



**LIFE-AR**

LDC Initiative for Effective  
Adaptation and Resilience

# Local Engagement in Climate Action: Communication Strategies under LIFE-AR Uganda



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Radio talk show on KDR 100.3 FM Radio in Kibaale	3
Figure 2: Radio talk show with PS Alfred in Pader	5
Figure 3: Commissioner Epitu during a media interview in Pader District	6
Figure 4: Pader District Radio talk show with PS Alfred, Local Council Five (LC5) Chairperson and LIFE-AR District Focal Point	7
Figure 5: radio, Ssezibwa Falls, Uganda. Credit: Mariya Sukhoveyko	10
Figure 6: Awareness meeting in Kibaale district. Middle in yellow is the District LC5 Chairperson who is a champion for the initiative	11
Figure 7: Election of Parish Climate Change Committees by Community members in Lomeris Sub-County, Kaabong District	13
Figure 8: Election of Parish Climate Change Committee by Community members in Kalungu District	13

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1- Summary of Communication Tools used for LIFE-AR in Uganda	11
Table 2: Top 5 best practices for communication tools from LIFE-AR mobilisation experiences	15

## Authors

Lilian Motaroki; Harriet Kyomuhendo (Assistant Commissioner, Policy Analysis-MWE and LIFE-AR Technical Focal Point) and Ismail Hiire (Communications Officer).

## Published by

IIED/ LIFE-AR 2025  
44 Southamptn Buildings,  
London, UK  
WC2A 1AP

Cover photo: People in front of shop, listening to the radio, Uganda. Credit: Anjo Kan / Shutterstock

## LDC Global and National Platforms: Transforming the climate finance landscape



Figure 1: Radio talk show on KDR 100.3 FM Radio in Kibaale

## INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a pivotal role in climate information systems, not only in shaping how messages are designed, delivered and received, but also in addressing key challenges to climate action. These include among other things, misinformation, limited public awareness, and low community engagement that can hinder the uptake of climate services and the co-creation of effective, locally grounded solutions.

This case study explores how the implementation of LIFE-AR in Uganda employed an inclusive, multi-level communication plan to sensitise, mobilise and connect with communities across four pilot districts. By combining traditional and modern communication tools such as radio, market drives, barazas, local leadership structures and digital platforms, LIFE-AR community mobilisation activities enabled wide-reaching, inclusive and context-sensitive engagement. These efforts positioned communities not just as recipients of information, but as active co-designers of climate-resilient development in their districts. The approach also generated valuable insights on how the initiative could learn from previous programmes to be more effective. The experiences from the first four districts in Uganda

offer critical, context-rich lessons for scaling locally driven and equitable communication strategies to other pilot districts in Uganda. These lessons are equally relevant for other countries and the wider ecosystem seeking to embed inclusive, community-driven approaches in their adaptation programmes.

## CONTEXT

LIFE-AR is a Least Developed Countries (LDC)-led and owned initiative that is currently being implemented in 10 [Front Runner Countries](#) (FRCs). The initiative was officially launched in 2018 at COP24 with implementation starting in 2020 following a formal [compact](#) signing at COP25 between LDCs and development partners. LIFE-AR is one of the primary vehicles for delivering the [LDC 2050](#) Vision for climate resilient people, economies and ecosystems by promoting a shift in how climate responses are prioritised, financed, coordinated and tracked. Anchored in the principles of justice, equity, inclusion, participation and leaving no one behind, the initiative calls for 70% of climate finance to be channelled to the local level.



In Uganda, LIFE-AR has been ongoing since 2021 with leadership from the Ministry of Water and Environment (MoWE). During the first two years, the country focused on an establishment phase that achieved:

1. setting up a national platform of governance
2. identifying and designing a long-term implementation pathway or delivery mechanism (Devolved Climate Finance) to strengthen capabilities and channel at least 70% of climate finance to the local level
3. establishing a fund management system and
4. developing a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework.

With these in place, the country transitioned to its second phase in April 2024 with a focus on testing innovations and small-scale pilot investments in selected districts and reflecting on lessons learned for scale-up.

## RATIONALE FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

Effective climate communication and community mobilisation are foundational to translating policy into action, particularly in highly vulnerable contexts. Guided by the [principles of Locally Led Adaptation \(LLA\)](#), devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level ensures that climate adaptation efforts are not only more inclusive and equitable, but also more responsive to local realities. Sensitisation and mobilisation activities play a critical role in this process by equipping communities with the information, confidence and platforms needed to engage meaningfully in governance. These efforts also help counter elite capture by broadening participation, elevating marginalised voices and fostering transparency in decision-making. According to the [IPCC \(2022\)](#), inclusive governance and participatory processes enhance resilience by aligning interventions with local knowledge and priorities. Moreover, studies from the [Global Commission on Adaptation](#) highlight that community-

driven adaptation can deliver up to 10 times the return on investment compared to top-down approaches.

Inclusive planning and equitable governance are central to LIFE-AR in transforming climate decision-making in a way that leaves no one behind.

In Uganda, one way this ambition is being operationalised is through a strong focus on communication strategies for increased community engagement. The emphasis on multi-level, inclusive communication is both strategic and foundational to achieving climate resilience and long-term impact. Efforts to mobilise communities moved beyond public sensitisation to embedding community voice and leadership within the climate planning process, ensuring that local realities and perspectives inform adaptation priorities and decisions at every level. To ensure these goals were met, a set of communication mechanisms were developed with the following objectives:

- Raise awareness of climate change risks and LIFE-AR objectives
- Build trust and credibility through local actors
- Facilitate community-driven selection of implementation sites
- Encourage operationalisation of inclusive governance structures like Parish Climate Change Committees (PCCCs)
- Support community-led prioritisation of investment priorities
- Foster partnerships between communities, government and other stakeholders
- Create space for learning and feedback to improve programme design and delivery

These objectives were pursued through a bespoke, multi-tiered approach tailored to ensuring inclusive, credible and community-driven engagement. The strategy was applied across districts, sub-counties, parishes and households, ensuring coherence with existing local governance systems.



Figure 2: Radio talk show with PS Alfred in Pader

## UGANDA LIFE-AR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### BESPOKE COMMUNICATION APPROACH

Sensitisation and mobilisation followed a step-by-step approach across all three administrative levels of local government: district, sub-county and parish. Each level used tailored methods to ensure context-specific engagement and inclusive participation.

#### District-Level

The first step to District engagement involved a two-day awareness meetings held for technical and political leaders in each pilot district including District Executive Committees (DEC), District Technical Planning Committees (DTPC), Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) and Local Council V (LC5) representatives. These were facilitated by district trainers of trainers (ToTs) from the respective districts who had participated in capacity strengthening workshops. Using local facilitators ensured credibility and alignment with local dynamics. The trainings were conducted in the local languages allowing the participants to fully understand the concepts but also contribute freely during the discussions.

#### Sub-County Level

At the sub-county level, LIFE-AR facilitated inclusive consultations that brought together a wide cross-section of stakeholders including sub-county executive committees and technical planning committees (SECs and STPC), councillors, civil society organisations, religious and cultural leaders as well as representatives of women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities.

#### Parish-Level

Engagements at this level started with focused meetings with parish level management structures. These included Local Council I (LC1) leaders, Area Councillors, special interest groups (disabled, women, youth and elderly), parish chiefs and Community Development Officers (CDOs) - as well as representatives from sub-county and district level local governments. These initial meetings secured grassroots buy-in and set the stage for wider mobilisation through community gatherings/ barazas<sup>1</sup>. They also created a platform for district, sub-county and parish teams to collaborate in delivering inclusive parish-wide campaigns, aligning messaging and timing with community routines to maximise turnout and participation.

<sup>1</sup> Barazas are open community meetings that promote two-way dialogue between programme implementers and community members, ensuring that community voices are integrated into planning and implementation.

The approaches helped secure high-level political buy-in, strengthen coordination across the different tiers of government and mobilise strong community participation, as detailed in the Emerging Results section below.

This groundwork was supported by a mix of communication tools and strategies, adapted to local contexts.

## EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED

LIFE-AR's communication approach in Uganda was grounded in accessibility, relevance and inclusivity. A deliberate combination of traditional and modern tools promoted exchange of climate information and messages in ways that resonated with different groups. These tools were used to raise awareness and to deepen community participation and understanding of LIFE-AR, shape delivery and foster local ownership of climate resilience efforts.

The selection of communication tools was informed by the district technical teams in collaboration with the sub-counties and parishes, who advised based on the dynamics of each parish including economic activities, religious affiliations and daily routines of community members. For instance, in areas with designated market days, market drives using megaphones were preferred to maximise reach and engagement. This approach ensured that messaging was context-sensitive, timed and delivered in ways that aligned with local realities.

The section below outlines the specific communication tools used, how they were applied and what made them effective (or challenging) in different district contexts.

### Market and Road Drives

Market and road drives were conducted in busy public spaces such as trading centres, markets and along main roads to maximise visibility and reach. In each district, an average of two market drives were conducted prior to key events, targeting trading centres and surrounding villages using megaphones. These drives featured mobile public address systems, local music and drama. They were organised and led by district focal point persons with support from sub-county leaders. A key feature of these drives was the involvement of trusted community figures including the LC Chairpersons and the Area Councillors who spoke directly to the crowds in their respective local language. Their endorsement helped build credibility and clarified LIFE-AR's purpose. During the drives, the initiative sparked significant curiosity, with many community members asking questions about its purpose and how it would differ from other ongoing initiatives such as the [Parish Development Model \(PDM\)](#).

Drives were strategically planned to precede major events such as the election of the PCCCs to maximise visibility,

raise awareness and increase turnout. The messaging focused on providing communities with relevant information, ensuring they were able to fully participate ahead of the PCCC elections and subsequent activities.

#### Key strengths:

- Brought climate messages to hard-to-reach or low-literacy communities
- High visibility and immediate audience feedback especially when aligned with busy trading days made communities feel valued and heard, strengthening their connection to the initiative and its implementation.
- Interactive elements like music and drama made messages more engaging and memorable
- Encouraged participation from marginalised groups such as women and youth, the elderly and disabled. Elderly participants, in particular, felt more included in local activities as messages were delivered in languages they understood.
- Targeted high-traffic areas making them more effective for reaching large audiences.

#### Critical reflection:

- The effectiveness of these activities depended heavily on reliable sound equipment, skilled and engaging facilitators and strong coordination among actors at multiple levels. This underscores the importance of early planning, equipment testing and clear role allocation to maximise impact.
- Some activities coincided with other community programmes, creating competition for public engagement. This points to the need for advance scheduling and targeted promotion strategies to capture and sustain audience interest.
- While generally well-attended, these activities may not have reached all members of the community especially those who are isolated or have limited mobility. This highlights the value of complementary outreach approaches to ensure more inclusive participation.



Figure 3: Commissioner Epitu during a media interview in Pader District





Figure 4: Pader District Radio talk show with PS Alfred, Local Council Five (LC5) Chairperson and LIFE-AR District Focal Point

## Radio Broadcasts

Radio emerged as one of the most effective tools for community sensitisation due to its wide reach, especially in rural areas and its ability to broadcast in local languages. Approximately nine radio talk shows were aired across selected stations including 88.3 Rapa FM (Pader), KDR 100.3 FM Radio (Kibaale) and Radio (Buddu) Kalungu.

The shows featured formats such as expert interviews, panel discussions with senior technical and political leadership and in some cases local leaders as well as interactive Q&A segments to engage the audience. Speakers were selected for their technical knowledge and leadership roles and/or because they were trusted voices who could connect with and resonate deeply within their communities. Messages were delivered in local languages to reinforce accessibility and ensure that listeners could relate to and act on the information shared.

### Key strenghts:

- Wide access across rural and peri-urban areas with limited access to internet or television
- Access to communities/ individuals with low formal education through local language
- Potential for two-way interactive engagement through call-ins or live feedback from listeners
- Leveraged the public's trust in local radio stations as reliable sources of information.
- Timing the programmes during community downtime e.g the evenings maximised audience reach.

### Critical reflection:

- Securing prime airtime especially after major news bulletins or during peak evening hours
- proved expensive, limiting both the frequency and consistency of broadcasts. This underlines the importance of balancing reach with budget realities and of exploring more cost-effective yet impactful airtime slots.
- In some instances, radio hosts or production staff lacked the capacity to clearly communicate technical aspects of LIFE-AR. This occasionally affected the quality and continuity of messaging, pointing to the value of ongoing training and pre-broadcast briefings to strengthen delivery and engagement
- Some of the districts don't have radio coverage for example Kaabong requiring reliance on other communication methods such as market drives and community meetings. This highlights the need for flexible, multi-channel communication strategies in geographically isolated areas.
- In certain cases, community members were observed to be passive listeners rather than active participants, highlighting not only the need for repeated broadcasts and complementary forms of engagement, but also the importance of ensuring content remains relevant and engaging to sustain community interest and participation over time.

## Community Gatherings (Barazas)

As part of the LIFE-AR rollout in Uganda, these gatherings drew between 250 and 1,000 participants, depending on the location and timing.

Barazas were convened at central locations within parishes, often following smaller, targeted meetings with

local leaders. Timing for the barazas was tailored to local contexts to promote high turnout. In Kalungu District for instance, one parish held its baraza after midday during harvest season to accommodate farmers returning from their gardens. This contrasted with other areas like Kibaale and Kaabong, where community routines allowed for different scheduling. They were facilitated by district focal point persons, sub-county officials and parish leaders. These meetings featured presentations on climate change and LIFE-AR goals and interactive Q&A and feedback sessions.

Barazas played a key role in the LIFE-AR sensitisation process. They helped clarify community roles and responsibilities, encouraged participation in activities such as PCCC elections and served as a platform to gather feedback, manage expectations and address concerns. For example, in some areas community members expressed scepticism towards LIFE-AR due to past experiences with other programmes. This highlighted the need for clearer messaging on what makes LIFE-AR different.

#### *Key strengths:*

- Built trust and credibility through face-to-face engagement between community members and programme teams
- Fostered community-driven input allowing people to share ideas, ask questions and provide feedback that informed implementation. In Pader, this revealed distinct needs and priorities among men and women where during droughts, marriages often increase, youth engage in hunting and building houses and women focus on collecting firewood and fetching water.
- Helped dispel rumours and misinformation early for example clarifying how LIFE-AR differs from previous programmes that failed to deliver on promises.
- They were inclusive as they were scheduled at times that suited community members, daily routines allowing broad participation after tasks such as gardening, harvesting and other responsibilities. For instance, in Pader, mid-day proved most convenient during the planting season, while in Kalungu, afternoons after harvesting worked best.

#### *Critical reflection:*

- Organising barazas particularly in remote or dispersed areas demanded substantial resources in both time and funding. This reinforces the need for careful budgeting and logistical planning, especially when aiming for sustained engagement.
- Timing had to be adapted to local routines, which differed across locations. In Kalungu for example, barazas were scheduled after 11 a.m. to allow farmers to complete their morning gardening while in Kibaale, Fridays were avoided because of community worship. This flexibility improved attendance but required organisers to remain responsive to local needs and schedules.

- Community composition varied across parishes, requiring flexible planning. In Kibaale, some barazas saw higher participation from women while others had more men or reflected a balanced mix. Deeper inquiry revealed that women were more committed to initiatives that directly supported their livelihoods, which accounted for their higher levels of participation. Facilitation teams had to navigate these dynamics while upholding LIFE-AR's core principle of inclusivity.

## Local Leadership Structures

Local leadership structures played a central role in mobilising and sustaining community engagement. These included Local Council I and II members (LC1s, LC2s), parish chiefs, and Community Development Officers (CDOs), all of whom are embedded within the lowest tiers of local governance.

Their responsibilities in LIFE-AR included:

- Disseminating key messages on LIFE-AR through village meetings, church gatherings and informal networks
- Encouraging community members to attend sensitisation events
- Leading or moderating discussions during barazas and road drives
- Providing ongoing support and follow-up after major events

Their deep community ties and ability to communicate in local dialects positioned them as trusted messengers and effective liaisons between communities and technical teams, especially in identifying and addressing participation barriers among marginalised groups.

#### *Critical reflection:*

- In areas with existing mistrust due to ongoing programmes like the parish development model (PDM), local leaders struggled to mobilise communities effectively for LIFE-AR activities. This highlights the importance of building trust through transparent communication and clear differentiation of the initiative's objectives.
- Existing power dynamics and local norms in some areas limited some leaders' ability to genuinely represent and advocate for marginalised groups such as women and youth. Addressing these barriers requires deliberate strategies to promote inclusive leadership and equitable participation.
- Local leaders often faced competing work commitments alongside added responsibilities such as moderating discussions, supporting follow-up and addressing community concerns. This increased workload sometimes led to burnout, which affected their ability to fully participate in LIFE-AR activities



underscoring the need for workload management and support mechanisms such as role rotation and co-facilitation.

- Some local leaders struggled to communicate the initiative's details effectively and manage community expectations, highlighting the need for continuous capacity strengthening on LIFE-AR (its objectives, scope and intended outcomes).

## Digital platforms

A dedicated WhatsApp platform was set up to strengthen communication between district and national teams during and after sub-national sensitisation and awareness-raising activities. Through the platform, district teams shared real-time updates on activity implementation, which not only enabled cross-district learning but also allowed emerging challenges to be addressed collectively. National teams used the space to share national and global

updates, fostering vertical integration and alignment across different levels of governance.

### Key strengths:

- Facilitates rapid information exchange
- Captures discussions for future reference
- Enhanced coordination between national and sub-national teams

### Critical reflection:

While the WhatsApp platform enhanced coordination and learning, its use also revealed limitations. Discussions required active moderation to remain focused, participants without reliable digital access were at risk of exclusion and sustained engagement depended heavily on the commitment and responsiveness of both district and national teams. These challenges highlight the need to complement digital tools with inclusive strategies that ensure equitable participation.

Table 1- Summary of Communication Tools used for LIFE-AR in Uganda

COMMUNICATION TOOL	PURPOSE	KEY STRENGTHS	KEY CHALLENGES
<b>Market &amp; Road Drives</b>	Raise awareness, generate visibility and encourage community participation	High visibility in public spaces Immediate audience feedback Use of local language, music, drama Reached marginalised groups (e.g women, elderly, youth)	Logistically demanding Competing events/programmes May miss isolated individuals
<b>Radio Broadcasts</b>	Mass sensitisation and information dissemination especially in areas with limited access to digital media	Wide reach Trusted local source Accessible to low-literacy groups	High airtime costs Variable broadcast quality Passive listenership in some areas
<b>Community Gatherings (Barazas)</b>	Facilitate dialogue, clarify roles, gather feedback and build trust with wider communities	Face-to-face interaction Encouraged two-way dialogue Helped manage expectations Scheduled for local routines	Logistically intensive Varied attendance across locations Sensitive to timing
<b>Local Leadership Structures</b>	Ongoing mobilisation, message delivery and community liaison through trusted local leaders	Deep community trust Local language fluency Continuous presence for follow-up and support	Capacity gaps on technical messaging Burnout risk Limitations to advocate for marginalised voices in some areas
<b>Digital platform (WhatsApp)</b>	Facilitated real-time coordination, learning and information sharing between district and national teams	Rapid updates and feedback; cross-district learning; documentation of discussions; promoted vertical integration	Need for active moderation Risk of excluding those with limited digital access

## KEY MESSAGES AND CO-CREATION PROCESS

An essential factor in the success of LIFE-AR's community sensitisation and mobilisation in Uganda was its use of a co-creation approach to communication. This process brought together officials from various levels of local government alongside national team staff to jointly develop messaging that was context-specific, trusted and widely accepted.

In the four pilot districts, LIFE-AR partnered closely with local council leaders to develop and disseminate key messages through village meetings and other formal and informal networks. Involving local leaders in crafting these messages helped ensure that communication was grounded in the community's values and preferences. This not only increased relevance but also enhanced credibility and community ownership of the process.

Messages were adapted to specific audiences:

- For community members, messages were simplified to focus on the local impacts of climate change, the benefits of adaptation, and the tangible outcomes of participating in LIFE-AR. Content was made relatable through everyday references such as farming, water

access and food security and delivered using visuals, storytelling and real-life examples.

- For district, sub-county and parish officials, more technical messaging was used to explain LIFE-AR's objectives, governance structures, the national delivery mechanism and the specific roles of actors at each level in implementation.
- The effectiveness of mobilisation efforts was strongly influenced by the quality of relationships between local leaders and community members. Providing leaders with appropriate support, resources, and guidance further enabled them to effectively fulfil their roles in communication and engagement.

Across all formats, communications were anchored around four consistent themes:

- The reality of climate risks and localised impacts
- The benefits of community-led adaptation and resilience
- The importance of inclusive participation, particularly of marginalised groups with an emphasis on key words like 'women's voices' and 'leaving no one behind'
- The potential for improved livelihoods and co-benefits for local ecosystems



Figure 5: radio, Ssezibwa Falls, Uganda. Credit: Mariya Sukhovoyko



# EMERGING RESULTS: LOCAL LEVEL ENGAGEMENT FOR INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

## STRENGTHENING DISTRICT-LEVEL OWNERSHIP AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

In all four pilot districts, LIFE-AR began with sensitisation meetings that brought together key political and technical leaders at the district level, facilitated by district ToTs with support from the national team. These meetings:

- promoted vertical integration between national and sub-national actors
- introduced the initiative, ensuring a shared understanding of LIFE-AR's principles, the devolved climate finance (DCF) delivery mechanism, and expectations for local engagement
- clarified roles and responsibilities and set expectations for collaborative delivery
- strengthened buy-in from both technical and political district leaders
- were essential in identifying the pilot sub-counties for LIFE-AR implementation based on established criteria, ensuring that piloting began with sub-counties with high overall vulnerability.

District leaders were also instrumental in shaping the communication strategy. They identified contextually appropriate mobilisation tools such as barazas, local radio and market drives and aligned messaging with local governance priorities. This district-level buy-in legitimised LIFE-AR's messages, mobilised political support and created strategic entry points for engaging lower tiers of government.

### BOX 1: PARTICIPATION IN KIBAALE DISTRICT

A total of 83 stakeholders participated in the district-level sensitisation meeting including the LC5, RDC, DEC and DTPC representatives.

Women constituted 27% of attendees and youth made up 30%, reflecting both the gender disparity in leadership and a notable youth presence.



Figure 6: Awareness meeting in Kibaale district. Middle in yellow is the District LC5 Chairperson who is a champion for the initiative



## ENHANCING SUB-COUNTY LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Sub-county sensitisation meetings bridged district-level planning with parish-level implementation. These events brought together a wide range of actors from different sectors to achieve the following:

- strengthen institutional awareness and capacity for sub-counties to coordinate and support planning and delivery of the devolved climate finance (DCF) mechanism
- reinforce local ownership and commitment to LIFE-AR's objectives, including inclusive governance
- ensuring that messages were relayed through trusted community channels
- identifying the pilot parishes within the selected sub-counties based on specific criteria outlined in the implementation guidelines.

Careful coordination at this level helped align event timing with local calendars and routines, enhancing participation and shaping inclusive delivery.

### BOX 2: SUB-COUNTY ENGAGEMENTS IN KALUNGU DISTRICT

In Kalungu district, 83 individuals attended sensitisation meetings across Lwabenge, Kyamulibwa and Bukulula sub-counties. About 40% were youth and representation included elders, youth (36%) and PWDs

## EMPOWERING PARISH LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

Parish-level sensitisation meetings reached 362 participants, over 80% of whom were parish leaders. Held in close collaboration with national and district teams, these meetings clarified roles, reinforced accountability across governance tiers and enabled vertical integration. Crucially, parish leaders collectively agreed on mobilisation schedules for the upcoming PCCC elections, including specific considerations to ensure gender and social inclusion. This early leadership engagement established parish actors as key agents of change and local mobilisation.

Parish leaders collectively agreed on mobilisation schedules for the upcoming PCCC elections, taking into account community routines and specific measures to ensure gender and social inclusion. This early leadership engagement established parish actors as key agents of change, driving grassroots mobilisation and laying the groundwork for widespread community participation in LIFE-AR activities.

### BOX 3: ENGAGEMENT OF PARISH LEADERSHIP IN KAABONG DISTRICT

A total of 170 stakeholders participated in the parish-level awareness meetings in Kaabong district. 39% of these were women, underscoring both active participation and the gender imbalance still present in formal leadership roles.

## ROBUST COMMUNITY MOBILISATION AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION IN PCCC ELECTIONS

Following the mobilisation plan, parish and sub-county leaders coordinated an intensive, one-week outreach campaign to maximise participation in the PCCC elections. Communication channels included a combination of the different tools described above and messages consistently highlighted the importance of inclusivity, urging participation from women, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly. To guard against elite capture, emphasis was placed on electing individuals based on integrity and sound judgement, rather than literacy or social status.

The mobilisation efforts culminated in widespread participation. Over 90% of attendees during the PCCC elections were community members, an indicator of successful outreach and community interest in LIFE-AR.

### BOX 4: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PCCC ELECTIONS

In Pader district, 731 individuals participated in the elections, with a relatively balanced gender split (389 male, 342 female). In contrast, Kalungu district recorded a lower female turnout at 34% and youth participation at just 7% reflecting ongoing challenges in achieving full inclusivity in some areas.



Figure 7: Election of Parish Climate Change Committees by Community members in Lomeris Sub-County, Kaabong District



Figure 8: Election of Parish Climate Change Committee by Community members in Kalungu District

The LIFE-AR community mobilisation strategy effectively translated local leadership engagement into widespread grassroots participation. From district inception to community election, each layer of engagement reinforced legitimacy, strengthened trust and encouraged inclusion.

The high participation in each of the districts demonstrates how deliberate, multi-tiered sensitisation when aligned with local dynamics and delivered through trusted actors can strengthen ownership and embed climate resilience efforts within local governance systems.



# INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNT

## Use inclusive communication drives to build legitimacy

Actively involving diverse community members from the outset, especially women, youth, people with disabilities, and the elderly built broader ownership of LIFE-AR and reinforced legitimacy for key governance processes like the PCCC elections. Messages promoting inclusivity such as “leaving no one behind” proved effective, particularly in conservative areas like Pader and Kaabong, where participation is often limited by cultural norms. Additionally, trained local leaders enhanced message credibility and consistency.

## Address structural inclusion barriers

Persistent gender, youth and disability disparities remain. In district meetings for instance, women comprised just 12% to 33% of participants, highlighting **existing structural imbalances** in leadership and staffing. Youth participation averaged 25%, with Kibaale and Kaabong showing stronger figures (30% and 40%, respectively). Additionally, available data shows minimal inclusion of people with disabilities. These patterns show progress in some areas though more systematic efforts are required to involve all social groups. Including women in mobilisation planning, ensuring accessible messaging and strengthening feedback channels, both formal and informal, can help uncover hidden barriers.

## Tailor messages to local context

At parish level where literacy, language and livelihoods vary, local language use and references to daily concerns like farming and food security made climate messages more relatable. Simplified content and locally anchored narratives **boosted comprehension** and strengthened community participation and engagement.

## Coordinate across governance levels

Multi-level coordination spanning national, district, sub-county and parish levels, strengthened both vertical and horizontal integration by creating clear communication flows and shared accountability across governance tiers. Involving both technical and political leaders at each level ensured that messages were well understood and championed by trusted local actors. Within each tier,

coordinated outreach efforts such as aligning market drives with trading days or timing radio shows to peak hours fostered collaboration among actors, reinforced coherence and maximised community reach.

## Past programme experiences shape community perceptions

In districts where previous government programmes particularly the Parish Development Model (PDM) underperformed, scepticism toward LIFE-AR was high, affecting turnout and trust. In contrast, where PDM delivered benefits, mobilisation was smoother. This highlights the need to understand local perceptions, manage expectations transparently and clearly distinguish new programmes from earlier ones in both messaging and delivery. Additionally, some local leaders struggled to communicate LIFE-AR’s objectives and scope, showing the need for further capacity strengthening to improve continuous community engagement.

## Use data to enhance equity and adaptiveness

Tracking participation by gender and age is a good start. To improve targeting and inclusion, future efforts should strengthen Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) capacities to collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other factors across all the pilot districts. This will enable real-time course correction, guide adaptive messaging and help better reach underrepresented groups. Continuous documentation of lessons throughout implementation is also key to informing adaptive communication strategies and improve future outreach.

## Engage media early and consistently

All the four pilot districts involved journalists in the sensitisation and mobilisation activities at different levels, with Kibaale and Pader demonstrating stronger engagement. Yet, local media have the potential to amplify messages, raise public awareness and sustain the initiative’s visibility. Engaging **media partners early** in activities rollout and strengthening their capacity to effectively communicate key messages is essential in supporting trusted, consistent communication and reinforcing LIFE-AR’s legitimacy.



Table 2: Top 5 best practices for communication tools from LIFE-AR mobilisation experiences

TOOL	BEST PRACTICE
Local Leaders	Equip leaders with clear, inclusive messages and support materials to build trust and local ownership.
Radio Broadcasts	Schedule during peak listening hours; use interactive formats (e.g the use of humour to convey messages and call-ins).
Market & Road Drives	Align with busy days/times based on daily routines; use music, megaphones and branded materials.
Community Meetings	Use local language; adapt timing to local rhythms (e.g afternoons or after-market).
Printed/Visual Aids	Simplify key messages using illustrations and stories; tailor for different audiences including children, young people and those with limited literacy to enhance comprehension and accessibility.

## LOOKING AHEAD

To build on the successes of the initial sensitisation phase and deepen community ownership of LIFE-AR, the next steps for Uganda will be:

- Rolling out regular follow-up radio segments in local languages, featuring community voices, updates on PCCC progress and expert insights to keep climate issues top-of-mind. The LIFE-AR national team may consider leveraging existing government-sponsored radio programmes to enhance visibility.
- Institutionalise quarterly barazas with communities to provide spaces for consistent feedback, transparency and shared learning.
- Promote inclusion of women, youth and people with disabilities by setting participation targets, strengthening capacities for gender-disaggregated data collection and ensuring accessible, inclusive meeting formats.
- Maintain engagement through the existing WhatsApp groups, enabling real-time updates and feedback on ongoing activities across districts.
- Strengthen PCCC capacity through periodic refresher trainings for sustainability, reinforcing their role as trusted sources of information and feedback within communities.
- Expand journalist engagement beyond initial sensitisation by involving them in ongoing activities and strengthening their climate communication expertise to improve quality and consistency of local coverage.
- Increase use of information, education and communication (IEC) materials, ensuring they are culturally relevant, translated into local languages, and widely distributed to improve LIFE-AR visibility and understanding.

## CONCLUSION

The example of community mobilisation around the implementation of LIFE-AR in Uganda demonstrates that strategic, inclusive communication, delivered through multi-level mobilisation and grounded in community realities is essential for building trust, legitimacy and sustained engagement in climate adaptation governance.

Multi-channel approaches are vital to reaching diverse groups and reinforcing key messages across different contexts, ensuring that no one is left behind. Equally

important, communication systems must be sustained and adaptive from the outset, to inform and allow communities to participate as equal partners in governance.

Future efforts should position communication not as a peripheral support function, but as a core pillar of programme design, integral to fostering accountability, greater inclusion of different community members including women, youth, people with disabilities and local ownership in climate adaptation.

 @LDC\_LIFEAR  
 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/LIFE-AR>  
 <https://www.LIFE-AR.org>  
 @LIFE-AR.bsky.social

The Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) is a long-term LDC-led, LDC-owned initiative which aims to enhance climate resilience.



LIFE-AR is hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and supported by the UK International Development from the UK Government, Irish Aid, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada and Quadrature Climate Foundation.