



Community rehabilitation of wetlands in Lake Victoria -Uganda

Project No: UGA/06/71,

UGA/SGP/OP4/Y2/RAF/09/05,

UGA/SGP/OP5/CORE/IW/12/04

Grantee: Environmental Women in Action for Development (EWAD) formerly EWA

Location: Kigungu, Entebbe Municipality

SGP Contribution: US\$ 108,150

Cash Co-Financing: US\$ 37,697

In-Kind Co-Financing: US\$ 27,980

Project Duration: 6 years (3 phases/2 years each)

Focal area: International Waters

Background

Like in many other fishing communities in Uganda, human activities in Entebbe sub-district have continued to put pressure on environmental resources and caused pollution in Lake Victoria. The people of Kigungu depend largely on fishing and sand mining as their major economic activities. While sand mining is invading lake fringing wetlands, which serve as important fish breeding sites, the continued use of rudimentary methods for smoking fish consumes a high amount of fuel wood and leads to tree cutting to meet high fuel demands. To compound the problem further there was poor waste management around the landing sites.

In an effort to address the escalating pollution of Lake Victoria, in 2006 the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) supported a project implemented by

Environmental Women in Action for Development (EWAD) aimed at improving the ecosystems of Lake Victoria by restoring degraded sand mining areas, promoting the use of energy efficient fish smoking kilns, and introducing environmentally friendly Eco-san toilets facilities.

Project Objectives and Key Activities

The goal of the project was to positively influence the behavior of the Kigungu fishing communities by encouraging their participation in conservation activities that would help secure the ecological integrity and sustainability of Lake Victoria, and its biological diversity while at the same time improving the livelihoods of the local inhabitants. With the support of GEF SGP, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), EWAD spearheaded the implementation of the project in Kigungu, Entebbe Sub-district.



As part of the project, EWAD worked with men, women and youth groups in Kigungu to undertake sand pits embankment, conserve and protect the wetlands, plant trees, manage solid waste properly, promote the use of efficient fish smoking kilns and promote the use of ecological-sanitation technology.

Environmental Impact

Wetlands that fringe the shores of Lake Victoria and its river systems are among the most productive ecosystems in the Basin. They include a variety of swamps, marshes and seasonally inundated habitats, which are a home to various plants (e.g. sedges, *Cyperus* spp, date palm and grasses) and animals (e.g. hippopotamus, sitatunga, crocodiles and snakes). The greatest concentration of wetlands is in Uganda, which



has the highest diversity of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants. Sand mining has directly caused wetlands loss and destruction. To reduce the negative impact of sand mining, a demonstration site was established to convert sand mines to habitats.



As a result of SGP project activities, over 35 acres of land (formerly sand mines) were leveled and backfilled in the reclamation process for habitat restoration and over 300,000 trees were planted in the restored area and other buffer zones of Lake Victoria within Entebbe sub-district. Given that sand mining is a direct cause of soil erosion through the disturbance of vegetation along the lakeshores; the restoration of vegetation cover on sand mines goes a long way in reducing the harmful effects of silt and sediments on the water body. The reclamation of the sand mines provided a new habitat for

various plant and animal species and it is anticipated that over 300,000 tons of carbon will be absorbed by the 300,000 trees planted -over their lifetime.

Two waste banks were constructed to minimize the impact of waste and more than 240 people have gained skills in solid waste sorting, management and disposal. Through practical training in waste management a Municipality-wide Community Implementation Committee composed of 21 persons was formed and embarked on hygiene improvement activities and waste management campaigns throughout Entebbe Municipality. It is foreseen that better waste management would cause basin-wide change by reducing nutrients release into Lake Victoria and improving water quality in the lake for human and ecosystem health.

In addition, two large tree nursery beds were established and continue to supply tree seedlings to those who need them. Five thousand trees were also planted in schools and at the household level in Kigungu and other non-project areas within Entebbe Municipality. EWAD donated about 10,000 tree seedlings to Busia District, Jinja Municipality, Kampala City Council, Mukono District, and Soroti District.



It is expected that this demonstration site will provide good examples of lake shore management in Lake Victoria.

Socio-Economic Impact



Two modern fish smoking kilns were constructed and are being used by over 50 households, thus helping an average of six people per household. Efficient fish smoking kilns increase income in several ways: they smoke more fish on less firewood and, as they are enclosed, prevent theft and damage caused by rain. Knowing that their fish are safe while being smoked allows the owners to pursue other productive activities. As more fish are being smoked, the beneficiaries have increased local sales and some are even exporting fish to places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

One hundred households benefiting about 1,080 people were supported with income generating activities like piggery, poultry and goat rearing, and food security and nutrition strategies were applied to improve their living conditions and to reduce child labor occurrences.



Two Ecological Sanitation (Eco-San) toilets were constructed and 330 community members were given practical training in the use and maintenance of Eco-San technology. Awareness raising of the Eco-San technology has improved the hygiene of the communities and water-borne diseases incidences have been reduced.



Gender Mainstreaming

Establishing equal roles for men and women has been a top priority in the implementation of the project and each of the integrated Community Environmental Conservation Projects of EWAD. Gender mainstreaming practices have ensured that men and women share leadership positions, and are given equal rights and responsibilities. In Kigungu, the Project Implementation Committee consists of 10 women and 11 men. Projects and responsibilities are distributed equally between men and women, enabling women to become powerful role models for younger generations.

Policy Impact



LE TEMPS DES SOLUTIONS

The project has gained considerable national and international recognition, and provided valuable experiences to transboundary water governance. In February 2010, EWAD was entrusted to host/organize the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) conference which brought together experts from the international and national communities on the theme “Building and managing sustainable trans-boundary Water institutions in Africa”, which took place at Lake Victoria Hotel, Entebbe, 14 to 18 February 2010. While specific policy impact is yet to be determined, the project experiences were presented and shared with experts from around the world. The GEF Secretariat International Waters Senior Advisor cited this case as a good example of Lake Basin management in the World Water Forum held in Marseille in March 2012.

Replication and up scaling

The project has been highly successful in sharing knowledge and lessons learnt for policy influence. Direct replication of project activities have been fostered in other areas through the project’s campaign and influence.

Lessons learned

Communication and long-term relationships with the communities and local governments is essential for the successful delivery of projects as it is very difficult to secure the multi-year funding necessary for efficient implementation of long-term sustainable projects. In order to make future projects of this nature successful, it will be necessary to ensure long-term funds by demonstrating EWAD’s impressive track-record for completing timely and efficient projects.