

## **Rwenzururu Kingdom Pledges to Prioritise Sexual Reproductive Health in Climate Change Mitigation Programmes**

Leaders from the Rwenzururu Kingdom in Kasese district locally known as *Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu* have committed to integrating sexual reproductive health and rights into their climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes.

The commitment was made by two ministers from the Kingdom who represented the cultural institution at a four-day training by Reproductive Health Uganda to understand the relationship between gender equality, climate change, and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Mr Silivesto Masereka, the kingdom's minister in charge of land, agriculture, and environment said that the institution is set to operationalise an integrated disaster risk management plan that will involve training locals about the adverse effects of climate change on the lives of women and those of their families.

"The training is an eye-opener to implement the majority of interventions that will help the community understand the linkage between SRHR and climate change. Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu has masses to engage, and we shall implement based on the knowledge we have acquired from the training," Masereka said.

He added that the kingdom will engage women, young people, and the elderly as core stakeholder groups in the implementation of projects through formation of groups that will be trained to adopt climate-smart agricultural practices around the mountain Rwenzori area to prevent erosion and landslides.

The groups will also be involved in adoption of methods like clean energy like use of energy-saving stoves, brick-making, and solar energy, among others.

On his part Mr Ericana Baluku, the minister for culture, tourism, and native administration in the kingdom, said that the institution will work towards strengthening the community's capacity to restore the vegetation around the mountain, restore wetlands, and skill women in making sanitary towels.

"We have a running project called the one million tree project around the Rwenzori slopes and hills. Communities around the mountain rely on charcoal and firewood for cooking, which is why they continue to cut down trees, and when it rains, their homes are washed away. It is upon us to engage community members, especially women and youths, who are the most vulnerable, to take lead in the restoration of forests on the slopes of Mountain Rwenzori," Baluku said.

Baluku noted that engaging and sharing knowledge in the different communities will see locals change their perceptions about climate change and actively participate in activities aimed at reclaiming the environment.

"We have the youth, who are very key when we put them onboard to implement programmes that will help them benefit from or exercise their rights and access to family planning, campaigns against teenage pregnancy, and child marriages," he added.

Kasese District is predominantly agricultural, relying on farming for employment and income. It is also a tourism centre, home to Queen Elizabeth National Park, Mountain Rwenzori and Rivers, Nyamwamba, Mubuku, Nyamugasani, and Hima.

In 2014, after heavy rains that lasted six hours, the rivers Nyamwamba and Nyamughasani burst their banks, leaving nine sub-counties flooded and two people dead. Since then, there has been recurring flooding in the Kasese district, leading to the destruction of key social services like hospitals, schools, the road network, and the displacement of lives and deaths, among others.

The government, through the department of disaster preparedness and management housed in the office of the prime minister, has adopted both short- and long-term interventions to mitigate the effects of climate change in the district.