

Women-Led Climate Resilience in sub-Saharan Africa



Siwema Ramadhani fetches water every morning from Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania. In the rainy season, she has to walk through knee-deep water to get to the lake. Photo: Roshni Lodhia

Climate change is having detrimental impacts on each community we serve. From droughts and floods in Niger and extreme heat in Burkina Faso to cyclones in Mozambique and mud slides in Burundi, across sub-Saharan Africa, climate change is one of the biggest threats to health, development, and well-being.

At Pathfinder, we're responding to the climate crisis with integrated, adaptation-focused programs that advance health, gender equity, and local climate solutions. Our programs support climate and health resilience, adaptation, and preparedness. Because climate change often has a disproportionate impact on women and girls, we engage them as thought leaders, innovators, and implementers of local climate solutions.

Through our programs, we improve the health and agency of women and girls as we respond to local climate risks, creating more equitable, healthy, and climate-resilient communities.



**By 2030,
Pathfinder aims
to reach 10
million women
and girls with
integrated
health, equity,
and climate
programs.**

Active Projects

Tanzania, (Burkina Faso)

MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience

USAID

In Tanzania, MOMENTUM works in the Greater Mahale Ecosystem, the Northern Tanzania Rangelands, and the Ruaha Rungwa Ecosystem, areas where extreme poverty, climate change, and geographic isolation threaten people's health and environment (PHE). The project implements an integrated, multi-sectoral population, health, and environment approach in partnership with conservation partners—including The Nature Conservancy and the Southern Tanzania Elephant Programme, and the Government of Tanzania.

This multi-sectoral approach includes sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), conservation, and livelihoods programming to strengthen health resilience. The project increases communities' access to health care and livelihoods while sustainably managing natural resources and conserving biodiversity.

The project includes a package of integrated health and conservation activities including but not limited to:

Model households/villages: Households volunteer to model positive health and environmental practices, including handwashing stations and energy-saving stoves, upgraded latrines, climate-smart agriculture, positive SRHR attitudes and practices, and girls and boys going to school. The project aims for widespread adoption of these practices across communities that will form "model villages"—where 75% of households are enrolled in the model household program.

First-time parents: Where MOMENTUM works, many girls and young women are sexually active but do not have access to contraception, leading to unintended pregnancies. The project reaches women and girls, ages 15-24, who are pregnant or have one child and their partners and mothers/mothers-in-law, with information about family planning, reproductive health, and positive health and environmental practices.



As part of MOMENTUM, Pathfinder supports the Maasai Women's Community Conservation Microfinance Group, pictured here. Photo: Emily Bartels-Bland.

Community conservation microfinance

groups: Working with communities living adjacent to national parks, MOMENTUM supports people to join savings and loans groups. Profits from the groups support members to diversify their incomes through environmentally friendly businesses such as beekeeping and soap making. Members are linked with information about sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health services. Many have been able to save for health expenses.

PHE school clubs: MOMENTUM partners with schools and local education departments to design and implement PHE school clubs that provide students with SRHR and environmental conservation education as well as activities such as tree planting.

Integrated SRHR and environmental conservation messaging: MOMENTUM partners with community health workers and PHE champions to deliver integrated health and environmental conservation messages through sensitization sessions, home visits, and other community outreaches. The community volunteers also provide services and referrals to clients.

Highlights:

- 70% of householders in Northern Tanzania Rangelands have access to upgraded latrines, and 84% of community members have improved water sources through public taps and piped water.
- Over a five-month period, the percentage of non-pregnant mothers with one child in the Greater Mahale Ecosystem using a family planning method increased from 54% to 84%.
- 4,074 people are members of community conservation microfinance groups; 2,877 are women.

MOMENTUM is currently expanding its integrated health and climate resilience programming to Burkina Faso.

Active Projects

Tanzania

Tuungane

Margaret A. Cargill Foundation

MOMENTUM's work (see page 2) is done in partnership with Tuungane. Since 2011, Pathfinder has implemented Tuungane with The Nature Conservancy in 24 remote and rural villages around Lake Tanganyika in Western Tanzania. Tuungane improves access to reproductive health services while empowering communities to address issues related to the environment, food security, and livelihoods.

Highlights:

- Established 155 community conservation banks, with more than 4,000 members, 67% who are women; women purchased health insurance and food for their families.
- Decreased run-off from agriculture into Lake Tanganyika, with a 40% reduction in the farmers farming within 100 meters of lake.
- Achieved a 35% improvement in maize yields, and 40% increase in horticultural crops, such as tomatoes and cabbage.
- Supported 30,565 clients to choose voluntary family planning methods.



Dorine Nachuine is assisted by nurse Christine Wanyana and a lamp from a solar suitcase as she goes into labor at Bussi Health Center 3, part of HOPELVB in Uganda. Photo: Jake Lyell

Past Projects

Kenya, Uganda

Health of People and the Environment in the Lake Victoria Basin (2011-19)

David and Lucile Packard Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, USAID, Winslow Foundation, Barr Foundation

Pathfinder worked with a range of partners in Kenya and Uganda to improve interconnected health, environment, and development challenges in an ecologically biodiverse region facing degradation. The project sustainably enhanced environmental conservation, improved reproductive health through the uptake of family planning services, and improved maternal and child health.

Highlights:

- Supported the planting of 680,768 trees.
- Established more than 4,400 new latrines and influenced 9,220 households on hand-washing practices.
- Supported construction of more than 25,600 energy-saving stoves.
- With communities, drafted 60 by-laws on environmental protection and health.
- Increased deliveries assisted by a skilled provider; in Kenya, from less than 200 in 2012 to more than 600 in 2016, and in Uganda, from about 400 to almost 1,000.

Kenya

Darwin Initiative: Pairing Community Conservation Areas with Sustainable Aquaculture in Lake Victoria

UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Darwin Initiative's model for responsible aquaculture and inland fisheries conserves native species while producing long-term benefits for people. The project uses community-based incentives to create sustainably financed community conservations areas near Lake Victoria. Pathfinder ensures women and young people are engaged in decisions about stewardship of natural resources.

Highlights:

- Increased women's representation in Roo and Ukula Beach Management Units to comprise one-third of each unit.
- Trained 120 women on entrepreneurship and alternative livelihoods to improve resilience to economic shocks and reduce pressure on the lake.
- Demarcated two community conservation areas as breeding zones for fish.

Past Projects

Niger

Tangamo (2022-23)

Private Donations

Tangamo responded to migrations from rural to urban areas in Niger because of climate change-induced droughts and devastation to agriculture. When women migrate without access to sexual and reproductive health care, they are at increased risk of sexual violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies. The project reached women migrants and non-migrants from villages where migrations were commonplace. All participants received information on reproductive health, family planning, and gender-based violence prevention and management. In villages, women learned about environmental protection, agricultural practices, and animal-rearing techniques. The project supported them to join an established network of farmers, develop business plans, and get access to land for vegetable gardening. In cities where women had migrated, they were linked to health and legal services, and joined in solidarity groups.

Highlights:

- Women's and girls' use of reproductive health and family planning services increased—from 28% to 97% among non-migrant women and 51% to 91% among migrant women.
- Through work with local partner MOORIBEN and strategic advocacy that has convinced local leaders to allow women to farm independently, 86% of young migrant women and 77% of young non-migrant women have become owners or co-owners of agricultural land.

“Healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies has implications for gender equity, nutrition, family finances, education, natural resources management, and more. That’s why our team looks beyond just the health sector. We’ve seen the results of integrated, cross-sectoral approaches with our own eyes,” said Dr. Sani Aliou, Country Director, Pathfinder Niger



Girls in Niamey, Niger, who participated in the Tangamo program.

Niger

Building Resilience through Strengthening and Integrating Reproductive Health and Family Planning in Niger (RISE-FP) (2017-20)

USAID/Evidence to Action (E2A) Project

Across communities in Matameye health district (Zinder, Niger) Pathfinder, E2A, and partner Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel-Enhanced Resilience strengthened the resilience of households by increasing access to family planning services through community-based distributors and mobile clinics. The communities received information about the availability of health services, including family planning and nutrition. Integrating health and agricultural messages engaged men and women. Men who came to learn about conservation farming stayed for information on contraceptives. Women who were counseled on reproductive health and childhood nutrition learned about conservation farming.

Highlights:

- Engaged local leaders and strengthened health systems to advance reproductive health in 80 communities across Matameye health district.
- Trained and supported 320 community-based distributors (half men and half women) to conduct home visits and provide counseling, group educational sessions, non-clinical family planning to clients who want them, and referrals for other health services.

Pathfinder International is driven by the conviction that all people, regardless of where they live, have the right to decide whether and when to have children, to exist free from fear and stigma, and to lead the lives they choose. As a global health organization with locally led, community-driven programs, we support women to make their own reproductive health decisions. We work with local partners to advance contraceptive services, comprehensive abortion care, and young people's sexual and reproductive rights in communities around the world—including those affected by poverty, conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. Taken together, our programs enable millions of people to choose their own paths forward.

Transform lives with us. pathfinder.org

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