



CASE STUDY

Uganda: Building Drought Resilience Through Land and Water Management Project

Historically, the cattle corridor of Uganda has been well known for reliance on mobile pastoralism as an important strategy to cope with resource variability. However, people's abilities to cope greatly weakened as the impacts of disasters became frequent and severe. A project was implemented designed to provide a supportive framework that promoted sustainable utilization of natural resources, ensure governance and accountability of actions, while addressing poverty.

Background

The cattle corridor of Uganda has semi-arid characteristics, high variability of rainfall and droughts. The main economic activities in this area are pastoralism and crop production. Historically, the area has been well known for reliance on mobile pastoralism as an important strategy to cope with resource variability. However, people's abilities to cope greatly weakened as the impacts of disasters became frequent and severe. The recurrence of droughts in the Aswa-Agago Sub-Catchment has been exacerbated by climate change. This has compromised the ability of populations and ecosystems in the area to recover from the shocks.

Moreover, the people in this area are poor having returned from the camps where they lived for almost 20 years due to war insurgence in northern Uganda. The communities have also exploited natural resources through indiscriminate tree cutting, vast wetland drainage, cultivation and bush burning; using unsustainable methods leading to high rate of environmental degradation. In addition, the existing governance arrangements have been weak, unable to enforce existing guidelines and byelaws to safeguard the natural resources. This contributed to the widespread loss of biodiversity, ecosystem integrity and consequently weakened household adaptive capacity. The most severe effects of these changes were felt by the most vulnerable groups to disasters who included the very poor people, women and children. These groups were significantly affected because they depend mostly on natural resources.

Actions taken

In order to address the challenges faced by the communities, a project was implemented designed to provide a supportive framework that promoted sustainable utilization of natural resources, ensure governance and accountability of actions, while addressing poverty. The underlining goal was to promote a sustainable approach by enabling people to understand and analyse the prevailing situation in their areas, to increase adaptive capacity and resilience knowledge.

This was done through various community dialogues and training sessions aimed at creating an empowering environment for the people to make decisions on how to sustainably manage their resources and landscapes and be able to cope in harsh drought periods.

The project was launched in Lira district north eastern Uganda with a representation of key government ministries which included Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), Ministry of Water and Environment, district local council members, district technical staff, representation from local community leadership. This contributed to raising awareness about the project. The spectrum of stakeholders also discussed and agreed on the proposed project strategy, work plan, implementation and coordination modalities.

The project employed the Community Environment Conservation Fund (CECF) approach. The CECF approach involves availing community grants at village level managed by a village committee as a revolving fund. The community grant is accessed by community members as a loan for emergencies with a service fee of 5% and is borrowed for not more than 3 months. This fund enabled community members to access money to cater for their immediate needs while fulfilling the environmental requirements.

Outcomes

Interviews revealed that woman and other vulnerable groups do not have a great impact/ability to influence national water policies, or how funding is allocated to national water-related management policies. The engagement of women and other vulnerable groups in the whole water value chain was thus identified as key to promoting normative changes and stereotypes relating to women's participation in WRM. Embedded cultural issues however cannot be changed, so, gender-related issues within other spheres of society i.e., non-water-related or -climate-related spheres, should be consulted. Linkages have been created between different sectors at district (Natural Resources, Production and Community Development and national levels (MWE). This has contributed to implementation of important policies related to natural resource management and governance. The project has facilitated the drafting of byelaws for environment committees in the project parishes.

Lessons Learned

Strong community institutions are a prerequisite for long-term sustainability, promoting resilience and managing common natural resources; coordination and integration of development programs together with local governments across sectors result in more coherent and efficient support to communities to increase impact.

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For any community intervention to be successful, it has to match with community needs and interests; therefore, conservation objectives have to be linked to livelihood improvement especially for poor and marginalized groups.

Corresponding Author

Kyampaire, Olive

Organisation

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Supporting Materials

GWP Eastern Africa

Building Resilience to Drought: Learning from experience in the Horn of Africa (GWP EAF/IGAD/WMO, 2016)

IUCN: Improving Climate Resilience 2014

IUCN Project Report 2015

Uganda: Building Drought Resilience Through Land and Water Management Project

Related IWRM Tools

Community-based water supply and management organisations

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