

Building Drought Resilience through Land and Water Management

The Global Water Partnership Eastern Africa (GWPEA) through the Integrated Drought Management Program in the Horn of Africa (IDMP HOA) has been documenting lessons and good practices from selected case studies in drought/water security related interventions. This case study is generated from the work of the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for a project being implemented in the Aswa River Sub-Catchment in partnership with the Directorate of Water Resources Management and three district local governments of Alebtong, Lira and Otuke in Northern Uganda.

The project focus is to build drought resilience of dry land communities through improved land and water management. The recurrence of droughts in the Aswa River Sub-Catchment has for long compromised the ability of populations and ecosystems in the area to recover from the drought related shocks.

At the start of the project in 2011, communities showed low interest as people at that time were returning from camps following a 20 year civil war in northern Uganda. Their focus was mainly on how best to survive in the harsh conditions. The immediate survival strategies included charcoal burning for sale and reclamation of wetlands for rice growing both for food and for sale. With the impending drought conditions, these activities led to further destruction of the environment.

The project has facilitated the drafting of a management framework involving new guidelines for environment conservation, formation of sub-catchment management committees, demarcation and restoration of wetlands, and enactment and implementation of bye-laws. Key project achievements include restoration of the rangelands, social economic development through supporting communities with the Community Environment Conservation Fund (CECF) effective management of wetlands and improvement in quality and volume of water sources.

The key lessons from this case study are that: Strong community institutions are a necessary prerequisite for long-term sustainability to promote resilience, enhance management and conservation of common natural resources; coordination and integration of development programs together with local governments across sectors results in more coherent and efficient support to communities to increase impact.

Overall, the project has contributed to promoting sustainable utilization of natural resources while addressing community livelihoods and improving community and ecosystem resilience to droughts.



Photo Credit: IUCN-Uganda

Water source managed by the sub-catchment management committees