Floods triggered by climate change pose a constant threat to millions of people in sub-Saharan African cities. In cities like Dire Dawa (Ethiopia), Kigali (Rwanda), and Johannesburg (South Africa), rising floodwaters endanger lives, livelihoods, and property.

A recent tragedy in Rwanda underscores the urgency of addressing this challenge. Torrential downpours in April resulted in deadly floods and landslides, claiming over 130 lives according to the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA).

One promising initiative is bringing hope to this growing vulnerability: Scaling Urban Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Adaptation in Sub-Saharan Africa (SUNCASA). In African cities, this groundbreaking initiative harnesses nature's power to combat climate challenges.

SUNCASA implements a multifaceted approach aimed at reducing flood risks, increasing access to green spaces, promoting gender equality, and supporting biodiversity, all benefiting over two million people.

"Africa's cities are experiencing rapid urbanization, but many residents in informal settlements lack adequate protection from climate risks like floods and extreme heat," said Ani Dasgupta, President and CEO of the World Resources Institute.

"SUNCASA offers a unique solution by utilizing nature-based solutions like trees and restoring ecosystems. These solutions not only reduce flood risks but also improve air quality and public health." Ani adds.

The project emphasizes collaboration. By working with key stakeholders in each city, SUNCASA identifies critical challenges and develops targeted solutions, ensuring maximum impact for vulnerable communities.

"Canada is proud to support SUNCASA," stated the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Canadian Minister of International Development. "This project aligns perfectly with our commitment to empowering communities to adapt to climate change and build a more sustainable future."

SUNCASA has also received strong support from local leaders.

"The City of Kigali welcomes the recent commitment… to support the city's green aspirations…" said Lord Mayor Samuel Dusengiyumva. "We look forward to advancing this work… strengthening communities against climate impacts."

“We welcome this investment that puts women and youth at the forefront of climate adaptation measures,” said H.E. Kedir Juhar, Mayor of Dire Dawa. In addition to Dire Dawa, surrounding cities will also benefit from this project.”

As a result of protecting and restoring ecosystems, we can reduce flood risk… and improve water quality,” said Johannesburg Mayor Kabelo Gwamanda.

SUNCASA is being led by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the World Resources Institute (WRI). Both organizations have extensive experience in environmental solutions and sustainable development.

“Natural-based solutions hold immense potential to address climate Challenges,” said Patricia Fuller, CEO and President of IISD.

“SUNCASA is a crucial step forward in demonstrating the effectiveness of these solutions. We are excited to collaborate with WRI and local partners to implement SUNCASA and create a lasting positive impact for communities across sub-Saharan Africa.”