

## Collective Action for a Water Secure World (C4W)

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# Changing Lives in East Africa: Scaling innovations to build community resilience

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### *Concept note*

## The water security crisis in East Africa

**The climate crisis is severely undermining East Africa's water security**, with more variable, less reliable rainfall causing frequent droughts and periodic floods. This is putting intense pressure on the 240 million people in the region who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. **Forty million people across East Africa lack food security**, and **in 2022, drought and water insecurity displaced 13 million**. Numbers like these are expected to rise as the impacts of the climate crisis on rainfed agriculture increase.

Water security is about more than ensuring there is enough water for all. Being water secure means that people will have increased opportunities for: health and wellbeing; food production; access to education and healthcare; access to domestic water and sanitation; employment; shelter; and increased resilience to climate change and other water-related shocks. Without water security, none of the Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved.

East Africa's population is expected to double by 2050, with a similarly rapid growth in its demand for water. Accordingly, **national development plans put a high priority on new irrigation to safeguard future food security**. National policies aim to expand irrigation in Uganda from 77,000 hectares to 1.5 million; increase small-scale irrigation in Ethiopia by 325,000 hectares by 2030; and accelerate irrigation expansion in Kenya from 10,000 hectares a year to 42,000 hectares.

## Farmer-led irrigation development

**Farmer-led irrigation development (FLID)** is proven to significantly improve the water security of farmers and their families, with longer-term benefits to the wider community. In contrast to top-down, capital-intensive development of large-scale irrigation, **FLID lets farmers develop and invest in their own small-scale irrigation systems** based on their own needs, market potential and investment capacity. **FLID is recognized as a solution for building farmers' resilience** because it increases productivity, incomes and access to food, which in turn improves nutrition, dietary

diversity for women, and weight and height scores for children. FLID also enables water access for multiple uses, including drinking water and livestock, thereby helping households and pastoralists combat climate variability and improve resilience.

However, despite both urgency and high demand, FLID design and implementation is being held back by several barriers:

- **Uncoordinated action**, with fragmented program and project design and disjointed policies across sectors.
- **Lack of access to data and knowledge**, which prevents improved targeting of FLID and leads to fears of unsustainable irrigation.
- **Lack of awareness of technology availability and suitability**, which hampers technology adoption by smallholder farmers.
- **Financial access barriers**, including ineffective enabling environments and limited public financing.
- **A failure to involve women and young people**, which creates unequal access – not only to water resources but also to technologies, financing and economic opportunities.

## Changing Lives in East Africa: A transformative approach to scaling up FLID

C4W was established in close partnership with the [International Water Management Institute](#) (IWMI) to promote the collective action needed to address the water security crisis.

The mission to build farmers' resilience to climate change and water risks using FLID arose from the [Transformative Futures for Water Security \(TFWS\) initiative](#), a year-long South-South dialogue which engaged over 1,000 people from 400 organizations in and beyond the water sector. We are also guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly for ending poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), gender equality (SDG 5) and sustainable water and sanitation (SDG 6).

This first program, Changing Lives in East Africa (CLEA), to be funded by C4W will be implemented through collective action by a range of actors. It will be led by IWMI and include partners at the national and community levels. **It will be demand led and locally led.** Between 2024 and 2028, CLEA aims to **improve water security for 500,000 vulnerable small-scale farmers and pastoralists on the front lines of the climate crisis in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.** Through multi-stakeholder partnerships, the program will leverage existing innovations and catalyze new ones to **unleash the full development potential of FLID.** This will strengthen climate and ecological resilience and build a water-secure and food-secure future for rural communities.

To achieve this, the program will use **advanced data analytics and digital innovation to target water innovations and monitor impacts.** This will overcome barriers to financing by reducing investment risks for farmers and the public and private sectors, while strengthening the financing ecosystem for irrigation and climate-smart agriculture, to **leverage \$100 million in public- and private-sector finance.**

With **gender equity, youth and social inclusion at the core of the program**, CLEA will ensure that water innovations are accessed, owned and used equally by women, men and young people.

Through partnerships, CLEA will build the diverse base of knowledge and skills and the changes in governance needed to **make people more water secure**.

## Collective action approach

The program will bring together governments, the private sector, farming communities, national development banks, local commercial banks, youth groups, entrepreneurs and research and innovation organizations to build the resilience of smallholder farmers in East Africa through FLID – without compromising water security for communities or pastoralists. Our collective action will provide much-needed **coordinated program and project design and implementation through multi-stakeholder engagement** to overcome the status quo of piecemeal investments and fragmented project implementation.

## CLEA partners

**The program will be led by IWMI.** IWMI, a founding partner of C4W, has a 40-year track record in testing and scaling water innovations, including for small-scale irrigation of high-value crops, landscape interventions and collective action business models for scaling FLID. Evidence from this work has driven policy change on irrigation in Tanzania, India’s West Bengal and Ethiopia, and made FLID more accessible for smallholder farmers across East Africa.

As an international research-for-development organization present in 15 countries and a global network of scientists and development professionals operating in over 50 countries, **IWMI will lead the delivery of CLEA through collective action partnerships** to scale innovations. Regional and international partners will include organizations such as:

International and national development organizations	Monetary financial institutions/International financial institutions	Governments and national research partners	Private sector
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Mercy Corps, Digital Earth Africa, Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Clasp	World Bank, International Finance Corporation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, African Development Bank	Ministries of agriculture (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda), Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands (Ethiopia), Ministry of Water and Energy (Ethiopia), National Irrigation Authority (Kenya), Kenya Water Institute, Ethiopian International Agricultural Research, Agricultural Transformation Institute (Ethiopia)	Ethiopia: Meki-Batu Farmers Union (53 farmer cooperatives); Lersha (innovative digital solutions, crop insurance for 150,000 smallholder and commercial farmers) Kenya: iProcure Uganda: Agriworks; National Alliance of Agricultural Cooperatives Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda: SunCulture, Futurepump, Lorentz

## Objectives

### 1. Co-develop and scale water innovations to enhance farmers' resilience.

CLEA will build on IWMI’s FLID portfolio to **develop socio-technical innovations for irrigation**. It will apply IWMI’s adaptive scaling and partnership model to scale tested water innovations, develop

a water investment pipeline, strengthen supply chains, incentivize the private sector, lower investment risks, build a stronger enabling environment for water innovations, and help more people, particularly women and young people, access and adopt farmer-led water innovations.

## *2. Financing collective action for farmer resilience*

Through collective action, CLEA will further develop and apply IWMI's demonstrated approach to **strengthening the financing ecosystem for irrigation and climate-smart agriculture**. The program will leverage public- and private-sector finance to lower financial barriers that prevent the rapid implementation of water innovations. The program will also co-develop a hub for blended finance to stimulate private-sector investment. We aim to leverage \$100 million in finance to scale water innovations.

## *3. Water data for better targeting and monitoring of FLID*

CLEA will build on IWMI's [Digital Innovation for a Water Secure Africa Initiative](#) (DIWASA) to **create a dynamic information system to choose the most appropriate and effective water innovations, monitor their impacts and stimulate adaptive and agile water governance**. This will enhance water governance, planning and investments for sustainable and equitable FLID.

## *4. Water governance and knowledge for collective action on water security*

Strengthening governance and capacities in water planning, investment and monitoring is essential for enhancing water security. CLEA will build on IWMI's innovative internship and innovation grant model to leverage multi-stakeholder platforms, use challenge funds and **build capacities while strengthening collective action partnerships** and addressing business needs across water, irrigation development and the agricultural sector.

## Funding needs

CLEA requires **initial seed funding of \$600,000 in 2024**, building to an annual budget of \$3 million per country and an additional \$1 million allocated for regional efforts. The program's **budget is \$21 million for the period 2024–2028**. Additionally, the program aims to leverage \$100 million in public- and private-sector financing to scale water innovations.

Collective action through the program will help transform water security for small-scale farmers in East Africa. CLEA will bring together diverse perspectives and expertise to collaborate, contribute and invest in partnerships for scaling FLID and accelerating water security for rural communities.

**Together, we will help build a water-secure future for farmers and their families in East Africa.**

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## **Factsheet**

### **Ambition**

Changing Lives in East Africa (CLEA) aims to **improve water security for 500,000 vulnerable small-scale farmers** on the front lines of the climate crisis in East Africa. We will do this by leveraging existing innovations in farmer-led irrigation development (FLID) and catalyzing new ones between 2024 and 2028.

### **Location**

Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

### **Objectives**

1. **Co-develop socio-technical innovations for irrigation** to enhance access to and uptake of water solutions to meet agricultural, domestic and ecosystem needs.
2. **Improve water data** to enhance water governance, planning and investments for sustainable and equitable FLID.
3. **Strengthen the finance ecosystem** to incentivize and catalyze far-reaching water innovations in irrigation and water storage. The program aims to leverage \$100 million in finance to scale water innovations.
4. **Enhance environmental, social and corporate water governance** with knowledge and inclusive partnerships to operationalize collective action on FLID across sectors.

### **Partners**

The program is led and implemented by C4W's founding partner, IWMI, and brings together governments, the private sector, farming communities, banks, youth groups, entrepreneurs and research institutions for collective action.

### **Funding**

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