

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS EFFECTS ON MY COMMUNITY

### Introduction

I am Cnstance Okollet and I come from Uganda in East Africa. I am a rural housewife, married and I have seven children. I live in the Eastern district of Tororo, near the Kenya- Uganda border. My village is Asinget A in Osukuru sub -county in Tororo county ,Tororo District.

I am a peasant farmer; I depend on agriculture to get all my needs –school fees for my children , medicine and food, among others . We used to have two seasons in a year. With good harvest , we could have food throughout the year. The first planting season was in January-February, and we harvested in June - July .

The second season was in August –September and harvesting was in November - December . Uganda has fertile land , a suitable climate and hard working people. We used to sell food to our neighbours like Kenya, Sudan and Congo.

Climate change and its negative effects has severely changed things for the worse as follows;

### Floods and Droughts.

- a) **Agriculture:** In 2007 there came heavy floods due to abnormally heavy rains. These destroyed and washed away crops in the gardens and rotted the root crops e.g cassava, potatoes and yams which are our “granaries”. Also, top soil was washed off, leaving the soil with less nutrients. There has, therefore, been low agricultural production.

Unusually long droughts followed the floods and the surviving crops withered off and the newly planted ones could not germinate and grow well for lack of moisture. The scenario here is that climate change has brought in extreme and unpredictable weather patterns whereby the (planting) seasons can not be relied on anymore by the farmers.

- b) **Poverty and food insecurity;**

The livelihood of our communities is on agriculture and, because of low productivity as a result of climate change, income from sale of crops has become less and less. The poverty levels have therefore become worse; many people cannot afford necessities of life ,e.g food, clothing, bedcovering (blankets), soap, footwear etc. Also, the feeding levels have deteriorated due to the poor harvests. The people’s food requirements , as a result ,have to be subsidized by government and NGOs . As an example, a month ago, in my own subcounty of Osukuru ,we were supplied with foodstuffs (cornflour and beans) by the government. Previously we used to export food to neighbouring countries, but because of low production, this has reduced markedly. The wetlands and forestlands have been largely depleted because the people have cut down the trees for making charcoal for sale, for fuelwood for domestic use and for brickmaking. All this is due to climate change.

c) Health and Education

During the floods there is rampant malaria due to stagnant water; there is also bilharzia, dysentery and cholera which are common due to contaminated water sources. These have led to a lot of deaths, more so the infants. It has also affected school attendance as children stay home because they are too sick to go to school. Education is further badly affected during the floods because many schools are flooded; the rural pathways are impassable for the children because the streams and bridges are overflowing and dangerous to cross.

d) Natural calamities and climate change

In the mountainous area of Bududa district only thirty kilometres away, too much rainfall has triggered off landslides and mudslides which have led to much loss of life and property as well as destruction of farming and residential land, roads, schools, hospitals etc. This phenomenon continues to this day. Meanwhile, twenty five kilometres away in neighboring Butaleja and Kirewa sub-counties which are lowlands where the rivers from these mountains flow through, there is flooding which has destroyed homes, crops, livestock, schools, hospitals, roads and entire livelihoods of the people. Waterborne diseases e.g cholera and dysentery, are killing people to this day.

e) Climate change and Women

Most of the responsibilities in homes is carried out by the women. This includes food production and preparation, caring for children (and husbands!) and families, as well as raising cash through farming and petty trade. These responsibilities have been made much worse due to climate change. This is because the women have to work many times harder to sustain their families.

**Conclusion**

It is imperative therefore, that the situation (climate change) must be reversed, otherwise my community in rural Africa may not see the next generation. However, together we can manage to reverse climate change.