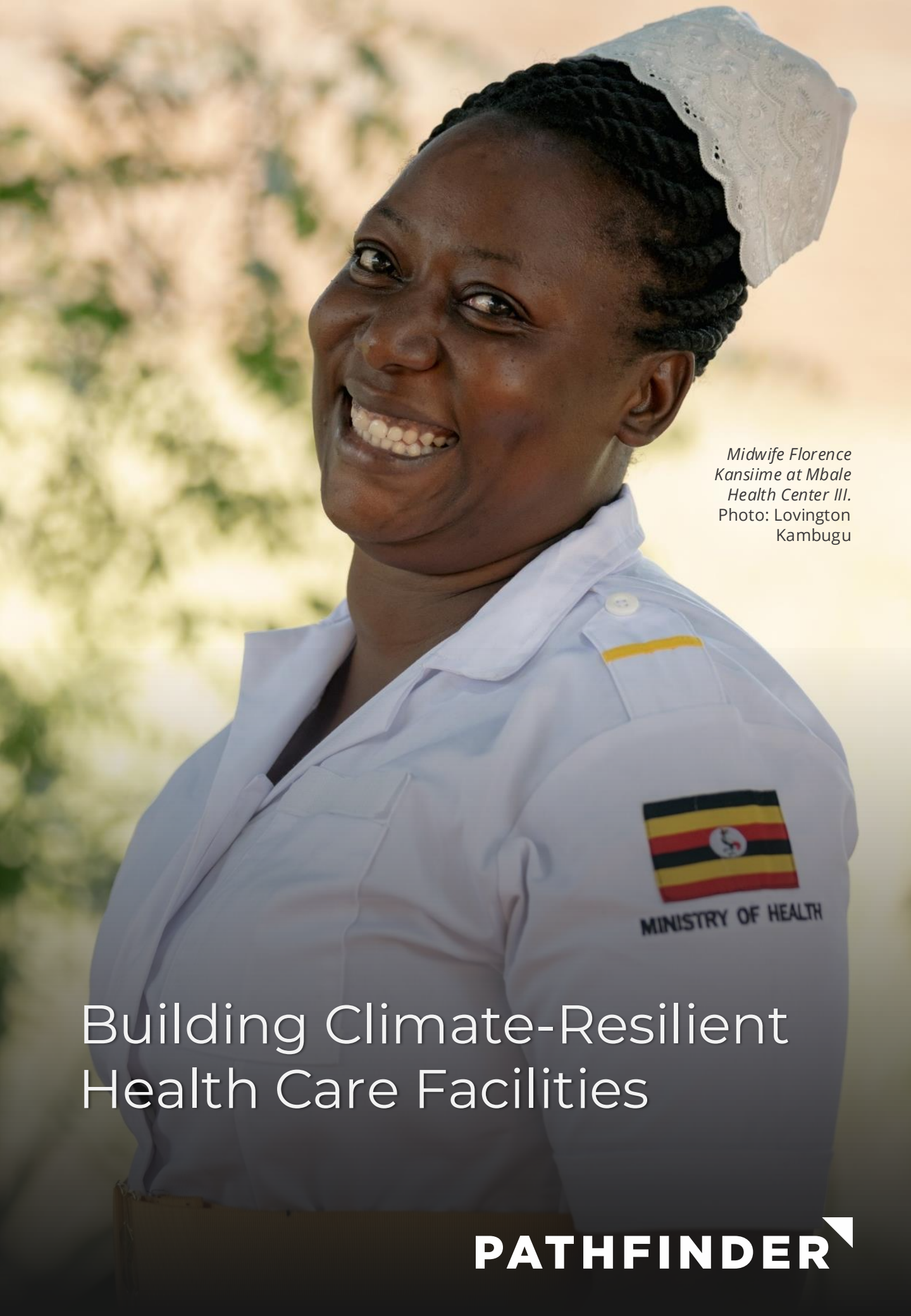
**Patricia Elotu**  
Programme Analyst for Gender  
and Climate Change, UN Women

**Q.** Climate change is creating a downward spiral for women and girls. **How do you propose we address this challenge?**

**A.** As NGOs, private sector, and government, there is need to:

- 1. Engage men.** Involve men in all projects and mainstream gender in policies and programs.
- 2. Support women's health and wellbeing including** psychosocial support for women to build resilience.
- 3. Engage communities and cultural leaders on** cultural gender norms that deprive women of their rights.
- 4. Invest in women's education and economic empowerment for instance,** link them to vocational training institutions and give them entrepreneurship opportunities to enhance their resilience.
- 5. Promote women's leadership and participation.**
- 6. Ensure gender responsive climate financing is in place.**
- 7. Use evidence-based programming.**
- 8. Advocate for inclusive decision making** at all levels of governance.
- 9. Build capacity** of women-led organizations and networks.





*Midwife Florence  
Kansime at Mbale  
Health Center III.  
Photo: Lovington  
Kambugu*

# Building Climate-Resilient Health Care Facilities

## OVERVIEW

# Building Climate-Resilient Health Care Facilities

According to the World Health Organization, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health care facilities are those that anticipate, respond to, cope with, recover from and adapt to climate-related shocks and stress.

Pathfinder partners with the Ministry of Health to ensure health workers nationwide understand the impacts of climate change on the health sector. This empowers them to better prepare and respond to climate-related shocks.

Through this collaboration, Pathfinder has facilitated knowledge-sharing workshops in 11 districts. These workshops explored the climate-health nexus and supported districts in documenting tailored mitigation and adaptation plans.

The workshops engaged a diverse array of stakeholders, including political leaders, district natural resource officers, agricultural officers, and cultural/religious leaders. This multi-sectoral approach strengthens the development and implementation of these climate preparedness plans.

## HEALTH SUPERVISORS & DISTRICT LEADERS TRAINED



- 79 Health workers trained
- 28 district leaders engaged

Ntoroko district leaders take part in a training on building a climate-resilient health systems.

Photo: Joshua Busiinge





Patients sit outside the maternity department at Rwangara Health Centre III in Ntoroko District in 2020. Photo credit: ©Daily Monitor



## NTOROKO DISTRICT

# Spotlight on Rwangara Health Center III

Rwangara Health Center III is a government health facility located in Kanara subcounty in Ntoroko district. Throughout 2020, Rwangara Health Center III performed an average of 264 outpatient services each month—38% of which were antenatal care services. Since 2020, USAID/Uganda FPA has supported this facility to provide a wide range of SRH services to its catchment population. Although the facility is in a flood-prone area, it had not yet encountered any major climate-related challenges.

Later that same year, heavy rains hit Ntoroko district, causing Lake Albert to flood. The water submerged Rwangara Health Center III, making it inaccessible to both the health workers and the community.

According to Hasheem Mwesige, the Assistant Resident District Commissioner and head of the District Disaster Response Committee, the floods often lead to a breakdown in the transport network

This makes it impossible for girls and young women to access health care facilities for SRH services. This has resulted in increased cases of unintended teenage pregnancies in the district.

### WHAT PATHFINDER IS DOING

Pathfinder trained health workers in Ntoroko district on the climate and health nexus and ways to mitigate climate change so that young women do not fail to access health facilities.

Pathfinder continues to support the facility through the use of other different channels and platforms including radio talk shows, community engagements, and health worker mentorships to equip the populations with knowledge on climate and health.



A woman, Fausta, is shown in profile, working in a coffee nursery. She is wearing a bright orange and yellow patterned dress and a matching headscarf. She is reaching out to touch the leaves of a coffee plant. The background is filled with lush green coffee plants and trees.

# Facilitating Community Resilience

*Fausta works at a nursery on  
Bussi Island in Wakiso district.  
Photo: Linda Suttentfield*

**PATHFINDER**



## OVERVIEW

# Facilitating Community Resilience

Pathfinder's facilitates community resilience through the following approaches.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engage communities through interpersonal communication approaches to create awareness on environmental health risks, mitigation and adaptation measures.

### MULTI-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

Collaborates with health and non health stakeholders to dialogue and deliver on joint efforts towards addressing climate and health challenges in the different local communities.

### FOCUSING ON GENDER AND YOUTH

Engages both men and women to challenge traditional gender roles and promote equitable participation in climate action.

### CAPACITY BUILDING

Builds the capacity of community health workers to integrate climate change in their community health awareness campaigns.

## RESULTS

- **856,000** trees planted
- **782** model households trained and supported with climate skills.
- **17,319** energy-efficient cookstoves constructed.
- **Over 70** beach management units supported to increase fish production and nutritional behaviours using approaches that conserve the environment.
- **4,481** new latrines constructed.

*Harriet Lwegaba works at a tree nursery on Bussi Island in Wakiso district.*  
Photo: Linda Suttentfield



# Fishing Communities of Lake Victoria take Lead on Saving Lives and Protecting the Environment



In 2012, with support from USAID, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation, Pathfinder addressed health and climate challenges along the Lake Victoria Islands of Jaguzi and Bussi. These communities experienced several challenges, including: a rapidly growing population, lack of access to health services, unplanned land management, deforestation, and overfishing. These factors contributed to the depletion of natural resources and an uncertain future for the next generation.

## PATHFINDER'S APPROACH

Pathfinder worked with local communities using community dialogues. These dialogues constituted of community members, community leaders and district leaders that helped identify interrelated challenges facing the communities on the islands and devised locally driven solutions that ensured sustainability.

During the dialogues, community members were encouraged to share ideas freely, ask questions, and suggest possible solutions to a stated issue.

## COMMUNITIES ENACT BY-LAWS TO ADDRESS SUSTAINABILITY

Positive outcomes of the project included increased fish production, economically empowered women, reduced flood risk from planting of trees, construction of pit latrines, and more.

The communities agreed to enact by-laws as another sustainable approach to sustain the gains made.

Pathfinder ensured that district officials were present and participated together with the community members in drafting of the by-laws. This was key given that the powers to approve the by-laws lay with the district government officials and it would also encourage adoption or modification of similar by-law in other sub-counties within their districts. Some of the by-laws that were made by the community members on Jacuzi Island included:

### Health By-Laws

- Every pregnant woman should access antenatal care services and deliver at a health facility.
- All children under 5 must complete their immunization schedules.

### Environmental By-Laws

- Every household must have a latrine, tippy tap, drinking rack, and washroom.
- Every Thursday each member of the community must contribute to community services such as cleaning the health facility, landing sites, and water collection points.





*Young Mother Elizabeth Mbambu, 23,  
with children from her  
neighborhood—Crispus Mwambale, 14  
(right) and Alinet Mbambu, 7 (left).  
Photo: Jake Lyell*

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**MORE RESOURCES AT**  
[Pathfinder.org/Uganda](https://www.pathfinder.org/Uganda)