

LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS IN RAKAI AND MUBENDE DISTRICTS IN THE KATONGA RIVER BASIN, UGANDA

Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), 2013



Houses close to Lake Kijanibarola Rakai District (Photo: UCSD)

INTRODUCTION

The Katonga wetland basin is formed from River Katonga, which follows the borderline between Kalungu and Gomba Districts and drains into Lake Victoria. The wetland is located between latitude 32°02' - 30°29'E and longitude 0°08'S - 0°10'N and covers an area of about 2,478 km². The wetland can be classified as a permanent peat forming freshwater swamp. A tributary system of the river Katonga receives effluent from Masaka Municipality and Lukaya town. The predominant vegetation of the wetlands consists of *Cyprus papyrus*. Livestock grazing is also an important activity during the dry season, while fishing activities are carried out throughout the year. The communities living around the wetland mainly comprises of the Baganda but there are also Barundi, Banyankole, Banyarwanda and Bakiga, all from the Bantu group (Nature Uganda, 2009).

Most of the area of Katonga river basin is under intensive agriculture with little care of land. With increased environmental degradation up stream of River Katonga and human interference of the wetlands, the existence of the river is threatened which will have adverse effects on Lake Victoria. Already some consequences like reduced water levels, increased silt levels and reduced fish are already being experienced in Lake Victoria. Conservation and proper management of the catchment of River Katonga and all the other rivers draining into Lake Victoria are important for Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project phase two (LVEMP II).

Poor land management and unsustainable land uses have been reported as the key contributing factors to the poverty of farmers in Lake Victoria Basin (LVB), while the rapid population growth has been associated with the massive land degradation, and declining human health and water quality. Due to the high population growth, there has been increased pressure on land and some small scale farmers have resorted to cultivating in areas with steep slopes, riverbanks, forests, and wetlands. Overgrazing has also contributed significantly to soil erosion around the LVB.

In order to address the above challenges, Lake Victoria Environmental Management (LVEMP) Project was developed as a comprehensive regional development program that covers the whole of Lake Victoria and its Catchment areas. The project was initiated as a response by original partner states of East African Community (EAC) and Donors to deteriorating conditions of Lake Victoria and its catchment to promote sustainable utilization and conservation of Lake Victoria Basin Natural Resources. LVEMP aimed at:

- Generating information and data necessary to improve the management of the lake ecosystem
- Establishing mechanisms for joint management of LVB resources by the three (original) EAC partner states (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania)
- Identifying and demonstrate practical, self sustaining remedies to environmental challenges.
- Building capacity for Ecosystem management

The first phase of LVEMP (LVEMP I) was implemented 1997-2005 during which the following achievements were made:

- Improved understanding of the lake ecosystem through research.
- Operationalisation of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization.
- At the national level, technical skills, facilities and equipment for water and fisheries management / research institutions built /upgraded.
- Water hyacinth infestation reduced to non-nuisance levels.
- Successful piloting of community based catchment rehabilitation subprojects

The second phase of LVEMP (LVEMP II) is an 8 years (2009 - 2017) regional project implemented in the 5 East Africa Community partner states of the Republics of Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. LVEMP II has been designed to address major environmental concerns in Lake Victoria Basin which have had adverse impacts on the LVB ecosystem, as well as the region's economy and livelihoods. The project intends:

- To improve collaborative management of the trans-boundary management of the Lake Victoria Basin
- To reduce environmental stress in targeted pollution hotspots and selected degraded sub-catchments to improve the livelihoods of communities who depend on the natural resources of the Lake Victoria Basin.

LVEMP II is largely expected to be implemented through community driven projects in which communities fully participate. These sub projects are intended to ensure improvement in beneficiaries' livelihoods while preserving the environment around them.

Livelihood intervention is one of the Community Driven Development (CDD) sub project components that facilitate the fulfillment of the LVEMP II objectives. It focuses on among others; household based interventions (private benefits), percentage of land utilized for production, reduced exploitation of fisheries and wetlands and provision of incentives to implement soil and water conservation.

The Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD) as part of The East African Sustainability (Suswatch) Network¹ conducted a baseline survey in 2 selected districts within the Katonga River catchment area; Rakai and Mubende districts in Uganda, covered by LVEMP II. In Rakai, the survey covered 4 LVEMP II sub counties; Kifamba, Kagamba, Kabira, and Kyebe, while in Mubende district, the survey covered 5 LVEMP II sub counties; Kitenga, Bageza, Myanzi, Kigando, and Manyogaseka. The overall objective of the survey was to establish baseline data on livelihood interventions in Katonga river catchment areas. It was therefore expected to provide benchmark information on key variables and indicators for periodic assessment of LVEMP II implementation.

The survey employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach was used to describe the state of affairs in the respective communities and clarify the benchmarks while the qualitative approach. Both male and female respondents were interviewed. The survey focused on the state of livelihoods in areas of: water access and availability, hygiene and sanitation, renewable energy supply, and aqua culture. Four hundred (400) households were studied, 200 from each district. The results are presented below:.

WATER ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY

In terms of water supply, Mubende district has various water supply options, which include swamps, lake, springs, valley dams, valley tanks, gravity flow schemes, and boreholes.

Rakai District is well supplied with adequate surface and sub-surface water reserves, although in some parts of the District especially on the North-Western plains and especially during the dry season, severe water shortage is occasionally experienced.

Ninety five (95 %) of the respondents reported that they at least have sources of water in their communities, with the exception of Kabira Sub County in Rakai where 32% reported limited water sources.

¹ The East African Sustainability (SusWatch) Network is a network of NGOs from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania spearheaded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya), and Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD). EA SusWatch Regional Secretariat is hosted by UCSD in Kampala, Uganda.

Although majority conceded to have water sources, unprotected wells were the most popular water sources in both districts represented by 42%.

Majority, 55% of respondents in Rakai district reported their main source of water for drinking to be spring wells, while for Mubende 52% reported unprotected wells/swamps. Second sources of water for drinking in both districts included lake and rain water respectively.

Majority of respondents in Mubende, represented by 63%, perceived their main source of water for drinking to be unsafe/ dangerous, compared to 51% of respondents in Rakai district.

About 72% of respondents in Rakai reported that their water for drinking is colourless, while 36% in Mubende reported that their water is brown.

Majority (86 %) of the respondents reported that they boil their water for drinking. This could be attributed to sensitization activities by NGOs and local governments. However, majority (54 %) of respondents perceive boiling water for drinking to be time wasting, while 46% find it to be unnecessary.

Majority, 98% of respondents fetch their water for drinking in jerry cans. Of these, 39 % clean their jerry cans daily.

With regard to water storage for drinking, 79% of respondents keep their water for drinking in jerry cans.

In Rakai district, 42% fetch their water for other uses from the lake while in Mubende district, 38% use rain water.

Most of the respondents represented by (46 %) indicated that their water sources for drinking are unreliable, while 46% of respondents indicated that their water sources dry up. With regard to specific water challenges per district, frequent water disconnections from the taps were mostly reported in Rakai, while 52% of respondents in Mubende reported dirty water as their biggest challenge.

About 63% of respondents reported rain water as their alternative source of water for drinking. This was mostly reported in Mubende district. For Rakai district, the lake was reported as the most popular alternative. Ninety four (94 %) of respondents in both districts reported that they harvest water for use.

In the two districts, women were reported to be more responsible for fetching water followed by boys and girls, although in most cases boys are more involved in fetching water than the girls.

With regard to distance, majority (85 %) of the respondents walk between less than a kilometre to one (1) kilometre to fetch water for drinking. However in Mubende district, 24% of respondents reported that they live 3 kilometres away from their nearest source of water

for drinking compared to 5% respondents in Rakai district. Kitenga and Manyogaseka sub counties have the furthest sources of water for drinking ranging from 3- 5 kilometers.

In both districts, about (52%) take an average of 30 minutes to fetch their water for drinking.

Most of the water sources are managed by Water User Committees and local leaders.

HYGIENE AND SANITATION

Majority (92%) of the respondents reported to have latrine facilities. Rakai district however registered a higher percentage (95%) compared to Mubende (89%) in terms of latrine coverage.

In the absence of latrines, majority 82% of respondents in Mubende district excrete in the bush compared to 18% in Rakai district.

Diarrhea was the most common reported disease in most households reported by 50% of respondents, followed by malaria at 16%. Malaria was mostly reported in Kitenga Sub County. Other diseases reported included typhoid and cholera.

Observations revealed most of the households do not have stagnant water. However, 85% of the households were found to have dirty/un-kept compounds.

Majority of the households (64%) in both Mubende and Rakai district were found with bathrooms. However in Kitenga Sub County, majority of the households were found without bathrooms while in Bageza, half the households were found with bathrooms.

Majority, 83% of the respondents in both Mubende and Rakai district were found without drying racks. In Manyogaseka Sub County, all households involved in the study were found without any drying racks.

ENERGY SUPPLY

Hydro electric power was reported in Kitenga, Bageza, Kagamba and Kyebe sub counties. In Kasensero trading center, a landing site in Kyebe Sub County hosts a fish processing factory, one of the products of LVEMP I.

Other sources of energy for lighting are solar power reported was reported in Kigando, Kyebe and Kagamba sub counties, and paraffin lamps was also reported in Kitenga, Bageza and Kagamba sub counties.

Majority of the community members in Mubende and Rakai districts (68 %) reported using small paraffin lamps locally known as “tadooba” for lighting while 22% use hydro electric power.

Almost all the respondents in Rakai and Mubende districts (99.5% and 95.2 % respectively), reported fuelwood to be their main source of energy for cooking, while only 2% use charcoal.

About 79% of the respondents in Mubende and Rakai districts respectively reported that the main source of energy for running their businesses is hydro electricity, while 21 % reported using charcoal and firewood.

Majority (70 %) of the respondents in both Mubende and Rakai district reported to have planted some trees. Rakai district registered a higher percentage of households (98 %) that have engaged in tree planting than Mubende district (57 %).

Seventy six (76 %) attributed failure to plant trees to lack of tree seedlings.

AQUA CULTURE

Only 9% of the respondents are involved in aquaculture. In Mubende district, 10% are involved in aqua culture compared to 9% in Rakai district. Kagamba is the only sub county where aqua culture was not reported.

Close to 90% of the respondents in both Mubende and Rakai district reported that there are about two fish ponds in their villages. Rakai district reported having more fish pond.

About, 70% of the respondents in both Mubende and Rakai district reported that they have fish rearing skills compared to the 29% who are lacking.

Approximately, 48% like fish farming for income generation while close to 42% do it for economic diversification.

Above, 59% of the respondents reported that they have failed to engage in fish farming due to lack of resources while only about 4% are not interested in the enterprise.

In Mubende district, Tilapia rated highest at 68% while in Rakai, Nile Perch was perceived to be the most popular fish caught in the community.

Kasensero, Kyebe Sub County has the only fish processing factory in the LVEMP II implementing sub counties.

In Rakai district, majority (59 %) reported lack of market for their fish while in Mubende district, water pollution was reported as the main challenge.

Conclusion

The wellbeing status of the communities in Mubende and Rakai district is attributed to low levels of education which restrict their livelihood options. The situation lures them encroach on the environment for survival. Overcoming the environmental challenges in the Lake Victoria Basin requires concerted efforts to enhance livelihoods of communities within the region. Implementation of LVEMP II through Community Driven Development Subproject (CDD) projects is timely but should preferably be actualized in collaboration with other stakeholders for better results to ensure sustainability. The findings in this report are a benchmark essential for assessing the project and to inform subsequent planning.