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ANNUAL REPORT 2025

MARU ACTION DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Building climate-resilient communities through local action, ecosystem restoration, indigenous knowledge and livelihoods in Kaseke, Uganda.

A DECADE OF GRASSROOTS CLIMATE LEADERSHIP IN KASEKE DISTRICT

Contents

Thirteen sections tracing a decade-rooted year of tree restoration, climate dialogue, livelihoods and community wellbeing across Kasese District.

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From left: tree nursery work, Seeds of Resilience planting, a community training session, basket weaving, a community gathering, and a water source — ten years and one year of the same work, side by side.

A Message From Our Founder



Dear Friends, Partners and Supporters,

Maru Foundation leadership during a 2025 field activity in Kasese.

For more than a decade, I have watched Kasese change season by season — rivers rising faster, farmers replanning their calendars, young people asking sharper questions about the land they will inherit. That decade of walking alongside these communities is the foundation everything in this report is built on.

2025 continued that work: standing with communities across Kasese District on the issues that shape everyday life here — climate change, flooding and landslides, environmental degradation, food and livelihood security, tree restoration, indigenous knowledge, education and community preparedness. We continued our Action 2 Million Trees work, implemented the Seeds of Resilience project with indigenous and vulnerable communities, kept creating space for honest climate dialogue through Climate Café Jazz, and closed out the final chapter of our Sentient Sanctuaries project.

“Climate action has to make sense to the people living with these realities. That belief has guided Maru Foundation from day one, and it guided everything we did this year.”

If one thing stood out for me in 2025, it is the depth of local knowledge already held in our communities. Farmers know when seasons are becoming unpredictable. Elders remember how rivers, forests and farming systems used to be. Our role is not to arrive and tell communities what they should know — it is to listen, organize, share information, and support practical action alongside them. We also learned, again, that planting trees is not only about numbers. It is about where a tree is planted, who looks after it, and whether a family sees enough value in it to protect it. The same is true for preparedness, livelihoods and community education — depth matters more than volume.

Maru Foundation continues to operate with limited resources, leaning heavily on volunteers, partnerships, and the commitment of the communities themselves. Volunteering does not replace the need for proper organizational resources, and as we grow we continue looking for ways to strengthen support, coordination and recognition for the people who carry this work forward. To everyone who continued to believe in it — thank you.

Fred Marule

Founder & Executive Director, Maru Action Development Foundation

About Maru Action Development Foundation

Maru Action Development Foundation (also known as Maru Foundation) is a grassroots-led nonprofit based in Kasese District, Western Uganda, working with local and most vulnerable communities on climate and environmental challenges, livelihoods, education, skills development and community wellbeing.

OUR VISION

Just and climate-resilient communities that proactively respond to their own needs.

OUR MISSION

To work with communities to develop practical local solutions for climate change, environmental protection, livelihoods, education and community wellbeing.

OUR CORE VALUES

✓ **Community Participation**

✓ **Inclusion**

✓ **Integrity**

✓ **Respect for Local Knowledge**

✓ **Environmental Stewardship**

✓ **Accountability**

✓ **Learning**

✓ **Collaboration**

Our approach, in one line: listen, work together, take action, learn and improve.

HOW WE WORK

We support local action alongside wider advocacy — preparedness and restoration before the next flood or failed season, not only response after.

ROOTED IN KASESE

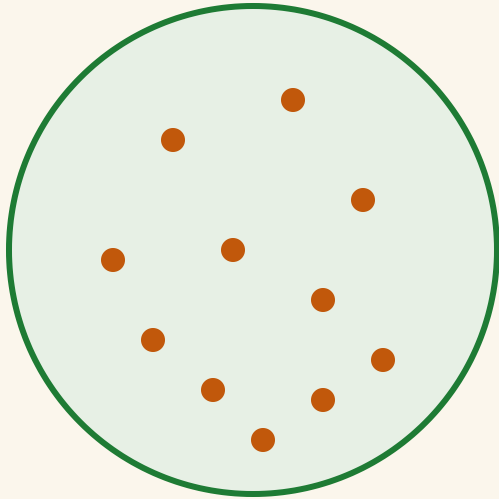
Grassroots-led, community-driven, and accountable to the people we work alongside.



A Maru Foundation community training session — the everyday setting where much of this work happens.

Where We Work: Our Operational Footprint

Maru Foundation's work is rooted in Kasese District, Western Uganda — home to over 850,000 people and one of the areas most exposed to flooding and landslides in the country. Since 2014, disasters here have taken over 50 lives and displaced thousands.



Illustrative map of Maru Foundation's 2025 project areas across Kasese District (not to scale).

2025 PROJECT AREAS

- Ihandiro Sub County
- Nyamwamba Division
- Karusandara
- Ibanda Kyanya
- Kirembe
- Nyakabingo 2
- Buhathiro
- Central Division
- Bulembia Division
- Mbunga
- Maliba
- Kyanjuki
- Ihango

Not every community listed received every program in 2025 — activities differed by location and project. Schools engaged included Mt. Rwenzori Secondary School and Kirembe Primary School.

850,000+

People in Kasese District

50+

Lives lost to disasters since 2014

WHY LOCATION SHAPES OUR WORK

In mountainous areas, heavy rainfall has quickly turned into serious disasters — the River Nyamwamba through the Kilembe Mines valley and other river systems have shown how fast water can affect communities. For many households here, climate change is not a discussion about the future: it already shapes food production, income, water, sanitation, housing and education.



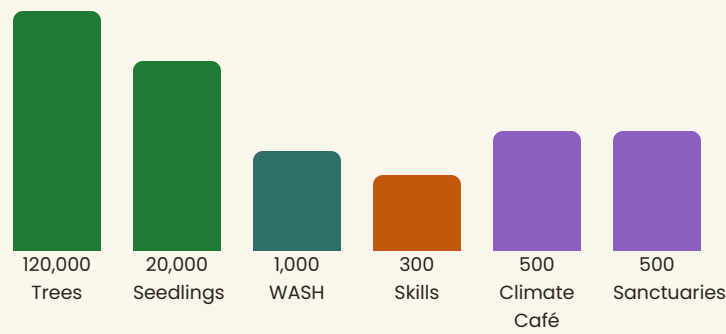
Pupils passing a reinforced river wall in a flood-prone stretch of Kasese — the kind of exposure that shapes where and how we work.

2025 At a Glance

A snapshot of what practical, community-led climate action looked like in Kasese District this year.



REACH BY PROGRAM AREA

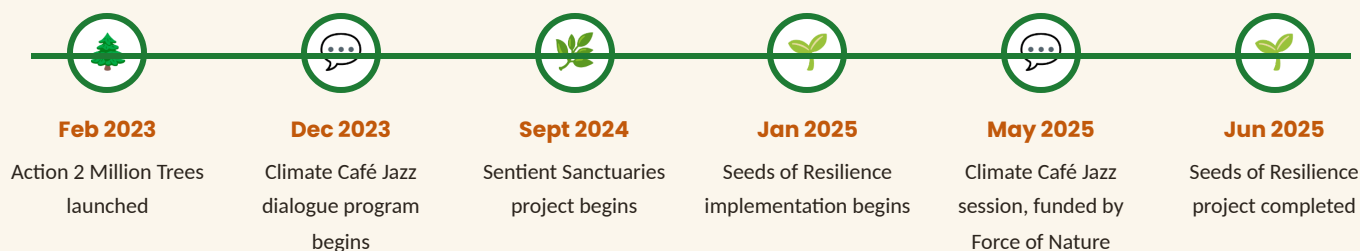


Log-scaled to compare programs spanning very different unit types (trees vs. participants).

These numbers represent five interlocking programs, not one. A tree nursery, a WASH training and a climate dialogue session serve different purposes — together they describe a community learning to prepare, adapt and provide for itself at the same time. All figures are cumulative programmatic totals as reported in the 2025 source draft; several reflect multi-year initiatives, not single-year output.

Our Journey: 2023–2025

Maru Foundation's flagship programs did not begin or end within a single year — they are built cumulatively, season on season. Each milestone below fed into the next: tree restoration created the entry point for climate dialogue, which in turn shaped how we designed Seeds of Resilience.



WHY WE BUILD THIS WAY

None of these five milestones stands alone. Each project was designed to carry forward what the last one taught us — from tree restoration, to dialogue, to livelihoods — so that 2025's work sits on a foundation laid across the previous two years, not a single project cycle.

MILESTONES IN THE FIELD



Left to right: Action 2 Million Trees planting, Seeds of Resilience agroforestry, and a Climate Café Jazz dialogue session.



Environmental Conservation

Environmental restoration remained Maru Foundation's strongest area of work in 2025. Through Action 2 Million Trees — launched February 2023 and still growing — our organizational figure now stands at over 120,000 indigenous and fruit trees planted and growing across communities including Kirembe and Buhathi. This is a cumulative figure, built from many smaller actions by farmers, schools and volunteers rather than a single-year result.

Tree planting has never been about seedling counts alone. The real question is whether trees survive, and whether communities see enough reason to protect them — which is why we promote indigenous and fruit species that restore land while meeting household needs.

120,000+

Indigenous & fruit trees planted and growing (cumulative)



Pupils with tree seedlings, a 2025 "Seeds of Resilience" schools activity.

PREPAREDNESS BEFORE THE FLOOD

Disaster preparedness runs alongside restoration: it is about what communities do before a flood or landslide, not only how they respond after. We have learned that people need information in forms they can easily use, and that local leaders, volunteers and community structures remain the most reliable way to reach households — protecting vegetation, improving land management, and preparing at-risk communities all have to be considered together.



Community disaster-preparedness engagement, 2025.

2023

Year Action 2 Million Trees was launched

Indigenous & fruit

Species prioritized, for land restoration and household benefit

Farmers, schools, volunteers

Who carry out planting and after-care on the ground

Climate Justice Agribusiness

Our flagship agribusiness intervention in 2025 was **Seeds of Resilience**: Empowering Indigenous Communities for Climate Action and Sustainable Livelihoods in Kasese, funded by Umverteilen Stiftung! – Climate Working Group. The project linked climate action directly to household livelihoods across Kirembe Ward and Ihango Parish.

Project: Seeds of Resilience
Funder: Umverteilen Stiftung!
Period: Jan–Jun 2025
Status: Completed

- **2 community-managed tree nurseries** with over 20,000 tree seeds raised.
- **Over 10,000 indigenous and fruit-tree seedlings** distributed and planted by local farmers.
- **Over 10 farmer groups** actively engaged in agroforestry and land management.
- **5 schools** engaged in climate resilience building and tree planting.



Farmers did not only need to hear that trees matter — they needed to see how trees fit within their own farms and household priorities. The project also supported communities to think about how farming practices can be adjusted in response to changing climate conditions, continuing a conversation that outlasts the project period itself.



Left: raising seedlings at a community nursery. Right: preparing land for agroforestry planting — a 2025 Seeds of Resilience field activity, Kasese Municipality.

AGROFORESTRY AS A BRIDGE

Agroforestry connects environmental protection directly to farming: as trees mature, farmers improve their land while also producing food, fruit, shade and, over time, other useful household products — turning conservation into something a family benefits from every season, not just in the long term.

2

Tree nurseries, community-managed

10,000+

Seedlings distributed & planted

10+

Farmer groups engaged

5

Schools in resilience building

Skills, Livelihoods & Youth Engagement

SKILLS & LIVELIHOODS

Climate action cannot be separated from livelihoods — a household struggling to meet basic needs will always struggle to prioritize environmental protection over food, school fees or income. Our skills programming reached over 300 women and young people cumulatively across tailoring, shoe making, basket weaving, baking and entrepreneurship, with Seeds of Resilience providing a direct link between agroforestry and household livelihood thinking.



Basket weaving & craft shop



Sandal & shoe making



Baking & food skills



Community skills day

300+

Women & young people reached cumulatively

YOUTH & EDUCATION

Schools and young people remain central entry points for this work — climate education cannot be left to adults alone. Our wider school and youth engagement now stands at over 20 schools, with 1,000+ children reached directly and 5,000+ indirectly through classroom and community activities that connect learning to local action.



Hannie Primary School, Nyamirangara, Kirembe.



Pupils planting and watering a tree seedling, 2025.

20+ / 1,000+ / 5,000+

Schools / children direct / children indirect

A household struggling to meet basic needs may find it difficult to prioritize environmental protection when the immediate concern is food, school fees or income — so we continue to design skills, agroforestry and school programs as one connected effort rather than three separate ones. This is why, in 2025, skills training, agroforestry and school engagement were planned together rather than as three unrelated activities.



WASH & Climate Dialogue

Water, sanitation and hygiene remain tightly linked to climate resilience in Kasese — flooding and landslides like the one pictured above regularly contaminate water sources, while dry spells create the opposite pressure. In 2025, our inclusive WASH training package reached Worth A Haven Primary School and the Mbunga-Nyakazinga community, engaging **over 1,000 participants**.

CLIMATE DIALOGUE

Climate Café Jazz, funded in 2025 by Force of Nature, creates space for farmers, elders and youth to talk about a changing climate from lived experience — 500+ participants across 20+ sessions since Dec 2023.

SENTIENT SANCTUARIES

Funded by Lush Charitable Giving LLC, this project closed its final phase in February 2025, having engaged over 500 community members in conversations on compassionate living.



WHY THIS SPRING MATTERS

Many households in our project areas still rely on unprotected streams and springs like this one for drinking, cooking and washing water — a direct source of the sanitation risks our WASH training addresses.

Worth A Haven Primary School

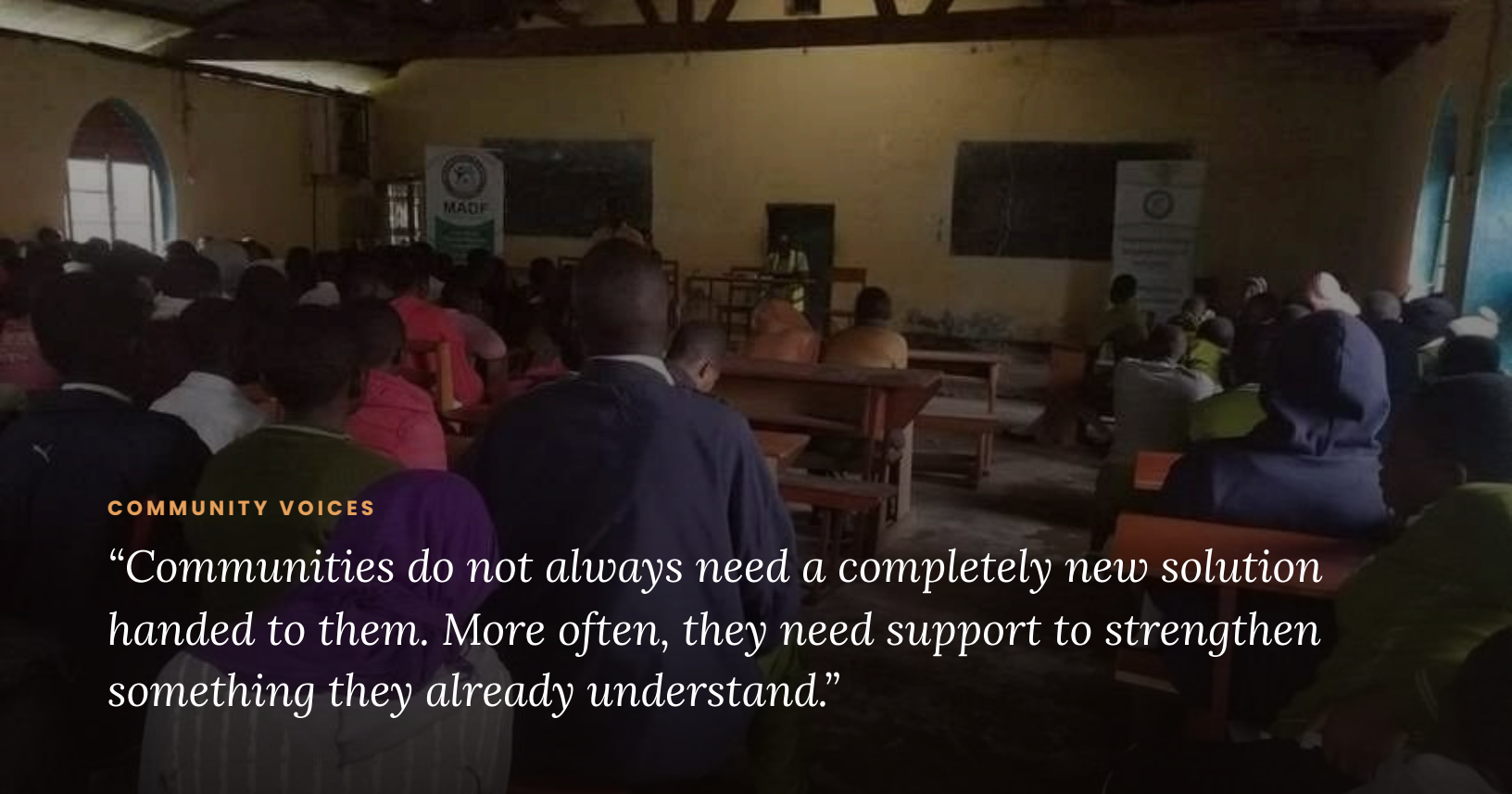
2025 WASH training location

Mbunga-Nyakazinga

Community reached through inclusive WASH training

CONNECTING THE DOTS

WASH, climate dialogue and Sentient Sanctuaries may look like separate programs, but each grew from the same conviction: that communities already understand their own realities, and that our role is to create the spaces, information and infrastructure that let people act on what they know.



COMMUNITY VOICES

“Communities do not always need a completely new solution handed to them. More often, they need support to strengthen something they already understand.”

The strongest part of Maru Foundation's work is what we hear directly from the communities we serve. Farmers speak often about changing rainfall and how difficult it has become to plan a planting season with confidence. Elders remember how rivers, forests and farming systems used to behave. Young people are asking sharper and more urgent questions about the environment they are inheriting.

Through climate dialogues, tree-planting activities, farmer engagement and school programs, we have continued building spaces where these voices are heard rather than spoken for — while carrying Kasese's experience into wider conversations, including Our Kids' Climate community calls and clean energy advocacy.

WHERE THESE VOICES ARE HEARD

**Climate Café Jazz
dialogues**

**Farmer & agroforestry
engagement**

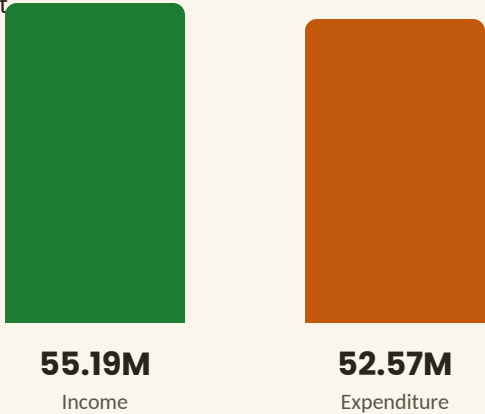
**School & youth
programs**

**Wider networks &
advocacy calls**

This is why Maru Foundation invests in dialogue spaces as much as physical projects — a tree nursery or a WASH point works best when it responds to what a community has already told us it needs.

Financial Summary & Resource Allocation

Maru Foundation remains committed to the responsible use of resources entrusted to us. Our FY 2024/25 financial figures recorded UGX 55,187,896 in income against UGX 52,565,838 in expenditure. FY 2025/26 has already surpassed this by over 10 percent.



FY 2024/25, in UGX. Figures as recorded in the source financial statement.

UGX 2,622,058

Net surplus retained, FY 2024/25

+10%

Income growth already recorded in FY 2025/26

As we grow, we continue to recognize the need for stronger unrestricted support to cover essential organizational costs that project funding does not always meet. A category-level breakdown (programs vs. administration vs. fundraising) will be added here once finalized by our finance team.

WHAT SUPPORTS OUR WORK

RESTRICTED, PROJECT FUNDING

Grants tied to specific programs — such as Seeds of Resilience and Climate Café Jazz — that fund defined activities over a fixed period.

UNRESTRICTED SUPPORT

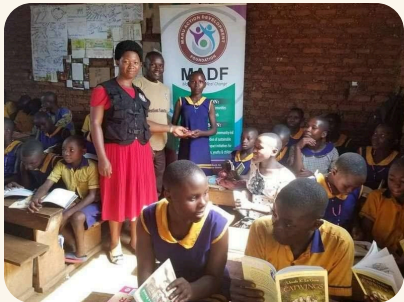
Flexible income that helps cover core organizational costs project funding does not, and lets us respond to community needs as they arise.

We are committed to sharing a fuller financial breakdown as our reporting systems continue to strengthen.

Looking Ahead & Adaptive Management

Moving forward, Maru Foundation will continue to focus on the issues that matter most to communities across Kasese District:

- 1 Climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness
- 2 Ecosystem restoration and agroforestry
- 3 Indigenous knowledge and climate dialogue
- 4 Youth and school engagement
- 5 Livelihoods and practical skills
- 6 Inclusive WASH and community wellbeing
- 7 Research and advocacy



A Maru Foundation team member with a pupil during a school-learner reading and educational support visit, 2025.



The next generation of Kasese's climate leaders, already at work in 2025.

Rather than simply increasing the number of activities, we want to sharpen the quality of what we already do – closer attention to tree survival, deeper climate dialogue spaces, and better understanding of what happens after a skills training ends.

CHALLENGES & HOW WE'RE ADAPTING

CHALLENGE	HOW WE'RE ADAPTING
Limited financial and operational resources	We rely heavily on volunteers, partnerships and flexible, unrestricted funding to design projects around community realities rather than funding cycles alone.
Some project areas are difficult to access, especially during heavy rains	We plan field visits around seasonal access patterns and prioritize community-based follow-up over centralized monitoring.
Tree survival, not just planting counts	We are shifting attention toward land management, ownership and after-care rather than seedling totals alone.

For Maru Foundation, the work is not only about projects – it is about building relationships with local communities and supporting people to act on the challenges that affect their daily lives. Our responsibility is to keep learning, keep working with communities, and keep looking for practical solutions.

Acknowledgments & Partners

None of this work would be possible without partnership. During 2025, we continued working with communities, schools, farmer groups, volunteers, local leaders, civil society organizations, climate networks and international partners, including:

✓ **Force of Nature**

✓ **Wild Wonder Foundation**

✓ **Our Kids' Climate**

✓ **YAGANET**

✓ **Kasese Municipal NGO/CSO Forum**

✓ **Adaptation Research Alliance**

✓ **Global Waste Cleaning Network**

✓ **Umverteilen Stiftung!**

✓ **Lush Charitable Giving**

✓ **Uganda Red Cross**

✓ **Inspire Girls Focus Foundation**

✓ **Movement for Community-led Development**

✓ **Plastic Pollution Coalition**

✓ **Greenpeace Africa**

OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

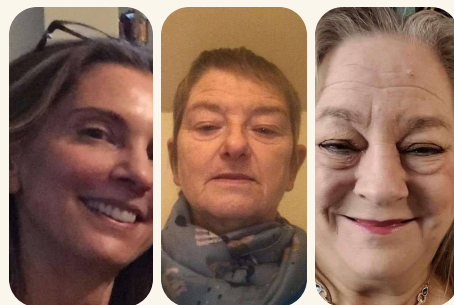
We recognize, acknowledge and appreciate our dedicated, passionate and generous Board of Trustees, who have stood and walked strategically with us through every stage of this work — including Marie Coz, Judith E. Callaghan, and Ex-Trustee Catherine, among others.



Some of Maru Foundation local based partners.



Some of our Maru Foundation staff and volunteers.



Some of our Maru Foundation Board of Trustees.

To our Board of Trustees, volunteers, staff, partners and community leaders — thank you for the guidance, mobilization, follow-up and trust that made every activity in this report possible. Your continued commitment is central to how a grassroots organization like ours stays connected to, and accountable to, the communities we serve.

Thank you for walking with us in 2025.



MARU ACTION DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Kasese, Uganda