

December 2024

Pathways

**Women Lead
on Climate
and Health**



PATHFINDER

Dear Pathfinders,

As we navigate the complex challenges of our time, Pathfinder International is committed to addressing the critical intersections of climate change and health, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Our work in Africa has never been more crucial, as we witness the disproportionate impact of climate-related disasters on vulnerable populations.

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The urgency of our mission is underscored by stark realities. In 2022 alone, over 110 million people in Africa were affected by climate disasters, accounting for nearly 60% of the global total.

Like many countries across Africa, Uganda's demographic landscape presents both opportunities and challenges. With over half its population under 18, the country embodies the potential of Africa's demographic dividend. Young people demand targeted, forward-thinking policies that address their unique needs in a changing climate.

Women, who make up 51% of Uganda's population, are at the forefront of both climate vulnerability and potential solutions. They constitute 77% of the agricultural labor force, a sector crucial to Uganda's economy and particularly susceptible to climate change. Recognizing women's central role in sectors prioritized by Uganda's Nationally Determined Contribution, Pathfinder is committed to partnering with women for climate resilience and sustainable development.

Our approach in Uganda focuses on three critical areas: strengthening leadership and coordination

for climate-resilient health systems, building climate-resilient health care facilities, and facilitating community resilience. These efforts are intrinsically linked to our gender equity and reproductive health initiatives that strengthen leadership and governance, promote inclusive health care delivery, and increase women's and girls' agency.

The challenges are significant. A vulnerability assessment conducted by Uganda's Ministry of Health revealed that nearly half of the country's health care facilities are exposed to drought, with significant percentages also at risk from floods, storms, and other climate-related hazards. Moreover, climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities, with women and girls facing increased risks of violence and health issues during climate-induced resource scarcity.

In response, Pathfinder is actively supporting the Ministry of Health to operationalize the National Health Adaptation Plan. As we move forward, Pathfinder remains committed to innovative, community-centered approaches that address the complex interplay between climate change, health, and gender equality. Building resilient communities requires holistic strategies that empower local leaders, particularly women and youth, to drive sustainable change.

Your continued support is invaluable as we tackle these interconnected challenges. Together, we can build a future where communities across Africa are not just surviving in the face of climate change, but thriving.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ritah Waddimba'.

Ritah Waddimba
Country Director,
Pathfinder Uganda

Creating Pathways to Greater Climate Resilience by Investing in Women's Economic Empowerment

Pamela Salim lives in Roo Beach, a small Kenyan fishing village along the shores of Lake Victoria. Her community relies heavily on the fish catch, which can be unpredictable. In the male-dominated fishing industry, prevailing beliefs around gender roles and societal norms can also limit women's economic participation. Climate change adds yet another layer of uncertainty around sufficient income generation from fishing.

Pamela—who previously leveraged the project's leadership development and skill-building sessions to successfully campaign for a seat in the Roo Village Beach Management Unit—is one of many women taking strides toward greater financial autonomy by decreasing dependency on the irregular fish supply.

In an effort to chart a course toward a more sustainable and gender-equitable fishing industry, Pathfinder Kenya implements the Darwin Initiative: Pairing Community Conservation Areas with Sustainable Aquaculture in Lake Victoria in partnership with Conservation International, Fauna and Flora International, and Victory Farms LLC. Pathfinder leads the project's integration of gender and sexual and reproductive health services.

Through the Darwin Initiative, Pathfinder introduced a community-led revolving fund—designed specifically for the women of Lake Victoria—with the goal of fostering greater economic independence by providing affordable, low-interest loans. Women participating in the

Continued on back page...

Pamela Salim with a fishing net awarded by the Darwin Initiative.



Left to right: Pheisha Auma, Susan Omedo, and Lydia Akinyi with fishing boats and gear awarded by the Darwin Initiative.

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

Kenya | 2021–2024

Funder: United Kingdom Government via the Darwin Initiative

In collaboration with Conservation International, Fauna and Flora International, and Victory Farms LLC, Pathfinder Kenya has been working with the communities surrounding Lake Victoria to cultivate a new model for responsible aquaculture that safeguards native species, while ensuring long-term benefits for local communities and engaging women to serve as entrepreneurs and leaders in the fishing industry.

 <https://bit.ly/4hJWHcm>

EGYPTIAN WOMEN SPEAK OUT — for Climate, Health, and Financial Freedom

Like many mothers around the world, Rania Ahmed El Sayed—who lives with her husband and two children in Mishta, Egypt—is a busy woman. When she first heard about Pathfinder’s Women-Led Climate Resilience project, which works with women to become “ambassadors of change” by leading green community initiatives, she was reluctant to participate. She wasn’t sure if attending all the project sessions would be worth her time.

After speaking with a project facilitator, Rania decided she would attend just the first session on a trial basis.

The first session was enough to shift her perspective about the impacts of climate change on health—and the difference she could make by taking on a leadership role in her community. Before she knew it, she was sitting in her ninth session. As Rania learned about how plastic waste affects the air, soil, and water and how pollutants cause serious diseases, she vowed to change her habits and behaviors at home to reduce her family’s carbon footprint and prioritize health and wellbeing.

And she did. Rania swapped out plastic containers for clay and glass, rationed her energy consumption, “up-cycled” fruit crates into bookshelves and shoe racks, and collected plastic bottles for recycling—which also contributed to her income.

Rania also used her involvement in the Women-Led Climate Resilience project to strengthen her own ties with her community through activities like interactive theater and peer education. As a peer leader, she gathered members of her community and shared information on the

interconnectedness of people, health, and the environment that had made a difference in her life.

Of the many activities she participated in through the Women-Led Climate Resilience project, Rania finds the vocational training on duck raising and barley farming to be the most rewarding.

“I started raising ducks and chickens at home after I gained all the necessary information about duck farming. I also learned how to [grow] sprouted barley for them, which saved me a lot of fodder costs [...] I was able to earn money by selling some to my neighbors and friends. I intend to buy more and raise them to earn even more.”

Today, Rania has turned her duck farming enterprise into a steady stream of income that she can reinvest into her business and her family.

The Women-Led Climate Resilience project has reached many other women like Rania. For example, in nearby Tahta, Azza Abdel Rady, a mother of three, is also using what she learned in the project sessions to make a positive impact on the environment and earn some extra income to support her family. Azza was already a project veteran when she joined

“I started raising ducks and chickens at home [...] I was able to earn money by selling some to my neighbors and friends. I intend to buy more and raise them to earn even more.”

Women-Led Climate Resilience

Egypt | 2022–2024

Funder: Individual Contributions

The Women-Led Climate Resilience project advocates for women’s reproductive freedom as a catalyst for women’s greater personal and financial independence, food and nutrition security among families, and reduced stress on local ecosystems and resources. The project’s multi-sectoral “one health” approach helps service providers combat potential health risks from climate change, emphasizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment to achieve optimal health outcomes.





PHOTOS: Pathfinder Egypt

Through the Women-Led Climate Resilience project, Pathfinder Egypt trains women in income-generating skills like crochet and macrame, embroidery and fabric recycling, agricultural waste recycling, and more.

the Women-Led Climate Resilience sessions in her village. Last year, she participated in sessions hosted by Pathfinder's Ma'an (Together) project, where she and her husband learned information about contraception that helped them space their future children to minimize strain on their income and resources. Through the Ma'an project, she also received a sewing machine and sewing lessons, which she uses to "up-cycle" old clothing and fabric.

faucets and collecting grey water for watering plants. Azza also chose to participate in specialized training in manufacturing eco-friendly cosmetics and skincare products. She took a particular interest in learning how to extract the essence of jasmine to ferment into perfume, and she produced a distinctive fragrance from her household jasmine plant that was a favorite of her colleagues and instructor.



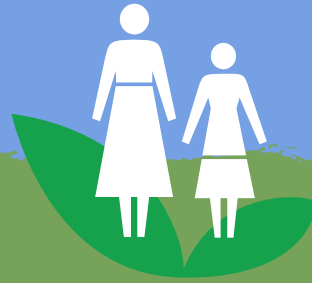
PHOTO: Pathfinder Egypt

Azza Abdel Rady learns how to manufacture eco-friendly cosmetics and skincare products through training sessions held by the Women-Led Climate Resilience project.

Encouraged, Azza started to identify the products that would be in demand among women in her community during Ramadan and Eid. In addition to her perfume, she made sunscreen and a hair and skin mask that sold very well.

Other women reached by the project learned crochet and macramé, embroidery and fabric recycling, climate-resilient irrigation methods, agricultural waste recycling—and skills to market their wares and advocate for their reproductive and financial freedom. By equipping women with tools to lead their communities as "ambassadors of change" in adopting healthy, climate-resilient behaviors, the Women-Led Climate Resilience project demonstrates the many connections among women's personal, financial, and reproductive freedoms, climate change resilience, and food and nutrition security for their families.

Like Rania, Azza also made changes around the home to reduce her carbon footprint and care for the environment, such as repairing all the



“Green Clinics” Model

The Women-Led Climate Resilience project implements a “green clinics” model, which supports health clinics to become green by using solar energy and training staff on green practices, such as green waste disposal and water conservation measures.

The project also strengthens health providers’ capacities through an advanced curriculum that integrates the “one health” approach—a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach to achieving optimal health outcomes by recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

The curriculum illustrates the many health risks caused by climate change and their adverse effects on sexual and reproductive health and rights—and presents adaptation and mitigation methods to combat those risks. It focuses closely on caring for pregnant women, newborns, and their families.

The project also strengthens health providers’ capacities through an advanced curriculum that integrates the “one health” approach



Through the Women-Led Climate Resilience project, Pathfinder Egypt supports health facilities in the Sohag Governorate become “green clinics” by training staff on green practices and installing solar panels.



PHOTO: Pathfinder Kenya

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No More Sex for Fish: Women’s Leadership in Kenya’s Sustainable Fisheries



Learn more about how Pamela and the women of Lake Victoria are making waves in the fishing industry through Pathfinder Kenya’s Darwin Initiative.

 <https://bit.ly/40J2lpc>

Photo above: Pamela Salim (left) and Florence Ken (right), elected leaders of the Roo village Beach Management Unit.

Creating Pathways to Greater Climate Resilience—continued...

project were organized into groups, with each group taking shared responsibility for managing and growing their modest fund of \$500 USD.

The impact was transformative.

Pamela, a member of the Superstar Women’s Group, used her loan to open a small shop to sell groceries and basic household supplies to her neighbors. Her business grew quickly through good word of mouth. Within a year, her income more than doubled, and she was able to use her earnings to pay school fees for her three children and improve her family’s living conditions.

Other members of the Superstar Women’s Group started businesses in poultry farming, tailoring services, and more. By generating a reliable stream of alternative income, these businesses helped insulate them from the seasonal and climate-induced fluctuations in the fishing industry.

As the women’s businesses flourished, the benefits rippled through their community. Their newfound financial

security enabled them to take on more active roles in community decision-making, particularly around environmental conservation efforts. They began organizing clean-up drives around the lake,

“Starting my grocery shop with the loan changed everything for my family. Now, I can provide for my children and contribute to our community in ways I never thought possible.”

— PAMELA SALIM

educating others on sustainable fishing practices, and promoting the protection of fish breeding grounds.

Today, Pamela and the Superstar Women’s Group are not only increasing their economic independence, but also strengthening the entire community’s resilience to economic and environmental challenges.

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