



Equipping communities to address environmental risks

Location:

Samburu, Isiolo and Laikipia Counties, Kenya

Partner:

Wetlands International

Authors:

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Kisima Wetland in Samburu County, one of the wetlands mapped by WI for purposes of protection
Photo credit: IMPACT

Environment and Forestry Cabinet Secretary Keriako Tobiko (riding a camel) when he graced the 2019 Camel Caravan
Photo credit: IMPACT

Olkeju Osira, a Community-Based Organization formed in 2005, has grown to be one of the most vocal voices in protecting water resources in Samburu County.

"Growth of the WRUA can be attributed to the support we received through training by IMPACT in collaboration with Wetlands International. This training enabled us to develop the Sub Catchment Management Plan in 2014 and eventually we received funding." Andrew Lelekoiten, Chairman Olkeju Osira WRUA.

Officially registered as a Water Resource Users Association (WRUA) in 2012, it has been implementing projects aimed at restoring and conserving the Ewaso Ng'iro ecosystem.

The funds provided were used to implement projects among them planting indigenous trees on the riparian of River Olkeju Osira and fencing the Suguta Marmar wetland that had been partially encroached. Encroachment through human settlement, agricultural activities and pollution are some of the threats facing wetlands in the Ewaso Ng'iro catchment area.

"We fenced off the wetland next to Suguta Township and laid claim on the section of the land," explains Andrew Lelekoiten, chairman of Olkeju Osira WRUA

Wetlands International (WI), a consortium member in the Partners for Resilience (PfR) Programme, has launched a project to map out wetlands in Samburu County to protect them. The process to develop an integrated wetlands management plan for key wetlands in the county has been initiated.



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Community Consultations to identify priorities of change towards eco system conservation
Photo credit: Wetlands International

In early 2020, WI conducted a field scoping exercise to understand the extent of the key wetlands by consulting with the local communities, County and National Government, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the private sector.

“Wetlands are often viewed as wasteland; places to be drained and converted for development and other land uses. Since 1900, more than 64percent of wetlands in Kenya have been lost through drainage. As wetlands are lost, the community is deprived of its well-being,” says Titus Wamae Regional Policy and Advocacy officer, WI Eastern Africa.

He explains that the management plan will propose actions for joint measures to improve wetlands and water resources management in future. These include screening investments and mainstreaming regulatory and socio-economic valuations in wetlands planning and management. The specific wetlands are Kilele, Kisima and Suguta Marmar which are threatened by human activities.

One of the key objectives that informed the need to develop a wetland management plan was to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) by not only assessing current and immediate risks but also future risks where climate change in this landscape is a defining factor.

This is in line with the 2015 Sendai Framework which called on States to adopt a multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision making.

Between 2015 and 2020, PfR in Kenya has been implementing interventions that demonstrate building on the foundations of Integrated Risk Management (IRM) as an effective way to fast-track the integration of community resilience actions in development planning.

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This strategic partnership aims at strengthening CSOs to lobby, advocate and promote the application of IRM to enhance and protect livelihoods of vulnerable communities in Kenya through the dialogue approach in the three domains -policy, investment and practice.

In Samburu, Laikipia and Isiolo Counties, WI has been working with Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement & Conflict Transformation (IMPACT) and Merti Integrated Development Programme (MID-P) in building the capacity of communities through WRUAs.

Semi-arid Laikipia North Sub-county has for years faced a challenge of availability of clean water. But today, a big population in this pastoralist community now boasts of water accessibility, the fruits of building the capacity of WRUAs to give them knowledge and opportunities to execute their mandate as spelt out in the Water Act 2016.

Kudoti WRUA, whose membership is drawn from Mukogodo Location, was formed in 2014. It faced teething problems mainly due to limited knowledge on the benefits of joining the WRUA, according to the chairman Daniel Kimalel.

Though the WRUA is yet to get funding, the Sub-Catchment Management Plan (SCMP) has opened ways for other stakeholders in community development to provide support.

"We missed funding from the Water Sector Trust Fund since we had not developed the SCMP. However, we received support from the CDTF {Community Development Trust Fund} and Constituency Development Fund {NG-CDF}. Through this support we have managed to harvest water from rock catchment, rehabilitated Kuri Kuri Borehole and piped the water to the lower zone thereby reducing the long distance women could travel in search of the commodity," explains the WRUA chairman.

Lilian Nyaega, Regional Programme Officer with Wetlands International, points out that as emphasized by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015 – 2030), priorities of action to foster community resilience should be aligned with existing government policy frameworks, strategies and systems.

"Developing and implementing an action-oriented framework that governments and relevant stakeholders can implement in a supportive and complementary manner. This helps in identifying disaster risks so that they can be managed; reduces conflict; and guides investment to improve resilience," states Ms Nyaega.

"Before the rehabilitation of Kuri Kuri borehole, we walked five kilometres to fetch water. Now the water is piped and close to our homes, thanks to the efforts of Kudoti WRUA," Jane Saigon, resident Dol Dol, Laikipia North Sub-county.

