



Engaging women in Nature-Based Solutions to improve livelihood, Ecosystem Conservation; Resilience to Climate Change and Peace Building in Bugesera; Rwanda.

1. Introduction

The workshop commenced at 10:30 am on April 18th, 2023. The Master of Ceremonies (MC) began by requesting all participants in the meeting hall to introduce themselves to facilitate smooth



conversations throughout the meeting. Mr. Innocent Musore (In photo on the left), the founder and Executive Director of GER-Rwanda, delivered the opening speech welcomed all the participants and provided a brief summary of GER's mission, history, achievements, and future goals. He also introduced the theme for the workshop, which focused on women's role in nature-based solutions, ecosystem conservation, and resilience to climate change and peace building.

He reminded the participants that the aim of the project is to raise awareness and actions to mitigate effects of climate change in holistic approach like forest recovery and how the interventions of the project will help to improve livelihood in bugesera communities. He pointed out that women are responsible of domestic work, they most affected by climate change. He highlighted that “WE CAN’T build sustainable peace without considering ecological aspects especially in Bugesera district one of the most affected by the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi”. The workshop convened 50 participants (40 F; 10 M). The project will work with 45 women leaders at community level and will be implemented in Bugesera district in Gashora district. By the end of 2023, GER-Rwanda will reach 1,000 participants which will include women champions on awareness on climate change in Bugesera District. He Thanked the Rain forest for partnership and the good leadership on Rwanda

2. Workshop Highlights and Topics.

2.1. Strategies that women can undertake to contribute to the fight against climate change



Above: Community team leader discussing some points with the participants

Among the discussions, the first topic of the meeting aimed at brainstorming different strategies that women can undertake to contribute to the fight against climate change and establish a climate resilient atmosphere in their living environments.

Climate Change: The facilitator helped the participants to better understand climate change effect globally, in Rwanda and at community level respectively; case in point, Bugesera district that face long-term droughts with very little rain.

Factors Contributing to Climate Change: The facilitator highlighted factors that have contributed to the increase of climate change, such as carbon-emissions, pollution, deforestation, and overgrazing.

Consequences of Climate Change: The facilitator pointed out the consequences of increasing climate change, such as drought, famine, poverty, disease, land infertility, floods, soil erosion, land degradation, and dried-up water sources.



Strategies to Ensure Climate Resilience.

- Sensitizing the communities on climate change, soil erosion prevention
 - Planting trees and avoiding deforestation, practicing irrigation using renewable energy, use of organic fertilizers, planting trees on lake shores, farmers' respect for buffer zones near lakes and rivers, reviving use indigenous seeds that are climate change resilient.
 - Enhancing meaningful stakeholder collaboration and engagement to mitigate effects of climate change and improve community livelihoods, these stakeholders include but are not limited to private institutions, local communities, youths, women.
- Strengthening small holder farmers to have more capacities and add value to their harvest that generate profit easily with little expenses.
 - Advocacy, Community-based activities specifically for women (special communal work locally known as *umuganda*) as home-grown solutions.
 - Strengthening environmental education in schools as well as environmental protection initiatives.

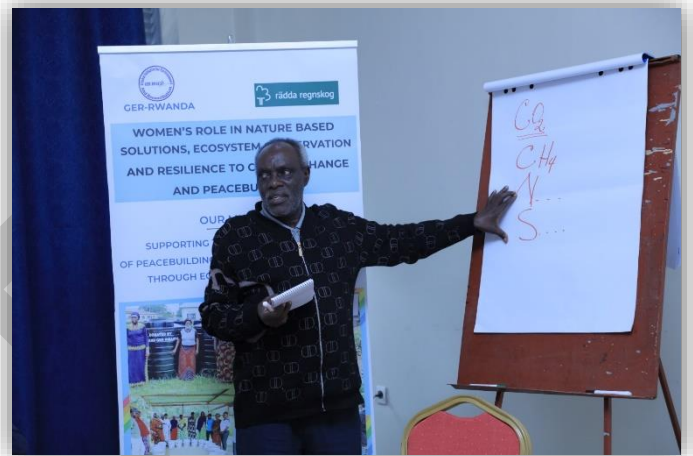


2.2. Waste, Hygiene, and Sanitation

Among other discussions focus was also laid on waste, hygiene and sanitation and the discussion points were on the types of waste, benefits of clean water, ways of maintaining good hygiene and sanitation, negative impacts of improper waste disposal, and plastic pollution. The participants learned about the negative effects of plastic pollution on aquatic life and soil fertility. Lastly, they were encouraged to take responsibility for proper waste disposal practices.

Proposed solutions to maintaining good hygiene and sanitation

- Boiling water before drinking it
- Teaching the benefits of maintaining good hygiene and sanitation and the different methods of doing it
- Controlled excreta disposal
- eating safe food and proper food handling
- Washing hands regularly with soap



3. Insights from the Workshop Participants:

-Director of Social Affairs in Bugesera district: thanked GER for organizing the meeting and everyone present for attending. He emphasized all the topics discussed by previous speakers, highlighting the benefits of proper waste disposal and community-based solutions.



-Nshimiyimana Dative (In photo on the left): explained about what her group does to help in protecting the environment. She told the participants about the project that they have been working on of producing organic fertilizer from locally sourced materials that are readily available in the communities.

Other participants shared how the project has helped them not only on the personal level but also as a community as a whole. According to them, the project has helped

them gain a spirit of reconciliation and unity where now they are able to interact with the people who wronged them during the Genocide contrary to how it was before joining the project. Additionally, they were very appreciative of the water tanks they were given as they have helped them tremendously to have access to clean water and the seeds for planting trees.

4. Proposed Actions:

During the workshop, several action items were proposed:

- Providing improved cooking stoves to vulnerable women in Bugesera District.
- Shifting our focus from personal issues to finding ways to fight climate change and make a positive impact in different regions of the world.
- Engaging women in environmental projects that can also boost their economic growth by generating income, thereby improving their living standards.
- Planting trees for those who are unable to do so themselves, creating fresh air and helping the environment.
- Arranging a meeting between project beneficiaries and district representatives to develop action plans that can extend the impact of GER even further.
- Promoting gender equality within families.

5. Success Stories

A success story was shared by **Mukabarisa Safina (In photo on the right)** ; a Genocide survivor from Gashora Sector in Bugesera district where she pointed out that the previous project helped her to plant climate resilient crops that can yield even in dry spells; Water reservoirs she was given helped to harvest rainwater which was used for irrigation of crops when there is no rain, more still sharing water among people built and improved relations between her and Genocide perpetrators who she forgave and they currently live in peace ; Crop harvest has helped boost her household income, the use of clay stoves has prevented deforestation to get firewood, she is more confident in addressing climate change, training, peer education among others. She concluded by pointing out that this project should be a platform for empowering women. Apart from environmental interventions, the project is improving social relations among people, families, households and communities this facilitates discussions on climate change.



6. Concluding Remarks

Innocent Musore gave a closing remark thanking everyone who participated in the workshop and reminded the participants to make sure that they implement the skills and knowledge they have acquired from the workshop once they go back to their respective communities to create a positive change.

Innocent highlighted that climate change is a global challenge and to that end it requires everyone's synergies to address the issue, while focusing on the most vulnerable people who are women that are most affected by climate change since they are the ones who are least engaged in addressing climate change.



In her concluding remarks **Ms. MUKANGENZI Lucie, National Women's Council (CNF) Vice Chairperson (pictured on the right)** also thanked GER on behalf of her organization for holding such educative sessions and expressed their interest in further collaborations with GER. and thanked the partnership between GER-Rwanda and Rain-Forest Sweden (RR); he further thanked the collaboration between Bugesera District and for supporting the workshop.