

Climate Action



Linda Adong trains residents on how to establish kitchen gardens in small spaces using locally available materials. PHOTOS/DAPHINE NAKABIRI

How Adong is turning kitchen gardens into climate solutions

Known as the 'Ghetto farmer', Linda Adong, currently the first runner up of Miss Climate Change Awareness for Northern Uganda 2026/27, began training households and youth in 2020 on climate-smart agricultural practices tailored for urban settings with limited space.



One of the kitchen gardens set up by Adong and team.

BY DAPHINE NAKABIRI

As the rains continued to intensify, many low-lying areas experienced flash floods in Kinawataka, a suburb found in Nakawa Division, each downpour typically disrupts the daily life for residents. The community which is situated in a valley, has become vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

The area experiences flooded pathways, stagnant water, and submerged businesses, also often preventing children from accessing school.

Linda Adong, an agriculturalist raised in this community has witnessed first-hand the growing impact of flooding and climate variability on households in Kinawataka.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, just after completing her studies at Kyambogo University, she, like many other graduates who struggle to secure jobs, was forced to remain at home as opportunities became limited.

She recalls, "After failing to secure employment, I decided to apply my knowledge in agriculture by venturing into backyard farming at my father's home, which enabled me to earn some income to meet my basic needs."

Adong later joined the One by One Initiative for Vulnerable Communities in Uganda, a community-based organisation in Kinawataka, where she recognised the need to support her community through environmental conservation and the development of green spaces.

During the training, she explored urban agriculture, an experience that deepened her interest in kitchen gardening and reinforced her understanding of it as a practical solution to climate change, food insecurity and unemployment that defined her community.

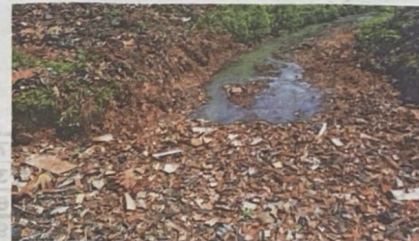
She says, "This experience inspired me to volunteer at the Kinawataka demonstration farm, where I began growing vegetables for sale, but with time, I realised the need to share this knowledge with others."

Kitchen gardens as a climate response

Known as the 'Ghetto farmer', Adong, currently the first runner Miss Climate Change Awareness for Northern



Adong (in green) notes that her motivation is rooted in the everyday realities of the Kinawataka community.



Uganda 2026/27, began training households and youth in 2020 on climate-smart agricultural practices tailored for urban settings with limited space.

Through this work, Adong emphasises kitchen gardening, a practical entry point into climate-smart agriculture, engaging community groups in initiatives that promote adaptation and resilience.

She trains residents on how to establish kitchen gardens in small spaces using locally available materials such as sacks, plastic bottles, jerrycans, old tyres, and even worn-out clothing, which are repurposed into containers for vertical and container gardening.

This approach enables households with limited land to engage in productive agriculture, transforming small, underutilised spaces into gardens that provide food, generate income, and strengthen resilience to climate change.

Adong notes that her motivation is rooted in the everyday realities of the community, where access to food and sustainable livelihoods remains a constant challenge.

"Seeing the challenges many households face in accessing nutritious food inspired me to act," Adong says.

Additionally, Kinawataka, like many urban informal settlements, faces a combination of socio-economic and environmental challenges. These include high population density,

unemployment, limited access to basic services, low-standard housing, and poor sanitation. These conditions are further compounded by the increasing impacts of climate change, which deepen the community's vulnerability.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperatures have risen by about 1.1°C due to human activities, increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as floods and droughts. These effects disproportionately affect low-income communities with limited capacity to adapt.

In Kinawataka, residents not only experience flooding during heavy rains, but also the prolonged dry spells often lead to water shortages and reduced food availability. Amid these challenges, Adong says kitchen gardening provides a practical and accessible way for households to adapt to changing climate conditions.

"Working with urban farming, specifically kitchen gardening, has improved community resilience and adaptation to climate change," she says.

Through this smart agricultural practice, households have been equipped with knowledge on the benefits of growing their own food, including sukuma wiki, amaranth (dodo), spinach, tomatoes, spring onions, fruits, and herbs such as rosemary.

Adong notes that this approach

rainwater for use during dry periods, enabling them to cope with water scarcity. This enables their garden to flourish year-round, an activity that can sustain food production even under changing climatic conditions.

In addition, Adong promotes the use of organic farming methods as part of sustainable agriculture. Whereas many farmers tend to buy chemical pesticides, households in Kinawataka are taught how to prepare natural alternatives using locally available materials such as ash, pawpaw leaves, and red pepper. These practices help reduce environmental pollution while promoting healthier food production.

Similarly, waste management is also integrated into the kitchen gardening model. Residents are encouraged to repurpose household and community waste into productive materials for gardening.

Plastic items, sacks and old tyres are reused as planting containers, helping reduce environmental waste while supporting urban agriculture.

Organic waste is further utilised in innovative ways, including composting and bio-conversion methods such as black soldier fly farming, which produces feed for poultry and other livestock while contributing to sustainable waste management.

CHALLENGES

Despite the progress made, several challenges still hinder the full adoption of kitchen gardening in Kinawataka. Many youth and women continue to lack access to skills, mentorship, and adequate information on climate change and sustainable agricultural practices.

Adong says, "Limited awareness remains a major barrier, affecting uptake of the initiative." She adds, "Also many people in the community are faced with financial constraints which make it difficult for some households to establish and sustain kitchen gardens."

To address these gaps, Adong combines community outreach with digital engagement. She uses her social media platforms, community caravans, and hands-on training sessions to sensitise residents on climate change and the importance of adopting adaptive, climate-smart practices.

Looking ahead, Adong has trained more than 500 youth and households in Kinawataka and within some parts of Northern Uganda, and many of the trainees have been able to establish their own kitchen gardens, contributing to improved food security and household resilience.

She however encourages young people to take initiative and explore sustainable livelihood opportunities rather than waiting for formal employment.

"Youth should network, stand up, and engage in activities such as agriculture, waste management, and other climate-smart enterprises," she advises.

Looking ahead, Adong plans to establish a demonstration farm hub in Northern Uganda to expand training in climate-smart agriculture and create more opportunities for youth employment, including ventures in animal rearing.

She urges government and stakeholders to invest in community-based demonstration farms and create enabling environments that encourage young people to participate in sustainable agriculture.

As climate change continues to reshape livelihoods across Uganda, initiatives like kitchen gardening in Kinawataka highlight how small-scale, community-driven solutions can make a meaningful difference. In this growing urban settlement, gardens are no longer just sources of food, but tools of adaptation, resilience, and hope.

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BULI LWAMUKAAGA SSAWA 4 EZOKUMAKYA

NE KEPHERS MAYUMBA

FOR INQUIRIES, CONTACT US ON
Email: customercare@ug.nationmedia.com
or call 0312 301 294

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