

PARES Case Study of Engagement & Involvement for Resilience

Case Study Title/ID **Uganda – Flood and Drought – Social Capital and Collective Action**

Country/location Uganda. Kasese and Katakwi Districts

Crisis/challenge type Recurrent flooding and prolonged drought

Contact researcher (for more information): Prof. Feddie Ssengooba: freddie.ssengooba@gmail.com/ Justine Namakula: jhasteen@yahoo.com

PARES Domain illustrated by this case study

Social Relations & Structures: Social Capital and Collective Action

Recommended Actions

For Communities: Strengthen participation in collective structures such as Village Savings and Loan Associations(VSLAs), farmer groups, and water committees that enable mutual support and preparedness actions. Encourage inclusive membership so vulnerable households can benefit from collective savings and support mechanisms.

For Government: Recognize community collective structures as key partners in disaster preparedness and recovery. Strengthen linkages between these groups and district disaster management systems to improve early action and coordinated response.

For NGOs & health program implementors: Support existing community groups rather than creating parallel structures. Provide training, financial literacy support, and preparedness capacity building to strengthen group functioning and resilience planning.

For Funders: Invest in strengthening community-based collective structures that sustain resilience beyond project cycles, including savings groups, farmer associations, and local resource management committees.

Data for this case analysis

46 key informant interviews (Kampala, Kasese and Katakwi) and 12 focus group discussions in Kasese and Katakwi in 2023, complemented by dissemination and validation workshops involving approximately 60 stakeholders in February 2026.

Key Message

When credible risk warnings are received, communities activate existing collective structures such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), Savings and

Credit Organisations (SACCOs), and water committees to mobilize resources and coordinate preparedness and recovery actions.

Case study summary

In flood- and drought-prone districts of Kasese and Katakwi, community groups provide a foundation for collective response to climate shocks. When warnings about floods or prolonged dry spells are communicated through trusted leadership structures, communities activate existing networks such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), Savings and Credit Organisations (SACCOs), elders' councils, and water committees. These structures mobilize financial and social capital through savings withdrawals, small loans, and mutual support. Group bylaws, regular meetings, and shared norms enable coordinated action, including supporting vulnerable households, protecting shared resources, and organizing preparedness activities. Collective structures also link communities to district government and Non- Governmental Organisations (NGO) programmes, improving access to training, agricultural inputs, and recovery support. Through these mechanisms, social capital strengthens preparedness, supports recovery, and reinforces trust and shared responsibility within communities facing recurrent climate shocks.

Detailed Explanation of engagement mechanisms

Context that provides the conditions in which the observed actions work

Kasese and Katakwi districts experience repeated climate-related shocks, including floods and prolonged drought. These events disrupt agriculture, water access, and household livelihoods. Public systems such as infrastructure and emergency response capacity are often limited, particularly in rural areas. As a result, communities rely heavily on existing social networks and collective institutions to manage risk and cope with shocks. Structures such as VSLAs, SACCOs, farmer groups, and water committees are widely present and serve both economic and social functions. These groups maintain regular meetings, establish bylaws, and build trust among members, creating a foundation for coordinated community action during crises.

The actions (mechanisms) that were observed to lead to resilience outcomes

When credible warnings about floods or drought are communicated through trusted leaders and community communication channels, collective structures are activated as preparedness and recovery platforms. Members draw on pooled savings or social funds to support households facing immediate losses. Groups coordinate actions such as assisting vulnerable households, mobilizing labour to protect shared resources, and supporting community preparedness activities.

Training in financial literacy and livelihood diversification within these groups also strengthens their capacity to support recovery after shocks. Registered groups often maintain linkages with district government programmes and NGO partners, which improves access to extension services, preparedness training, and recovery resources.

Observed outcomes

Activation of collective structures enables communities to mobilize financial and social capital quickly during crises. Households gain access to emergency funds, small loans, and social support networks that help stabilise livelihoods after shocks. Collective action also strengthens community preparedness and reinforces shared responsibility for managing risk. However, households that are not members of savings groups or collective structures may benefit less from these mechanisms, highlighting the importance of inclusive participation.

Case Evidence

Vignettes #2, #5, #6, #7, #8 in Uganda – Flood & Drought – Supporting Evidence document

Related case studies

Social Relations and Structures

Uganda – Drought – Trusted Leaders and Intermediaries

Uganda – Flood – Knowledge Systems Integration

Operational Systems

Uganda – Flood – Drought – Multistakeholder Collaboration

Learning and Capabilities

Uganda – Flood – Drought – Embedded and Equitable Partnerships

Other relevant case studies

Cyclone-related flooding

Madagascar – Cyclones – Social Capital and Collective Action

Madagascar – Cyclones – Communication and Information Systems

Madagascar – Cyclones – Embedded & Equitable Partnerships

Drought

Ethiopia – Drought – Trusted Leaders and Communication

Ethiopia – Drought – Social Capital and Collective Action

Ethiopia – Drought – Knowledge Integration

Ethiopia – Drought – Embedded and Equitable Partnerships