

# Ripple Effect's position on the climate crisis

## United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13

"Communities adapting effectively to climate change and restoring eco-systems for current and future generations."



## Why we must take action

The climate crisis is the single most significant issue affecting people across rural Africa. It threatens not only their lives, but the world's ability to feed itself – now and in the future.

Sub-Saharan Africa has recorded steady economic growth since the new millennium.<sup>1</sup> But the climate crisis has the potential to reverse the continent's progress.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly 70% of the people in Africa rely on the land to feed their families and make a living.

The World Bank predicts that if global temperatures rise above 1.5°C (compared with pre-industrial times) 40-80% of land which can grow maize, millet, and sorghum will be lost.<sup>3</sup> (Global warming reached 1°C in 2017.)

Changing weather patterns have disrupted growing seasons, and have encouraged invasions of pests such as desert locusts, which have devastated crops in east Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Leah, Kenya



# How our work tackles the climate crisis

Our Agroecological Climate-Positive Approach (ACPA) works long-term to reverse some of the global harms of the climate crisis, by using sustainable farming practices which support nature.

It also delivers immediate protection against the impact of climate shocks.

Our programmes go beyond achieving net zero carbon emissions to create a positive environmental benefit, by removing significantly more carbon than is generated by our work.



## 1. Developing environmentally sustainable land stewardship

Our principles of regenerating land, protecting the natural environment and increasing biodiversity all support sustainable agricultural production.

We work with communities to map the resources they already have (such as land, water, trees, livestock and soil quality) and then develop a programme with them that minimises external inputs, and introduces the organic agricultural skills they need to establish sustainable, biodiverse farms and communal land.

More food can be produced on the same land using techniques such as:

- composting to improve soil quality
- water harvesting so that farmers are less dependent on regular rainfall
- controlling pests and weeds naturally with companion planting



## 2. Building resilience to climate shocks

Unpredictable rain seasons, which may be shorter with sudden intense rainfall, are forecast for most of eastern Africa.<sup>5</sup>

**Farming families are already reporting that crops have failed, and their land is producing less than expected.**

Our work on building climate resilience includes:

- planting trees and grasses, and digging gullies help to prevent soil erosion on hillsides
- training in drought-resistant crops and diversified planting
- developing new income streams to give financial security, such as setting up shops or delivery businesses



# The climate crisis is a social justice issue

Sub-Saharan Africa, where we work, is the region of the world that is most affected by the climate crisis. Those who have contributed the least to climate breakdown are suffering its effects most acutely.

By the second week in January, the average person in the UK will have created a greater carbon footprint than a single person in Ethiopia or Uganda will account for in a year. <sup>6</sup>

## Country Director for Uganda, Pamela Ebanyat:

Unreliable rainfall means that the most vulnerable rural families here in Uganda are now experiencing up to four months of hunger, eating just one meal a day. They are not the ones responsible for the environmental destruction created by destructive large-scale farming practices and urban industries around the world."

## Ripple Effect's CEO Paul Stuart:

"Organisations like ours – along with private corporations, and governments – must take action on climate now. Not just because it's in our best interests for working effectively, or for finding new markets, or avoiding international instability. But because it's the right thing to do."



### Dessie's story

Single mother Dessie lives in the highlands of Ethiopia, growing food to feed her young daughters. Erratic rainfall is making harvests unpredictable, and the nearest fresh water is an hour's round-trip away.

"Climate change is killing us," she says. "We used to grow whatever we planted. We produced lentil, pea or barley in winter; and oat, wheat, bean and potato in autumn. There was no extreme weather. Now the weather is making farmers hopeless."

## How do cows fit into environmentally sustainable projects?

One or two cows, or smaller farm animals, can transform the land care and productivity of a well-managed smallholding:

- milk and eggs are a vital source of protein for malnourished children

- improved livestock health and welfare means that each animal is more productive

- manure is not a waste product but is used as a valuable fertiliser

- the greenhouse gas emissions produced by one cow can be offset by just 0.5 hectares of trees planted for fodder around the field boundaries of an average-sized 1.5 ha smallholding





## Making sure the voices of African farmers are heard

Our advocacy takes the form of helping family farmers to find a collective voice.

Rediscovering local skills and training in new techniques builds confidence. The farmers we work with develop the ability and social standing to protect their natural environment and push for change.

Eighty percent of our staff come from the countries where we work: they are an authoritative voice on locally appropriate solutions to the climate crisis.

Within the UK and internationally, we also work with other NGOs and funding bodies to share our best practice across the development sector and beyond.

## Putting our own house in order

**We aim to regularly review, consult, and improve how we work.**

Our carbon footprint for the year 2017-2018, as audited by Climate Stewards, was 316 tonnes of greenhouse gases for travel, office and staff activities of all our Africa and UK operations (not including the activities of farmers).

We have measured the carbon sequestration we can expect from the trees planted in a sample of our projects across east Africa. Our tree-growing activities in 2021 alone are predicted to capture 58,500 tonnes of carbon over the following 10 years.

- 50.5% of our carbon footprint was accounted for by airline flights. Post-pandemic we will continue to use video conferencing whenever possible, and our operations will be managed through a regional hub in east Africa to reduce our air miles.

- We are reducing our office space, and working from home more frequently to further reduce our emissions.

- Since this audit, switching to a renewable UK energy supplier has reduced our impact by a further 11.9 tonnes annually.

- We will actively pursue new partnerships with organisations that are aligned to our values, to ensure that our partnerships have a positive environmental impact.



Read our other position statements:

Livestock

Agriculture

Ripple Effect is the trading name of Send a Cow. It is a charity registered in England and Wales (299717) and Scotland (SC049792) which is a company limited by guarantee (02290024).

1. [Understanding Africa's Food Security Challenges | IntechOpen](#)
2. [Brookings Report Reflects on Africa's SDG Progress](#)
3. [What Climate Change Means for Africa, Asia and the Coastal Poor \(worldbank.org\)](#)
4. [Desert Locust 're-invasion' threatens millions across Horn of Africa | UN](#)
5. [CO2 Emissions | Global Carbon Atlas](#)
6. [ipcc.ch](#)