

Enhancing Climate Resilience in Burundi-Rwanda Transboundary Catchment

Attributable Impact

- Increased climate resilience in the community of 30.000 people
- Biogas-generated energy has improved living conditions for families, due to its low cost compared to charcoal, which is largely used in the region
- This provides a clean source of energy and thereby contributes to improved health conditions

Summary

GWP has been involved in IWRM planning in Burundi since 2009. In 2010, the national water policy was updated to include IWRM. The Africa Water Facility review mission to Burundi concluded that the IWRM planning process has achieved its purpose and has recommended financial support to implement the plan.

In 2011, within the framework of the Water, Climate and Development Programme (WACDEP), GWP East Africa Regional Water Partnership launched a pilot demonstration project aimed at enhancing community resilience to climate change in the Lake Cyohoha transboundary catchment in the Bugesera region.

Background

The Lake Cyohoha transboundary catchment is located in the Bugesera region, straddling Burundi and Rwanda. It falls within the Kagera sub-basin of the Lake Victoria basin. Agriculture, mostly rain-fed, is the most important livelihood for 90% of the population in the catchment.

Access to basic needs such as clean water, sanitation, energy, health services and education are severely limited, with disproportionate impact on women and children who are largely responsible for water and firewood collection. Food insecurity is also a threat due to small farming plots, poor agricultural practices, and land degradation and population growth. In addition, the legacy of civil wars and associated instability in the region has led to large scale migration and unplanned settlement within the catchment. Consequently, the lake and its wetland systems, that provide local communities with various socio-economic and environmental services, are threatened as deforestation and unsustainable farming and grazing practices cause soil erosion and encroachment of the lake shores leads to water pollution. Climate change also poses a growing threat to the region as droughts and floods have become more common, exacerbating many of the issues faced.

GWP contribution

During the project design phase, the limited community capacities, including their weak institutions, were identified as a major constraint to improved catchment management and greater resilience to

the impacts of climate change. According to GWP's theory of change, adequate awareness raising and capacity building adjoined with working in partnerships with different institutions can bring a systemic change and sustainable governance in water management.

Stakeholder ownership was largely achieved through a combination of close interaction with the local population at all stages of project implementation and institutional buy-in from both the local authorities and national ministries; a set-up made possible due to GWP's neutral platform for engaging stakeholders.

GWP has been in constant engagement with many partners such as local government, private sector, youth and women groups in Bugesera. WACDEP activities in Bugesera are also considered as part of District development plans. Burundi and Rwanda already identified gaps on the existing mechanisms, and also identified additional tools for integrating issues of water security and climate resilience into sectoral planning processes. There has been huge political and institutional support in Rwanda from the ministries and NGOs.

Some specific activities:

- Detailed situational analysis – Hydro-climatic and socio-economic assessment of the Lake Cyohoha catchment as well as identification of challenges faced within the region.
- Demonstrated use of biogas facilities – 11 initial biogas digesters using domestic waste and wastewater were installed in the Kamabuye sector in Rwanda which has led to increased uptake of the technology within the local villages and fewer trees being cut down.
- Improvement of water supply infrastructure – Including construction of a 2,500 meter water pipeline that provides 3,000 people with access to water
- Planting of trees around the shores of Lake Cyohoha – Community mobilisation resulting in the planting of drought-resistant trees (10,000 in Kirundo Province, Burundi, and 36,000 in Eastern Province, Rwanda) to reverse ecosystem degradation within the lake and along its shoreline and reduce vulnerability to climate change
- Involvement of women and youth – Women and youth were both formally represented in the established community catchment management structure in recognition of the disproportionate impact that the current situation and proposed solutions has on their lives.
- Enforcement of national environmental laws – Local community dialogues and consultations and administrative buy-in on the importance of respecting local water resource regulations, such as farming restrictions within the 50m buffer zone around the lake.
- Media training and sensitization activities – Field visits and media training sessions were carried out for more than 45 journalists in Burundi and Rwanda who vowed to report more frequently on water security and climate change issues in the region.

Results

The project has improved living conditions and reduced vulnerability to climate change among many of the 30,000 catchment inhabitants. Tangible interventions considered to be no/low regret solutions such as biogas facilities, water supply infrastructure and reforestation programs have directly benefited communities and demonstrated alternative, multi-beneficial solutions. In addition, the

large scale development of local institutional and community capacity on more sustainable catchment management practices and climate change adaptation, as well as the formal endorsement of the project itself, has succeeded in generating wider interest among communities and local governments in the region, thereby promoting the enforcement of regulations and encouraging replication of demonstrated solutions.

In Rwanda WACDEP interventions are considered as integral parts of the Bugesera District Development Plan and in both countries the project has been implemented within existing national frameworks for climate change adaptation and water resources management. The project is also in line with the priorities identified within the National Adaptation Programmes of Actions (NAPAs) of Rwanda and Burundi, both of which prioritised the Bugesera region. This strengthens the sustainability of the project results and institutional structures upon which they are dependent.

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