

The LVEMP II Civil Society Watch E-bulletin

A Monthly from the **East African Sustainability Watch Network** comprising: Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya). More: www.easuswatch.org

January 2014

Climate Change Escalates Vulnerability Patterns of Livelihood in the L.Victoria Islands



Images from Left to Right: (1) Water transport on Lake Victoria in Kisumu-Kenya (2) Landing site in Kasensero-Uganda (3) Fishing village in Mwanza-Tanzania

A pilot project intending to contribute to livelihood diversification of the fishing dependent communities on the Islands of Lake Victoria, through introduction of alternative income generating activities-IGA is on course. The project is undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), under the implementation of a regional strategy for the Eastern and Southern African-Indian Ocean (ESA-IO) region program, and the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO).

In June 2013, a survey was undertaken by the LVFO team to establish vulnerability indicators and livelihood dependency and poverty patterns associated with six self-help groups in six islands of Mageta and Ndeda in Kenya, Ukerewe and Bumbire in Tanzania and Buggala and Jagusi in Uganda respectively. Findings of the survey on vulnerability, livelihood and poverty indicate that trends associated with reduction in crop and fish production are due to climate change. Poor harvest of crop due to drought and low fish catches due to decline in fish stocks result in the down ward trends of food production, which have a consequential effect on revenue, income and food security. In spite of the challenges of climate change on the islands, epidemics including HIV/AIDS, cholera, typhoid and animal diseases are a threat to life. Most affected are children and women faced with food insufficiency during times of stress when men abandon families on the islands as they go to the main lands to find alternative work.

The project offered a total budget of 27,000 US Dollars to the 6 self-help groups in the six islands. The average members per group are 25 mostly dominated by women. Selected self-help groups and their respective beaches and islands were Nyisiaya Women's Group in Ndeda Beach, on Ndeda Island and USIA Youth Group in Mahanga, on Mageta Island (Kenya); Mpola Mpola at Gori, on Jagusi Island and Ddajje Star Group in Ddajje, on Buggala Island (Uganda); REEC/UPENDO in Ihumbo, on Bumbire Island and NEEMA Community Group in Igalula, on Ukerewe Island (Tanzania).

More about the Pilot Project from: <http://tinyurl.com/p5h73pq>

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Spotlight: Yala Catchment Swamp forfeited for commercial farming?

World wetlands day will be celebrated on 2nd February. In Kenya, national celebrations will be held in Sio-Siteko Trans-boundary Wetland in Busia District. 50 kilometres on the north-eastern shoreline of Lake Victoria is Yala swamp that has become a death bed for communities around it. This trans-boundary wetland of Siaya, Bondo and Busia Districts is a delicate ecosystem and biodiversity conservation habitat for indigenous and endangered fish, bird and mammal species. It is a vital riparian and floodplain wetland of Lake Victoria, and the third largest in Kenya, covering an area of 38,000 - 52,000 ha. The swamp forms the mouths of Rivers Nzoia and Yala and is a freshwater deltaic wetland arising from backflow of water of Lake Victoria as well as the rivers' floodwaters. It has been a livelihood hub for the community until it started to choke them as a result of improper farming planning by Dominion Farms Ltd, a subsidiary of Dominion Group of Companies based in Edmond Oklahoma USA, who moved to the swamp in 2003 through an arrangement with the Lake Basin Development Authority (LBDA). The initial proposal was that Dominion would engage in rice production, in part of the swamp known as Area I, covering about 2,300 ha. This land portion had been reclaimed before 1970, and previously used by LBDA for agricultural activity, mainly to produce cereals, pulses and horticultural crops. An environmental impact assessment (EIA) was commissioned for large-scale rice production, for which a license was issued in 2004, specifically for the rice irrigation. Instead of the originally intended rice cultivation in the 2,300ha once owned by the LBDA, Dominion Farms Ltd embarked on other additional agricultural and development activities in the swamp that went beyond the intended rice cultivation to include construction of irrigation dams, water-drilling, construction of airstrip, road construction and livestock rearing.

Dominion further proposed to undertake a number of new development projects within the Yala Swamp, under what is now called "an integrated project". For this purpose it proposed that part of 9,200 ha be reclaimed from swamp area. This has left only 6,000 ha (35%) of current wetland to act as buffer zone. The company was asked by NEMA to undertake new EIA to incorporate all current and proposed projects; a report was submitted to NEMA in October 2005, before the license was issued for the activities, Dominion Farms Ltd embarked on the implementation of their proposed development activities. The revelation of the new activities undertaken by Dominion Farms Ltd elicited mixed reactions from a number of stakeholders voicing various concerns ranging from issues of sustainable development, environment and livelihoods. The construction of the dam by Dominion at a higher level than the approved level has resulted in flooding, which has destroyed farm lands, property of the community in Yala. "There are frequent malaria outbreaks because of the stagnating water from the floods, the situation is very bad. Living here is a death trap", says Adikini a community member. Efforts by this Bulletin to reach Dominion for comment on the allegations were not successful. The development of the wetland and the implementation of the multinational have resulted in a loss of community land used for pasture, access to safe and clean drinking water for both human as well as livestock.

The world commemorates World Wetland Day every February 2 to mark the Day the Ramsar Convention, signed in Iran in 1971. Since 2014 has been declared the UN International Year of Family Farming, the Ramsar Convention has chosen Wetlands and Agriculture as the theme for 2014 World Wetlands Day. [More about Wetlands Day & the Ramsar Convention: http://tinyurl.com/nwyyw6n](http://tinyurl.com/nwyyw6n)

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African Union set to empower Women in Agriculture and Food Security

Her Excellency Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, the Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture at the African Union has said that the space of the intersection of empowering women in agriculture and food security is a higher priority today, than ever before. Speaking at the on-going 22nd ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, she made these remarks at the *Gender is my Agenda Campaign* (GIMAC) consultative meeting on mainstreaming gender on the 23rd January 2014. "What is clear is that when the reality of the need for higher growth rates and broad-based economic growth across Africa are aligned, targeting mechanisms to mainstream women and youth are what will take us beyond the tipping point where we are today.", she said. Adding that simultaneous focus to enable delivery of transformation should include improving access to production inputs, reducing post-harvest losses, strategic crops, market information, access to finance, applied science education, entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as accountability. "The evidence is overwhelming, that focusing on rural women in agriculture and agribusiness, is insurance for African economies to continue to be global leaders, and economic growth to move forward, at the pace that is needed to realize a food and nutrition secure Africa, by 2025". Adding that "As we reflect on our discussions, deliberations and actions, I encourage you to keep in mind that we at the Africa Union are committed to Africa's robust, integrated growth and benefits of that growth, being inclusive of Africa's women".

The African Union launches the year 2014, declared in 2012 as the African Union year of Agriculture and Food Security. This launch calls on Africans not only to reflect on successes registered and challenges encountered over the 10 years of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), but also to identify and apply concrete ways which will bring to the full capacity of Africa's women and men, girl and boy children, to actively build resilient households, dynamic communities, and robust economies, that foster innovations and sustained growth throughout the continent, while continuing to focus on increasing production and productivity at the farm level, reducing post-harvest loss and maintaining nutrition levels to avoid child stunting.



Farmer Rosette Kigozi from Mityana –Uganda in her citrus orchard (Photo by UCSD)

World Wetlands Day 2014 theme: "Wetlands & Agriculture: Partners for Growth"

Join the National Celebrations in Rwanda (January 31) with Community Work "Umuganda" & guided wetland visit at RUGERAMIGOZI marshland, Muhanga District | Kenya to be held at Sio-Siteko Trans-boundary Wetland, Busia district (February 2) | in Uganda in near Lake Wamala, Mityana district (February 28).