

EU, WWF Uganda promoting environmental conservation and improvement of community livelihoods through innovative approaches

Conserving the Rwenzori Mountains National Park through working with local communities and Uganda's private sector

The European Union (EU) and WWF Uganda Country Office partnered to implement a project called "Sustainable Financing of the Rwenzori Mountains National Park (SFRMNP)". The project aims to promote Community Based Tourism and development of new tourism products to increase revenue for the rural poor living close to Rwenzori Mountain National Park (RMNP). The project is co-funded by EU and French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM) and implemented by WWF Uganda Country Office.

So far, through the project's intervention, three (3) community groups have been supported in the area of capacity strengthening and have also been offered financial support to boost their tourism based activities. One of the beneficiaries of this fund is Busongora Joint Farmers Association, a group of 516 coffee farmers from the frontline communities bordering the Rwenzori

Mountains National Park in Kasese district. The members of the association have been trained in good agricultural practices to improve their coffee yield, value addition and diversification into coffee tourism; a shift from their traditional joint coffee processing and Marketing. They now boast of a new tourism product "The Rwenzori Coffee Experience".

Through various such interlinked interventions (Tourism promotion and environmental conservation), the project aims to restore the integrity of the Rwenzori Mountains, conserve its biological biodiversity, as well as support the improvement of livelihoods of the vulnerable communities bordering the National Park.

As part of its activities, the project is also piloting a Payment for Ecosystem Services; a sustainable financing and conservation scheme where land owners are rewarded

by the private sector that rely on the region's ecosystem for improving land management practices which as a result also improve the water quality and quantity in the region. In this regard, a hydrological and Agronomic study was carried out to inform on the water quality and quantity of the main rivers in Kasese (Mubuku and Nyamwamba). The study recommended best practices that should be adopted by farmers upstream for better land management. In addition, companies in Kasese District that are reliant on the district ecosystem, especially Hydropower companies, are already contributing to the catchment management efforts implemented by WWF and other partners. More companies are expected to join in and offer valuable support to this initiative. The project (SFRMNP) is implemented in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Uganda Tourism Board, National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) and Kasese District Local Government.



One of the snow capped peaks of the Rwenzori Mountain in Western Uganda, along the border with DRC.



Improving water quality and quantity can play a key role in improving ecosystems management and improvement of the livelihoods of people living close to the river banks.

Improving rural livelihoods and reducing green house gas emissions through wide spread access to clean and renewable energy

In March 2016, with funding from the EU, WWF-UCO launched the "Scaling up Rural Electrification Using Innovative Solar Photovoltaic Distribution Models" project and is being implemented in the districts of Kasese, Masindi and Arua. The project builds on the already existing WWF's Champion District Initiative (CDI); a district-led approach towards increasing access to clean and renewable energy for off-grid communities. The new project aims to replace kerosene lighting and provide greater access to electricity for communities living in areas that are currently off the national grid. The overall objective of the project is that by 2025, rural livelihoods are improved and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced through widespread access to clean and renewable sources of energy in Uganda.

Targets to be achieved:

The project aims to achieve the following:

- 17,157 households in rural communities in Kasese, Arua and Masindi have access solar PV power
- 20 SACCOs and organized groups including rural women, men and youth to be identified and trained to manage solar mini-grids
- Capacity of 20 CBOs to be strengthened to distribute, install and manage solar PV technology
- 200 small businesses (bars, restaurants, hair salons, phone charging booths) to benefit from 20 mini-grids to be set up
- 50 social institutions (30 schools and 20 health centres) to be supplied with solar PV systems of 1000W

Through the promotion of solar power for both households and institutions, the standard of living for the benefiting communities shall significantly improve while cutting carbon emissions through the use of clean and renewable energy alternatives. The adoption and strengthening of sustainable financing mechanisms of the RMNP, shall ensure long term financial stability of the RMNP. Through both of these EU supported initiatives WWF believes that together, they are significantly contributing to conservation of Uganda's biological biodiversity whilst improving livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities.



Solar PV can play a key role increasing access to clean and renewable energy for off-grid communities.