

Vihiga County Leading the Way in Local Climate Action

The global impact of climate change has prompted collective efforts to find solutions and protect our planet. While Kenya recently hosted the Africa Climate Summit from September 4th to 8th, 2023, highlighting the importance of addressing climate change at a national level, there is still much to be done at the County level. Vihiga County, like many other regions, has been significantly affected by climate change. One pressing issue is the prolonged and severe drought experienced from 2020 to 2023, which left many residents without sufficient food and extremely vulnerable. Vihiga's heavy reliance on rainfall for agriculture amplifies the challenges posed by unpredictable weather patterns. Additionally, the County faces problems like erosion along the shores of Rift Valley lakes, increased flooding due to rising lake levels, and distant melting of ice caps. To address these multifaceted challenges, Vihiga County has proactively implemented the following strategies to enhance resilience and collaborate with local and international partners to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

1. Legal Framework for Climate Change:

The County has enacted policies and laws to guide the planning, financing, and implementation of climate action. Such include the Vihiga Climate Change Fund Act 2019 (amended 2021), the Vihiga County Climate Change Policy 2022-2027, and the Vihiga County Climate Regulations.

2. Climate Change Governance Structures:

The establishment of climate change coordination structures at County and ward levels, including Ward Climate Change Planning Committees, the County Climate Change Planning Committee, the Climate Change Steering Committee, and the Directorate of Climate Change has enabled community-led climate action.

3. Climate Financing Framework:

In addition to the 2% of the County's budget for the County Climate Change Funds (CCCF) through the Climate Change Fund Act, the County Government of Vihiga has also mobilized resources from various partners, including the World Bank, DANIDA, and FIDA, for the Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLOCA) program.

The County has utilized these funds to strengthen institutional capacity and implement adaptation programs, such as clean energy adoption, climate-smart agriculture, environmental conservation, disaster risk reduction, and capacity building at the ward level.

4. Community-Prioritized Climate Resilience Investments:

The County has implemented community-prioritized projects in 12 wards, benefitting around 3,000 direct beneficiaries and many more indirectly. This includes the construction of Gimogoi-Shikomoli solarized water project, serving over 100 households. These projects focus on clean energy use in water supply and climate-smart agriculture.

Further, the projects have ensured inclusivity by involving women, youth, and people with disabilities in climate change planning committees and action implementation.

6. Environmental Management and Conservation:

The County has enhanced environmental conservation and protection through awareness campaigns, capacity building, afforestation, and biodiversity conservation. Further, it has undertaken rehabilitation and re-afforestation of critical areas, such as Maragoli hills, wetlands, and springs.

In conclusion, Vihiga County stands at the forefront of climate change resilience and mitigation efforts, recognizing the urgent need to address the far-reaching impacts of climate change. The County's proactive approach is evident through the enactment of key policies and legal frameworks. These instruments provide a solid foundation for planning, financing, and implementing climate action initiatives, ensuring that resources are readily available and strategies are well-defined. Vihiga County's efforts serve as an inspiring example of localized climate action, demonstrating that meaningful change can be achieved through proactive governance and community engagement.

Photos



