

# Actions required at all levels

It is widely appreciated that climate change is a cross-cutting issue that requires working together to minimise the risks it presents. This requires harmonisation and coordination of the various efforts by different actors already underway. The East African Community (EAC) presents an opportunity for understanding how important it is to collaborate when managing trans-boundary ecosystems. In addition to collaboration, the following actions require observance:

1. **Strengthening implementation, compliance and enforcement of regional and national policies for environment and natural resources management** - The EAC, the government of Kenya and that of Uganda have put in place requisite policies and legal frameworks but the level of implementation and compliance with these instruments is still very low, especially at the regional level.
2. **Main streaming climate change adaptation in sector strategies and programs down to grass root level.** This is particularly weak at sub-national level that have trans-boundary resources due to inadequate capacity and funding.
3. **Developing mechanisms for multi-stakeholder involvement and collaboration** - to address challenges such as uncoordinated policy, legal and institutional regimes; administrative and governance issues, inadequate financial and technical implementation capacities; conflicting socio-economic interests; emerging environmental threats, and lack of awareness.
4. **Creating partnerships and networks among the public, private sector and civil society** - National and sub-national/catchment level partnerships can provide a platform and facilitate dialogues on trans-boundary issues related to water resources management, climate change adaptation, disaster management or general environmental management issues. Partnerships of this nature need to be strengthened.
5. **Integrating climate change adaptation into development programmes.** Climate change adaptation actions should not be implemented for its own sake but rather integrated into development programs for sustainability.
6. The East African Community (EAC) provides an excellent opportunity to **strengthen cooperation among countries for trans-boundary ecosystem management** and climate change adaptation through its protocols, policies and strategies on environment and natural resources management.
7. **Enhance resource mobilisation efforts to address climate change issues** - The focus should be on a mix of domestic and international climate finances as well as private sector financing. There should be climate change adaptation investment strategies across the board. The establishment of Climate Change Fund (in Kenya and East Africa Region) should be embraced as an approach for addressing climate change catastrophes that are trans-boundary in nature.



*Landslides in Mt. Elgon area have destroyed people's homes, destroyed property, claimed lives and the communities are now vulnerable and susceptible. These can be avoided through collaborative planning and financing.*

## What sectors can do

All sectors need to adopt and recognize the value and significance of healthy intact ecosystems. Sectors such as forestry, wetlands, tourism, agriculture, energy, infrastructure development (among others) need to:

- Apply an ecosystem based approach to business planning and delivery, employing robust social and environmental safeguards in particular to ensure that trans-boundary ecosystem resilience is strengthened rather than weakened;
- Adopt an ecosystem based approach to adaptation when undertaking cost-benefit analysis and assessments of alternatives regarding projects and technologies;
- Work together and consult with other sectors in assessing risks posed by climate change and finding adaptation solutions;
- Pilot and demonstrate trans-boundary ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation, and their cost effectiveness;
- Involve community based organisations in choosing socially appropriate engineering and technological adaptation measures where necessary;
- Offer capacity building and training for ecosystem-based adaptation, targeted at policy makers and practitioners at different levels.

## Specific recommendations for key sectors

Sector specific recommendations include:

- **Financing:** Leverage resources and appropriate funding mechanisms for ecosystem based approaches especially those that are trans-boundary in nature;
- **Agriculture:** Focus on systems that promote health of soil, water and agricultural ecosystems;
- **Water:** Employ integrated water resource management approach and protect ecosystems that naturally capture, filter, store and release water;
- **Transport:** New transport networks should not affect the ability of local people to deal with climate change, for example by undermining ecosystem services;
- **Energy:** Mitigation responses and energy supply do not undermine ecosystem services or habitat loss;
- **Forestry:** Promote forest landscape restoration which is a long term process of regaining ecological functionality and enhancing human well-being across deforested and degraded landscapes.
- **Ecotourism:** seek to popularize the diversity of life, meet interests of the tourist without undue stress to the ecosystems.



# Strategy and Guidelines for Integrating Climate Change Adaptation Approaches in Trans-boundary Ecosystem Management in East Africa

January, 2015



*This brief is one of the policy influencing materials produced by the project – Implementing a resilience framework to support climate change adaptation in the Mt Elgon region of Lake Victoria Basin in Kenya and Uganda*

The study analyzed regional and national policies and strategies in environment and natural resources management and identified opportunities, challenges and actions required to integrate climate change adaptation approaches into trans-boundary ecosystem management in East Africa.

This publication is produced with the funding support from the American People through USAID

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Lake Victoria is a major source of water in the region for domestic, industrial, fisheries and recreation. East African countries need to guard it jealously.

## What are the opportunities

There are a number of opportunities for integrating climate change adaptation approaches in regional and national environment and natural resources management and development programs:

### At national level:

- Member states have climate change policies (and some have started processes for enacting climate change laws). Already National Environmental Management Acts that have established National Environmental Management Authorities (NEMAs) in Kenya and Uganda guide coordination and regulation of environmental activities including approval of environmental impact assessments;
- There are institutional frameworks that could be used as entry points for collaborative actions.

### At regional level:

**Policy and strategic instruments** - The EAC Treaty provides a favourable policy framework for integrating climate change approaches in environment and natural resources management including trans-boundary ecosystem management.

**Legal and Institutional Frameworks** - The EAC has made significant milestones in legislation through the EAC Trans-boundary Ecosystem Management Bill (2011) that is awaiting enactment.

**Programmes and Projects** - Within the EAC region there are a number of trans-boundary ecosystems management programmes and projects. An example of these is the Mt Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Programme (MERECP) under the EAC framework that provides an opportunity for harmonized policy and practical approaches in the management of the Mt. Elgon Forest Ecosystem including climate change adaptation and mitigation. Regional climate change projects such as the Programme on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in COMESA-EAC-SADC Region and the Planning for Resilience in East Africa through Policy, Adaptation, Research and Economic Development also provide good entry points for mainstreaming climate change in trans-boundary ecosystem management.

**Political will and interest in issues of climate change** - Formulation and enactment of various policy and strategy documents related to climate change and specifically the approval of EAC Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Master Plan by the heads of states of EAC countries is a very good indication of good political will to address climate change at the EAC level.

## The challenges

Addressing climate change in the region faces social, economic, environmental and political challenges. It is even more complicated when such climate change concerns stride over a resource that is trans-boundary in nature. Within the region the following have been identified as major challenges requiring a concerted effort to collaborate in order to find short term and long term responses. These include:

- high population growth rate and over reliance on natural resources;
- governance mechanism that have limited provisions for enforcement;
- inadequate institutional and human capacities to formulate and implement programs;
- limited financial resources;
- lack of joint and coordinated management plans;
- conflicts in environmental and socio-economic development interests of the countries and stakeholders;
- emerging environmental and natural resources management threats such as over exploitation of natural resources;
- lack of awareness and ownership at community level and limited information about transboundary ecosystem management

Yet, overall, the East African Community, as well as member states have requisite policy, legal and institutional frameworks to address the above challenges. **What needs to be done is to step up political motivation to support implementation and enforcement.**

## EAC needs support from the international community

Governments, regional institutions, multinationals, bilateral and international conventions, and financial bodies have a role to play to address climate change in East Africa. The international community therefore should:

- Commit to legally binding agreement that cuts global emissions;
- Ensure adequate funding to enable developing countries (including those in the EAC) to adapt to impacts of climate change. The funding should be stable and flexible to address the challenges of climate change in the trans-boundary ecosystems;
- Provide support for capacity building in EAC countries to enable them build resilience, address climate change impacts and benefit from climate finance;
- Develop technical guidance to increase the understanding and capacity for integration of ecosystems in adaptation under the Nairobi Work Program of the UNFCCC;
- Secure and facilitate access to international climate funding so that governments can allocate resources to community-level projects that seek to strengthen local ecosystem resilience and reduce people's vulnerability to climate change.

## Policy, legal and institutional frameworks

The EAC has policy and strategy documents related to environment, water resources, wetlands, land and they all contain provisions for addressing climate change issues.

Kenya and Uganda as countries have an enabling policy, strategic and legal framework for addressing climate change issues. The National Constitutions of the two countries are very clear on the role of governments in protecting the natural resources for the good of the people.

Sectoral policies, strategies and laws in the two countries such as those related to environment, water resources, wetlands, land etc all contain provisions that provide a good basis for climate change adaptation and these are harmonised under the East African Community.

Uganda and Kenya, have climate change policies, strategies and action plans and this is an enabling environment for mainstreaming climate change in trans-boundary ecosystem management.

Sectoral institutional frameworks in the two countries such as those related to environment, water resources, wetlands and land provide a good basis for multi-stakeholder collaboration and coordination to address climate change issues.

Thus an enabling institutional framework for coordinating and mainstreaming climate change in trans-boundary ecosystem management exists in both Kenya and Uganda and indeed in the EAC region.

## At international level:

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** - has presented numerous opportunities in the area of trans-boundary ecosystem management within the context of climate change adaptation and in particular ecosystem based adaptation. Ecosystem based adaptation has gained funding as one of the key responses to the impacts of climate change aimed at reducing the vulnerability of biological and human systems to the adverse impacts of climate change. A number of financing mechanisms have been established under the UNFCCC - the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Adaptation Fund and most recently the Green Climate Fund.

## How it is working

The integration of climate change adaptation in Eastern Africa is already ongoing but with limited awareness. Stakeholders and actors are now giving it the required publicity to popularise the approach. There is already an appreciation and recognition that climate change is a fundamentally multisectoral issue, and that all sectors and categories of stakeholders must therefore be actively involved.

The strategies are not necessarily new, but are being strengthened to respond to the future climate projections, and the link to ecosystem resilience. Strengthening ongoing efforts to make them deliver benefits in a more coordinated and harmonised manner at sectoral level is what is required.

We need to engage the communities that are custodians of the resources at stake and therefore local governments are critical in advancing this forward. In the region, local governments with trans-boundary resources are already collaborating but this requires financing, which is the biggest bottleneck at the moment.



The landscapes surrounding major trans-boundary ecosystems play an important role in stabilising micro-climates which in turn improve the quality of life of the communities

## What the East African Community can do

As a region, the East African Community needs to strengthen implementation and compliance to regional and national policies for environment and natural resources management. In addition, there is need to develop structures for multistakeholder involvement and cross-sectoral coordination to mainstream climate change adaptation in sectoral strategies and programs. Specifically, the EAC should:

- Identify competent regional institutions to assist in lobbying for the ratification of EAC protocol on environment and natural resources management by the members states that have not ratified the protocol;
- Fast track finalization of the operational strategy and action plan to implement the EAC protocol on environment and natural resources management;
- Develop mechanisms for assessing, monitoring and enforcing compliance to regional policies on environment and natural resources management by national governments as agreed at regional level;
- Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for tracking the level of implementation of regional policies and strategies to ensure that they are effective and also provide information for informed decision making on the necessary corrective actions;
- Build regional institutional and human capacity for mainstreaming environmental and climate change measures in regional programs and for integrated transboundary ecosystem management;
- Develop approaches and guidelines for mainstreaming climate change adaptation at regional level in the management of transboundary ecosystems;
- Support countries to undertake risk assessment across various sectors to help develop strategies to reduce and prevent climate change related disasters;
- Profile climate change as a across cutting issue at the highest political level in the EAC;
- Mainstream climate change vulnerability assessment and development of adaptation strategies into Strategic Environmental Assessment guidelines;
- Develop multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral coordination structures and approaches for transboundary ecosystems management at regional level that provide mechanism for the active participation and collaboration of various stakeholders and actors;
- Put in place and operationalise programs and projects for building the capacity of stakeholders including private sector, civil society organisations to enable them provide meaningful and well informed input in ongoing transboundary ecosystems management and climate change adaptation activities;
- Enhance regional capacities to sustainably promote investment in development projects based on shared natural resources and promotion of regional integration.

Most importantly, the East African Community should prioritise management of shared ecosystems through increased funding at regional level. Specifically, there should be earmarked financial resources for trans-boundary resources such as Lake Victoria, Mt. Elgon, Kagera River among others.