

PROJECT TITLE: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND MARKETS TRANSFORMATION

Development Partner: DANIDA through WWF Denmark

Total Funding: Danish Crowns (DKK) 8,000,000/=.

Project Duration: 4 years from 2018-2021

Problem the project is addressing

The programme seeks to address the following problems in the Greater Virunga Landscape in the Albertine region:

- a) Increased degradation and loss of forests, wildlife, and water resources particularly within and outside high value conservation areas. The increased degradation and loss of natural resources compounded by climate change impact has had negative impacts on both nature and human livelihood. The Albertine Graben is also facing growing pressure from on-going oil and gas developments most of which are in or around protected areas. These activities pose significant threat to human and wildlife health due to their potential for wide scale pollution and environmental degradation.
- b) Unsustainable production and market practices in the forestry and energy sectors are having devastating effects on high conservation value forests as well as the livelihoods of the dependent communities particularly women and youth. This is exacerbated by unregulated trade and extraction of natural resources with no regard to environmental and social concerns of women, youth and men. Illegal timber traders use banned tools such as hand-held chainsaws that have low timber recovery rates (25%) and sell timber to the booming construction industry in-country and export to countries like South Sudan
- c) The high dependency on charcoal and fuel wood also contributes to increasing GHG emissions and thus climate change. According to the Energy Report for Uganda (WWF-UCO, 2015), firewood and charcoal used by households constitutes 75% of the total Ugandan Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. Climate change impacts are already being felt by the communities through distorted rainfall patterns and increased frequency and severity of extreme climate events (droughts and floods). Communities in the Albertine Graben are already experiencing temporal and spatial water scarcity which is negatively impacting on socioeconomic activities and livelihoods.
- d) Poor governance characterised by weak policies, laws and institutions; weak enforcement of policies and laws; and insufficient funding is undermining effective natural resources management in Uganda (MWE, 2015). A recent study for the forest sector (World Bank, 2009) attributed poor governance to poor implementation of forest legislation, limited public participation, transparency and accountability challenges, limited resources to mandated institutions, political interference, lack of equitable benefit sharing mechanisms and limited incentives.
- e) Rural communities in the Albertine Graben lack decision-making power, opportunities and tools to control natural resources upon which they depend. There is a clear limited understanding of their rights and effective approaches to engage the duty bearers on forestry, energy development, biodiversity conservation and general socio-economic development. Furthermore the limited opportunities for participation in decision processes that have a bearing on their social and economic well-being increases their vulnerability to pressures that emerge from the increasing economic activities in the Albertine Graben.

Project objectives

The overall programme objective is *“Civil society effectively exercise their human and environmental rights and are actively influencing policy and market decisions to promote sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing of natural resources and ecosystem services for the long-term sustainable development of people and nature”*. The specific objectives are:

- a) A strengthened civil society contributes to improved policies and their implementation in the energy and forestry sectors at national and provincial levels in terms of improved environmental sustainability, increased social inclusion and economic equity for youth, women and men.
- b) Market-based change mechanisms within the energy and forestry sector contribute to sustainable production and consumption with increased social inclusion and economic equity for youth, women and men in Albertine Graben and the wider Uganda.

Project implementation Strategy

The project is using a two-sided strategy of governance and advocacy and market transformation through piloting, showcasing and scaling up. With respect to the governance strategy, the programme seeks to ensure that the prevailing policies, legal and regulatory frameworks are enabling CSOs to advocate for policy reforms that benefit men, women and youth. The programme will target central government, state agencies and district local governments to revise policies, laws, regulations and guidelines that enable equitable benefit sharing and improve legality in forest products trade. On the market transformation strategy, WWF-UCO seeks to engage with the private sector and other stakeholders in promoting sustainable production practices and certification schemes as well as identify financial incentives for a green economy. WWF UCO is to use a multi-stakeholder engagement approach that prioritizes private sector as a means towards developing solutions that are informed and facilitated by the different experiences and expertise in the different categories of stakeholders. The specific interventions under implementation are:

- a) Capacity building of partner CSOs to engage in coordinated policy advocacy and to represent the interests of their constituency (e.g. local and marginalized communities).
- b) Facilitate dialogue and partnerships between civil society, private sector and key government agencies at local, national and regional levels.
- c) Promote government policies and practices that enable and ensure civil society participation; address broader social, economic and environmental sustainability issues; and promote improved benefit sharing and livelihoods for poor and vulnerable communities.
- d) Promote and support market transformation initiatives to enable change at scale while at the same time empowering local timber traders to improve their wellbeing.

Project scope and target areas

The project is being implemented in the Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL) to consolidate achievements of the previous Danida-supported program. The program seeks to ensure a link between landscape interventions with national policy processes and will maintain strong partnerships with national level CSOs. The program is scaling-up success stories into the Semuliki-Albert Landscape among the local communities adjacent to Bugoma Central Forest reserve. In the GVL the program targets local communities adjacent High Conservation Value (HCV) protected areas – Kalinzu, Imaramagambo, Bwindi, and Rwenzori. The choice of GVL is informed by the need to consolidate achievements, the high conservation value of the ecosystems, the high population density and the high poverty levels as well as the susceptibility to refugee crisis due to armed rebellions (M23, ADF) in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.