

SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA

There are three major mountain terrain areas in Uganda, the Mt. Elgon, Rwenzori mountains and Virunga mountains.

A. Mt. Elgon Ecosystem

Mt. Elgon is a transboundary ecosystem currently being managed under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC).

On-going programmes and projects on Mt. Elgon include:

1. Mt. Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Programme (MERECP).

This programme was started in response to the need for a regional approach to the management of this transboundary ecosystem as an important part of a water catchment for Lake Victoria, the River Nile and Lake Turkana. This program also falls within the framework of Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) operational strategy 2007-10 under the Environmental and Natural Resources programme area.

MERECP was designed by IUCN and implementation started in September 2005 for a four year period with a total co-financed budget commitment of NOK.342 million (approx. US\$ 4.827 million) by the Governments of Norway and Sweden.

At the mid-term review of the project that was carried out in April, 2008, it was recommended that the programme strategy be redesigned to focus resources towards grass-root level communities living adjacent to the National Parks and Forest Reserves in the Mt. Elgon area of Kenya and Uganda. Under the redesigned programme strategy, implementation is managed by Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) of the East African Community (EAC). Implementation at the country level is coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources (MEMR) in Kenya and Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in Uganda. This implementation period is proposed to cover January 2009 – December 2010 at a total cost of not exceeding NOK 17.775 million equivalent to US\$ 2.661 million.

The key expected outputs here include benefits sharing and co-management models of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation and management around protected areas (PAs) demonstrated successfully by end of 2010; Equity and benefit sharing models/revolving funds that create opportunities for payment of ecosystems goods and services for unproved livelihoods are in place; Linking of livelihoods improvement to climate change mitigation/adaptation demonstrated

successfully by end of 2010 and appropriate institutions are strengthened in support of the transboundary ecosystem approach by end of 2010.

2. The Sio-Malaba-Malakisi Project of Nile Equatoria Lakes Subsidiary Action Programme (NELSAP) of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), which supports the management of water resources of the three river basins within the Lake Victoria Basin namely: Sio/Malakisi, Mara and Kagera Rivers systems. MERECP and NELSAP interventions are being implemented in the districts of Mount Elgon, Kenya and Bududa and Manafwa (Uganda). MERECP can work with this Project to monitor water quality as well as on the process of harmonization of policies and laws;

3. The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS); a Government of Uganda Initiative, which mainly advises on income generating and livelihoods related initiatives in the Districts of Mbale, Sironko, Bududa, Manafwa, Bukwo and Kapchorwa. MERECP interventions are in some of the same sites, and hence, co-benefits and synergy of IGA can be expected;

4. The Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF), which promotes cooperation among Wildlife Protected Areas in six counties including Kenya and Uganda. The main focus is on cross-border law enforcement. LATF is willing to facilitate the harmonization of communication between the Kenya and Uganda Wildlife Institutions. MERECP can interact on subjects such as; control of cross-border wildlife trafficking, radio frequencies, security;

5. The Forests Absorbing Carbon Emissions projects [(FACE Foundation) in collaboration with UWA] which has been involved in restoration of degraded areas; awareness; improved community building through high value crops and on-farm initiatives i.e. woodlots, energy saving stoves and soil conservation initiatives. MERECP can learn about carbon sequestration, cost estimates, and lessons from drivers of community acceptance/rejection of plantations undertaken by FACE in Uganda.

6. The Green Zone Development Project funded by the African Development Bank (ADB), which is being implemented in the tea growing zones in the greater Trans-nzoia and Mount Elgon districts. The strategy is that MERECP could explore synergies in measures related to IGAs.

B. RWENZORI MOUNTAIN ECOSYSTEM

Key projects being implemented in this ecosystem include:

1. Rwenzori Mountains Conservation and Environmental Management Project (RMCEMP)

The Rwenzori mountains National Park (RMNP) was established in 1991 covers nearly 100,000 ha in Western Uganda and comprises the main part of the Rwenzori Mountain chain. Rwenzori has been a focal point for international recognitions and was inscribed as a UN world heritage site in 1994 and is being enlisted as a Ramsar Site for inclusion as a wetland of international importance. Rwenzori is a transboundary massif shared with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where it is protected as the Virunga National Park, also a Ramsar Site and World Heritage site. RMNP is located in the Albertine Rift Mountane Forests Eco-region. A globally unique area with exceptional biodiversity and a priority site for WWF, known as the African Rifts lakes according to WWF's Global Programme the Framework (WWF, 2008) Globally important biodiversity of natural habitats for endangered species and those endemic to the Albertine Rift and a rich and unusual flora.

The current project, Rwenzori Mountains Conservation and Environmental Management Project secured funding from NORAD in October 2004 to cover interventions from 2005 to December 31st 2009.

Goal and Purpose of RMCEMP

The overall goal of the project is that, the Conservation of Rwenzori Mountain ecosystem is enhanced and its biodiversity and water catchment values are maintained in harmony with sustainable utilization of resources for the benefit of Uganda and the International Communities.

The purpose of the project is that the integrity and conservation status of Rwenzori Mountains National Park. (RMNP) is reinforced by the end of year 5.

Key outputs for this project include Management of RMNP strengthened, Financial viability of RMNP enhanced, Mechanisms for assuring sustainable use of in park resources in operation, Effective mechanisms for park community communication and cooperation established, Local government capacity for conservation – focused environmental action planning strengthened, Existing and developing pressure point on the watershed functions and properties of RMNP mitigated, Forest landscape restoration initiated to offer opportunities for sustainable development outside RMNP, Regional process and tools for the conservation of Rwenzori Mountains imitated and developed, Effective project management systems established for the project.

Other projects being implemented in the Rwenzoris include the Eco-Agricultural and livelihoods improvement project implemented by ECO-TRUST and entails promoting agricultural based activities that exhibit limited environmental degradation.

2. Rwenzori Water Tower Project

Activities implemented in this project include developing a framework for multi-stakeholder forum, securing boundaries of catchment area and resolve conflicts, developing an ecosystem management plan and Institutional arrangements for its implementation, enhancing capacity for integrated and ecosystem management, restore the degraded ecosystem, Identifying and promoting activities for improved and sustainable livelihoods, enhancing knowledge on the ecosystem funding for planning and management such as ecosystems assessment (research, monitoring and evaluation and social-economic surveys

C. VIRUNGA MOUNTAINS

1. Mgahinga Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust Project (MBIFCT)

MBIFCT is being implemented in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority and was funded by World Bank.

2. International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) Water Gravity Scheme

The project is being implemented in the communities around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and activities here include Provision of gravity water. Other activities also include Microfinance schemes, and eco-tourism development.

3. Transboundary Core Secretariat

This entity was set up by lead authorities and/ or agencies for wildlife in the three countries of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Its core objective is financial resource mobilization. A ten (10) year strategic plan has been developed and a legal framework is underway. The secretariat is being financed by the Dutch government.