

NGO teaching residents how to cope with climate change

Platform. The International Union for conservation of Nature with other partners in the Mt Elgon landscape established a platform to provide a mechanism for coordination of the development initiatives and promote learning within the landscape and its ecosystems.

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One in Ugandans have experienced effects of climate change in different aspects. Different approaches to the management of Uganda's ecosystems are needed, to ensure that these can continue to provide goods and services in the wake of changing climatic conditions.

One such approach is the engagement of all relevant stakeholders at all levels, in the planning and execution of plans, to ensure an integrated management of natural resources in a manner that efficiently applies scarce resources to achieve greater resilience.

The International Union for conservation of Nature (IUCN) with other partners in the Mt Elgon landscape established a platform dubbed the Mt Elgon Stakeholders' forum, to provide a mechanism for coordination of the development initiatives and promote learning within the landscape and its ecosystems.

Since its formation in 2012, the forum has brought together key stakeholders from local government, government agencies, Non-government organisations, community based organisations, private sector, political leaders and leaders of marginalised groups to share lessons and lay strategies towards a common goal of restoring the productivity of the Mt Elgon landscape.

Mt Elgon stakeholders have been able to identify their niches within the development agenda of the ecosystem and prioritise investments to where there is greatest need. For example, when planning for NUSAF III support in Kapchorwa, the District Local Government made a decision to give



Field visits provide an opportunity to the residents to share successes and help improve perceptions towards conservation initiatives. COURTESY PHOTO

priority to the sub-counties that had not received support from IUCN through its Community Environmental Conservation Fund (CECF). With improved exchange of information through the platform, stakeholders have been able to harmonise interventions, leverage resources and reduce on duplication of efforts.

The forum has brought together a range of stakeholders, and through various interactions, they have been able to appreciate the challenges that face the landscape and its ecosystems.

Mr Hussein Matanda, the chairman of the forum points out that prior to its establishment, politicians were hostile to conservation efforts, and they would encourage communities to continue with actions that degrade the ecosystems.

He says that such hostility has since reduced, and politicians are working in harmony with conserva-

tion organisations and institutions.

He said the forum has provided a platform for dissemination of scientific information that is generated specifically for the Mt Elgon landscape. A number of partners within the landscape have undertaken studies that help to understand the challenges and vulnerabilities of the Mt Elgon ecosystems.

"One example is the vulnerability

impact assessment that was conducted by IUCN UNDP and UNEP, which identified flooding, landslides and droughts as the major climate risks and hazards affecting the region. Through the forum such information has been shared, and this informs decision making within the landscape," Mr Matanda said.

According Mr Matanda, the government through the Ministry of Water and Environment, is planning to put in place a National Mountain Forum, based on the Mt Elgon Stakeholders' forum concept as a result of the successes realised so far. Once in place, the national forum will further enhance coordination of the development of mountain ecosystems.

The second National Development plan (NDP II) for Uganda points out that "though climate change is a global challenge to which global solutions must be found, the effects of climate change are local and local solu-

tions are necessary while taking into consideration regional and national contexts".

"What this means is that we need to find solutions that work for our unique context, and this necessitates that everyone gets involved, including the marginalised communities who heavily depend on natural resources for survival and who get affected the most when climate change impacts hit," he said.

Key resources that support livelihoods namely forests, wetlands, lakes, and rivers, mountains, among others span district and sometimes national boundaries. As the natural resources cross jurisdictions, the number of actors and groups of people who have a stake in their management and use also increases. This implies that planning for the restoration of these resources cannot be restricted within the official administrative boundaries.

KEY INFORMATION

Since its formation in 2012, the forum has brought together key stakeholders from local government, government agencies, Non-government organisations, community based organisations, private sector, political leaders and leaders of marginalized groups to share lessons and lay strategies towards a common goal of restoring the productivity of the Mt Elgon landscape.