

The East African Sustainability Watch Network

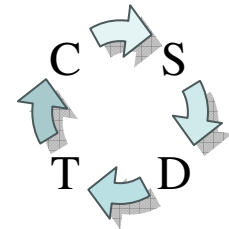
Kenya SusWatch c/o



KOE



UCSD



Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development

**Monitoring the
Implementation of National
Obligations to International Agreements
and other Arrangements for Sustainable
Development in East**



Africa



**A Presentation to the 2nd Lake Victoria Basin
Stakeholder's Forum, Tom Mboya Labour College –
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1.0 Introduction

The East African Sustainability Watch was formed in 2005, as a network of NGOs from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania spearheaded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Kenya National SusWatch (c/o Kenya Organization of Environment Education - KOEE), and Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD). Being a loose network, the EA SusWatch Regional Secretariat is hosted by UCSD in Kampala, Uganda.

The **Vision** of EA SusWatch is: **A world where sustainable development principles drive social and economic development processes.**

The **Mission** of EA SusWatch **to catalyze and mobilize civil society in Eastern African to exert accountability from governments and international development institutions to achieve a socially and environmentally sustainable world.**

The **mandate** of EA SusWatch is *“monitoring the implementation of national obligations to International agreements and other arrangements for sustainable development in Eastern Africa”.*

There are three National Chapters existing as: a) **Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD)**, b) **Kenya Organization of Environment Education (KOEE on behalf of the Kenya SusWatch Network)**, and c) **Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD)**. These form umbrella structures that coordinate members in the country. **There is intention to establish national chapter in Rwanda and Burundi once members have been recruited and EA SusWatch activities extend to cover these two countries.**

2.0 A Case of East African CSO collective action on Lake Victoria: *The East African Civil Society Watchdog Project for Sustainable Development in the Lake Victoria basin*

The EA SusWatch Network has implemented this project in the Lake Victoria Basin since December 2006 (project ends November 2009) with support from Sida. **The overall objective of the project is “to build capacity of CSOs’ of the three networks in collective advocacy and lobbying activities aimed at supporting/enhancing sustainable development policies at local, national and regional levels.”**

The project was designed in response to the then **inadequate local and sub-regional activities by Civil Society engaging key stakeholders and decision makers in Lake Victoria Basin (LVB)**. This was attributed to **lack of capacity and information about sustainable development among other factors**. UCSD provides the implementing lead role for this project on behalf of the other EA SusWatch partners.

The Project has had three immediate objectives:

- a) To **mainstream citizen participation** in policy development, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development objectives and poverty reduction outcomes within the three national SusWatch partner networks.
- b) To **strengthen the capacities of participating organizations** to effectively contribute to, and undertake advocacy and lobbying on sustainable development issues at the regional level.

- c) To **scale up networking and information sharing** on sustainable development in East Africa sub-region in order to build synergies with other stakeholders including the EAC, parliamentarians, bilateral and Multilateral donors, for greater impact in lobby and advocacy for sustainable development policies.

The project has **focused on localizing Sustainability Watch in the Lake Victoria Basin by linking the activities of the Global SusWatch project with citizen empowerment and participation; networking and information sharing and capacity building for sustainable development in the Lake Victoria Basin.**

The three networks have been working to inform and influence the diverse and growing stakeholders of the East African integration particularly in the Lake Victoria basin so that they act in consonance and in support of the consultatively agreed regional vision for Lake Victoria. Specifically the project will target to influence on going work related to Lake Victoria development including the decision-making processes of Council of Ministers for Lake Victoria, work of Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC), work planned under Phase 2 of the Lake Victoria Environment Management Programme (LVEMP2) and the Nile Equatorial Lake Subsidiary Action Programme (NELSAP); and policies of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) through its relevant committees.

3.0 Achievements of the East African Civil Society Watchdog Project for Sustainable Development in the Lake Victoria basin (2006 – 2009)

East African SusWatch appreciates being part of the LPIANF that comprise different actors as it contributes to securing more inclusive processes from the diverse and growing stakeholders of the East African integration particularly in the Lake Victoria basin

- **Public awareness and Education materials:** The bilingual biannual *East African SusWatchdog Newsletter (Waangalizi wa Maendeleo Endelevu)*; Posters in both English and Kiswahili, stickers in 6 languages, A documentary on sanitation state in selected areas in Jinja and Kisumu in English and Kiswahili; a pocket size reference book for media on Lake Victoria issues, actors and processes English and Kiswahili; A student companion on Lake Victoria issues, actors and processes in English and a Guide to the Climate Change Effects, Challenges and Options in the Lake Victoria Region
- **Advocacy work:** Discussion papers (1 – 4 to date) covering: *Implementation barriers to promotion of sustainable development in the LVB, Sanitation and hygiene, Effects of the drop in Lake Victoria water levels, Critique of the EAC budget process*; Annual CS views on sustainable development in *The East African* and *Mwananchi* Newspapers; Position papers and Briefs; web and email based communication - website, a blog, list serve where SusWatch regularly shares information news and views; Dialogues on different issues and at different events

- **Meetings with key actors:** Speaker, EALA members, LPIANF meetings, contact with other actors during the 1st and 2nd Lake Victoria Conferences organised by LVRLAC; meetings with LVBC Secretariat and National Focal points; attending the High level Technical Forum negotiating meetings on the EAC Common Market Protocol in Kigali and Kampala; LVFO and other Fisheries actors as part of the World Fisheries Days, and during the Lake Victoria Regional Fisheries Conference that took Place in Kampala in October 2008.
- **Scaling up participation:** CSOs during the World Social Forum in Nairobi (2006), where Lake Victoria side event was organised; Regional Lake Victoria Fisheries Conference, Facilitating journalists to attend key regional meetings in Arusha, Kampala and Nairobi. **Despite this, CS participation LVB development still lacks a formal mechanism.**
- **Capacity building efforts:** training sessions for CSOs, mentoring & coaching involving exchange visits among CSOs in the region (for 3 participants per year).

4.0 Challenges and Lessons Learnt

- **Lack of a formal communication and coordination channel (a formal entry point) that can enable CSOs to formally interact with LVBC.** Furthermore, despite recognition of CSOs in the Protocol for Sustainable Management and Development of Lake Victoria (concluded on November 29, 2003 and ratified by the Partner States in 2004), there has been **no deliberate involvement of CSOs in Sectoral committees as proposed nor working groups and other operational/advisory structures** set up to tap into their views on planned policies and strategies.
- **Lack of information on pending issues that may have direct impact on the lives of many people** in East Africa. For example discussion of policies and laws at the regional level need to create space for public discussion by availing such information in accessible formats and diversity of media (including making use of CSO networks to facilitate such discussions)
- **CSO funding for sustainable development initiatives remains low**, while the challenges are growing by day.
- **Language:** diverse languages used in different areas
- Need to **package and disseminate more information ('palatable' to politicians and decision makers)** to influence planning and decision – making; and creating viable mechanisms to enlist regular feedback and suggestions.
- **Low CSO awareness on Lake Victoria 'regional agenda'** (policy and legislative processes, programmes and projects) and how they could contribute / get involved.

5.0 Seeking Attention: SusWatch and the 2nd LVB Stakeholder's Forum

Based on the theme of the Forum ***"Strengthening synergies and cooperation in sustainable development in Lake Victoria Basin"***, the East African SusWatch network hopes that stakeholders will be able to discuss, internalise and come up with action plans to counter the immense challenges facing one of the regions in Africa with the fastest population growth (in both rural and urban areas).

The East African SusWatch Network hopes that the Forum will enable **open and fair discussions with ‘what is and how-to-address’ approaches, given the myriad challenges facing Lake Victoria** in water (impact of the drop in water levels), transport, fisheries, agriculture, education, health and sanitation, and energy sectors.

Furthermore, the East African SusWatch Network raises the following questions (mainly *invisible aspects*) for all stakeholders to ponder upon **during this Forum and even afterwards**:

- **What *strategic and practical* innovations could we take up to widen participation** of the different stakeholders in the LVB?
- **Poverty (status of housing, water and sanitation) – with the multiple deprivations haunting a larger part of the 30 million inhabitants in the LVB**, how do we *effectively and efficiently* address even the minimalist International Development Targets like the Millennium Development Goals?
- How to build **long-term synergies amongst development actors within the LVB?**
- **Do we have any lessons for and from corporate social responsibility to date? How do we tap** business and private enterprises to address more social and environmental concerns?
- **How do we innovatively finance sustainable development** in light of the global financial meltdown?
- **How do we institutionalize and promote conflict- sensitive development approaches** at all levels in the LVB?

6.0 Conclusion

In order to further reflect on the theme of this Forum: **“Strengthening synergies and cooperation in sustainable development in Lake Victoria Basin”**, the East African SusWatch network would like to make use of 2 inspiring quotes from two persons in relation to [Sustainable Community Action](#) to stress **two important issues** that need to be taken into account (**financing for sustainable development** and **importance of empowering communities / citizens for sustainable development**)

John Robbins

"Natural ecosystems will [only] be protected when society **taxes** the pumping of fresh water, the damming of rivers and the felling of virgin timber. As **polluters pay more**, and those who tread more lightly on the Earth pay less, **incentives are created** for people to do the right thing."

Tony Blair

"Too much has been imposed from above, when experience shows that success depends on **communities themselves having the power** and taking the responsibility to make things better."

To learn more about the East African SusWatch Network and its views on a range of sustainable development matters in the Lake Victoria Basin, please contact the following:

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7.0 References for further reading

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- Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD) website: www.ugandacoalition.or.ug
- Inspiring quotes on Sustainable community: http://sca21.wikia.com/wiki/Inspiring_Quotes_17 accessed october 23, 2009