


SUNCASA

Resilient Cities. Natural Solutions.



The Scaling Urban Nature-based Solutions for Climate Adaptation in Sub-Saharan Africa (SUNCASA) project aims to enhance climate resilience, gender equality and social inclusion, and biodiversity protection in urban communities Dire Dawa (Ethiopia), Kigali (Rwanda), and Johannesburg (South Africa). Focused on community-level capacity building and leveraging gender-responsive nature-based solutions (NbS), SUNCASA will benefit 2.2 million people living in high-flood-risk areas.

The Challenge

By 2050, more than 65% of Africa's 2.5 billion population will be living in cities. However, incipient climate governance systems, rapid urbanization, and deforestation have degraded landscapes and ecosystems, affecting urban communities' capacity to adapt to climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts temperatures in Africa will rise faster than the global land average, and many cities will face water scarcity, droughts, increased urban heat, and greater flood risk from intensifying storm events. As environmental threats multiply, marginalized communities are likely to experience increasingly adverse impacts.

SUNCASA at a Glance

Jointly managed by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), with USD 22 million in funding from Global Affairs Canada through the Partnering for the Climate Program, SUNCASA will work with local partners to improve urban communities' capacity to adapt to climate change. By implementing gender-responsive NbS for the restoration of watersheds, riparian corridors, and urban green spaces, the SUNCASA project directly responds to risks like climate change-induced flooding, landslides, extreme heat, and biodiversity loss. In collaboration with a host of local organizations with expertise in restoration and gender, equity, and social inclusion, SUNCASA will work with local governments, civil society, and community associations to enhance an enabling environment for the adoption and scaling of urban NbS that prioritize the most vulnerable. This includes mainstreaming gender-responsive NbS into policy frameworks, sharing the latest research, building capacities, and unlocking finance for scaling NbS projects.

Gender, Equity, and Social Inclusion

Women and girls, along with other marginalized groups, have limited access to natural resources and are often disproportionately affected by climate crises. NbS can play an important role in reducing urban climate vulnerability and can be explicitly designed to reduce inequities in the process. The SUNCASA project will empower women and other marginalized groups with the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in NbS planning, project preparation, long-term management, and local decision making. SUNCASA will facilitate conversations around gender-based barriers, driving the improved engagement of women and youth in climate adaptation measures that enhance the resilience of their communities. The project's design and implementation will use a gender-responsive, inclusive and participatory process guided by the [International Union for Conservation of Nature Global Standard for NbS](#).

Impact

SUNCASA will directly and indirectly benefit 2.2 million people by increasing their resilience to climate risk, directly train and support over 22,000 individuals involved in implementation and improve water security for millions more. The project aims to address gender gaps in climate adaptation: at least 50% of the project's beneficiaries will be women, representing a shift in existing social norms.

Our cities

Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

Flash floods, soil erosion, and water scarcity are critical climate change hazards in Dire Dawa. Community health and the local economy are at risk from heat, and declining groundwater levels are resulting in water scarcity. SUNCASA will partner with local actors to implement NbS, focusing on urban and rural kebeles (villages) in flood-prone areas. NbS implemented under SUNCASA will reduce soil erosion, enhance groundwater recharge, develop river buffer zones, mitigate flooding and heat island effects, and expand opportunities for agroforestry. Additionally, these actions will improve land productivity, crop yields, and access to technology.

Kigali, Rwanda

Kigali faces pressing climate hazards, notably flooding and landslides, exacerbated by the country's rugged topography and rapid urban expansion. All three of the city's districts are characterized by steep slopes, with many homes exposed to landslides and flooding risks. In collaboration with local organizations, SUNCASA agroforestry and restoration activities will rehabilitate critical micro-catchments across the Nyabarongo River, which cuts through the Kicukiro, Nyarugenge, and Gasabo districts. In addition, vegetated buffer zones will be established to stabilize gullies and protect high-risk households while limiting encroachment.

Johannesburg, S. Africa

In Johannesburg, invasive species in river systems threaten the city's water security, increasing flood risk and affecting local biodiversity. Communities along the Jukskei River also grapple with rising temperatures. The Jukskei catchment encompasses densely developed residential areas, and informal settlements within these regions are especially vulnerable to floods. In collaboration with local partners, SUNCASA will deploy targeted NbS for riverbank rehabilitation and the removal of invasive species clogging the city's waterways. The project will also expand resilient green spaces in the city by planting indigenous trees and supporting horticulture.

Related Initiatives

SUNCASA is supported by IISD and WRI's Africa Climate Resilient Cities Program. IISD is an independent think tank working to accelerate solutions for a stable climate, sustainable resource management, and fair economies. WRI's African Climate Resilient Cities Program is a multi-year initiative catalyzing the development of equitable, well-planned, and financed climate-resilient cities in Africa. The program is supported by Cities4Forests and the Urban Water Resilience in Africa Initiative. These programs work together to establish enabling conditions for NbS adoption and scaling, publish key research, and build a pipeline of NbS projects.

www.suncasa.org

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Project partners



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