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Introduction

The changing climate is no longer an abstract issue and the realities of its impacts are being felt by everyone and everywhere. Africa and Rwanda in particular, is no exception to the effects of this change in climate- affecting millions of people already and thwarting their efforts to escape poverty.

Against this harsh reality, it's imperative to speed up the integration of climate risk considerations into policy in order to ensure that development proceeds along paths resilient to climate change.

Using funds provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Climate Change and Development – Adapting by REducing vulnerability (CC DARE) Programme jointly implemented by UNEP and UNDP is supporting countries in Sub Saharan Africa with their priority needs for adaptation and Rwanda is amongst them. The programme is providing targeted and flexible support that helps integrate climate change issues into their development planning and decision-making frameworks. The overarching aim of CC DARE

is to improve the ability of countries to remove barriers and create opportunities for integrating adaptation into their national development agendas with emphasis on meeting the identified country specific needs using quick and tailored support that reinforces ongoing initiatives on climate change adaptation, and strengthening existing national institutions so that they can be useful in mainstreaming adaptation into development planning processes beyond the project.

As part of the Rwanda's development efforts, the integration of long-term climate change adaptation activities into their national planning process was facilitated and achieved through the implementation of two projects titled

1. Enhancing Capacity Building and Raising Awareness on Climate Change for a Sensitive Community in Rwanda.
2. Adapting to Climate Change through Land and Biodiversity Conservation.



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These projects laid the groundwork for adopting adaptation consideration into regular policy development activities in the country.

Problems addressed by the CC DARE Projects in Rwanda

Rwanda has a population of over nine million and is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. This exerts a lot of pressure on the natural resources of the country, particularly its land cover (forests and wetlands). It is estimated that in the past two decades, Rwanda has lost about 60 percent of its forest cover. The 1994 genocide also led to a lot of economic destruction and setback, particularly in its human resources and infrastructure, which has compounded the inadequate availability of data and information on key socio-economic and natural systems such as in the areas of climate and environment. After the 1994 war and genocide in Rwanda, many displaced persons and refugees returned and, haphazardly and inappropriately settled in some of the most fertile but physically and environmentally marginal lands. Settlements sprang up at the tops and risky slopes of mountains leading to land clearing and extensive degradation. The environmental burden caused by the newly settled human activities such as deforestation and over cultivation on steep slopes went beyond the tolerance level of the natural ecosystem. The loss of vegetation cover accompanied by unprecedented

soil loss and degradation on hill slopes has recently produced landslides and severe flooding in low land areas of the country resulting to loss of lives and destruction of infrastructure, particularly in the Gishwati area of the Nyabihu District.

Despite the fact that Rwanda has also made advances in environmental protection and measures have been taken to tackle problems related to environmental degradation, the country still faces many challenges. Two main challenges are:

1. The traditional and cultural mindset, poverty and inadequate behavioral change exert strong influence on participation in environmental activities. Inadequate information and awareness of Rwandan communities on climate change present serious barriers to the country's efforts in tackling climate change challenges, particularly adaptation and its integration to national development. Existing government and civil society institutions at every level also lack the knowledge, skills and capacities to fully act on changing local population mindset and practices. Intensive public sensitization, awareness and capacity building are expected to provide the required change.
2. Inadequacies in the enabling environments such as appropriate institutional and regulatory frameworks, particularly at the Local





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Government, present hurdles that must be overcome for long term and sustainable efforts to address environmental issues, particularly climate change.

Against this backdrop, the Rwandan - CC DARE projects addressed these two main challenges through two national NGOs; the Nile Basin Discourse Forum (NBDF) and Rwanda Environmental Non-Governmental Forum (RENGOF) projects.

Both projects were designed to enhance capacity and raise awareness of a large percentage of the population of Rwanda to influence their perception and participation in the implementation of climate change programmes in the country. Prior to the CC DARE Programme, the Ministry of Natural Resources of Rwanda conducted a study to analyze the environmental vulnerability of Gishwati forest area and produced the Gishwati Land Use Map with recommendations. The study classified the area into three categories (very high risky zone, risky zone, and moderate zone). One of the recommendations was to move communities from the very high risk zone and resettle them in moderate to less risky zones. As a result, 304 families living in the very high risky zone were asked by the local authority to halt agricultural activities while the relocation site is being secured for them. The RENGOF – CC DARE project is designed to

produce a Land Suitability and Land Use Plan for the rehabilitation of lands vacated by the re-settled communities. The Project provides the Nyabihu, particularly the Gishwati Local Government Authorities with a tool for the rehabilitation of the degraded lands through Government and donor intervention such as the proposed climate change adaptation initiatives such as those planned under the LDCF and AAP projects. Although this project is intervening only in the Gishwati area of the Nyabihu District where the climate change impacts are severest, similar challenges exist in all districts of Rwanda as this country is recognized as the ‘country of a thousand hills’. Hence, with available human and financial resources the up-scaling and replicability of the activities are high in the country. Other countries within the sub-region would also benefit from the experiences, which will be shared according to planned channels of communication and information sharing in the project.

The objective

The main objective of CC DARE interventions in Rwanda was to enhance and build systemic, institutional and individual capacity of the population and provide them with skills and tools to enable them face the challenges of climate change, remove barriers to climate change adaptation



and initiate the process of mainstreaming climate change adaptation into the country's development frameworks.

How the Activities were Implemented

The activities of the projects were achieved through consultation, stakeholder participation and partnerships as noted in the following paragraphs.

1. Both the NBDF and RENGOF projects had public sensitization and awareness activities. Using consultation and joint implementation of some of the activities were necessary and carried out accordingly. Firstly the inception workshop to introduce the projects to major stakeholders was jointly conducted in the Local Government Area of Nyabihu District. Key stakeholders of both projects, especially local government authorities were invited to Gishwati area and the concepts of the projects and the expected roles and responsibilities of partners were clearly explained.
2. Partnerships were forged between various Civil Society Networks both nationally and regionally. Key NGO and Media Networks to conduct the training of Trainers and those Trainers who would in turn proceed to train other



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national stakeholders were identified and the training was led by the NBDF and conducted by the Farmers Link in Uganda. Civil Society organizations and media representatives were trained on climate change science and negotiations and on climate change issues as they affect agriculture and food security, forestry and ecosystem management, population pressure and migration, sustainable development, community based adaptation and gender. They also received training on climate change reporting. To enhance their capacities and facilitate reporting and further training of communities in the districts, these NGOs and Journalists were provided with information, education and communication (IEC) materials. The IEC materials were produced and disseminated in different formats as print and electronic (radio, television, and website) materials.

3. The RENGOF project went further to complement the general public awareness and sensitization campaigns with small-scale demonstration activities as learning-by-doing exercises. Sensitized and capacitated stakeholders easily accepted ownership, willingly took up responsibilities in the project, were prepared to adjust attitudes for the sustainable carry-on of the project activities even after the end of the project. Demonstration activities were excellent in capturing near accurate estimates and information and contributed immensely to the design of the Land Suitability and Land Use Plan. The process of implementation of the demonstration activities was consultative and inclusive. Communities were consulted as to the identification of the lands to be used for the demonstration activities, the types of plant species to be used in the demonstrations and they physically participated in the planting and management of the vegetation cover in the demonstration sites.
4. The process to revise and develop the Land Suitability and Land Use Plan for the Nyabihu District was also consultative and participa-





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tory. A Consultant was hired to lead the process and ensure close working relations with key stakeholders. The process entailed data collection exercises through simple surveys, desk research, processing of the data and updating of existing data bank. The process also included group and/or one-to-one consultative meetings with the community, Local Government Authorities, Government Ministries and Departments, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Extensive national and international review was conducted and the final version of the Plan was subjected to an extensive national validation process.

5. The validated Land Suitability and Land Use Plan is finally handed over to the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, in its capacity as the UNFCCC Focal Secretariat and the arm of Government responsible for implementation of the Climate Change Convention and to the Local Government Authorities of the Nyabihu District and the Gishwati Area for marketing to Government and other development partners. REMA and the LGAs of Nyabihu and Gishwati will particularly use the Plan for the implementation of climate change adaptation initiatives such the LDCF and AAP.
6. In addition to the national CC DARE adaptation activities in Rwanda, other adaptation measures are being implemented by different stakeholders. These are, in some cases, isolated initiatives, which are not being documented and disseminated to ensure their replicability by other actors. Efforts have been made to evaluate and document best practices in all of these adaptation initiatives and the CC DARE activities implemented by NBDF and REN-GOF. This was achieved through a consultant to lead the evaluation process, production of informational materials highlighting best practices on climate change adaptation for CSOs and other, production of a documentary film on climate change risks and adaptation best practices and dissemination of the results of the study and the information materials on climate change adaptation best practices through a workshop of all stakeholders. The major stakeholders that participated in the process include government institutions, academic institutions, researchers, civil society organizations, international NGOs, private sector, etc.
7. Information sharing and the dissemination of experiences and lessons learned from the implementation of the Rwanda - CC DARE project to other local and national government authorities in Rwanda and within the sub-re-





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gion and Africa would be achieved through the participation of representatives of the projects in Rwanda in local, national, regional and international climate change adaptation fora. Policy briefs and newsletters and regular activity reports are also posted and available on the NBDF, RENGOF and CC DARE websites. Bi-annual reports are also produced by the CC DARE Management Team and shared with stakeholders during international meetings such as the Sessions of the UNFCCC Bodies, AMCEN, etc.

The Results Achieved

The two Rwanda-CC DARE projects have contributed to the development of a sensitized, aware and capacitated percent of the Rwandan population of including communities, civil society organizations, extension staff and local government authorities who are ready to offer services, take ownership and cooperate in building resilient communities and ecosystems, and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change on the economy of the country;

The activities have also:

- Concretized and demonstrated small scale activities as a measure to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change and as means to

get accurate information and insight into utilization of ecosystem management as viable adaptation option to the adverse effects of climate change;

- Designed Land Suitability Plan consisting of 1:1,000,000 and 1:50,000 soil maps is now available to local government authorities as a tool for stimulating the implementation of climate change adaptation initiatives in Gishwati Area, Nyabihu District and for replication in other vulnerable regions, areas and Districts of Rwanda. The Tool will also enable the Local Government Authorities to relocate communities to lower and less risky ground. The areas that have been vacated by the relocated communities are now rehabilitated and re-vegetated using natural and indigenous plant and grass species.
- Shared experiences and knowledge on planning for mainstreaming of climate change adaptation at the local government level.

At national level; ; trainings of journalists on climate change reporting led to more articles being published in various newspapers, broadcasting on National Television (TVR), Radio Station talk-shows on climate change in various languages (English, Kinyarwanda and French). Several articles' contributed to the NBDF Rwanda





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newsletter on climate change issues have been published and shared with various stakeholders. Training of Trainers on climate change saw at least 45 trainees empowered to disseminate the knowledge to others in various areas of interventions as well as 36 journalists improved their communication skills in reporting on climate change.

Trainees made very important recommendations during the course evaluation and these include the extension of the training to other CSO actors, particularly other NGO networks, provision of the training materials to trainees to replicate to their members and staff, support study tours to enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudinal changes so far gained and increase period of implementation for this kind of project.

At district and provincial levels, about 200 citizens in the five provinces of Rwanda participated in the sensitization workshops through cost sharing partnerships between NBDF Rwanda and five of its member NGOs that were among the CSOs trained under the Training of Trainers initiative of CC DARE. These workshops were information gathering and sharing strategies to enrich the scope of knowledge on climate change concepts in the country. In participation were Mayors of districts, field officers in environment and agriculture, local NGOs in various provinces, private firm owners,

religious leaders, teachers, opinion leaders, and media enterprises.

How The Project Addressed Sustainability and Cross-Cutting Themes

To address sustainability and cross-cutting themes during implementation, country partners and CC DARE Team adopted:



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CC DARE: Climate Change and Development – Adapting by Reducing Vulnerability

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1. Inclusiveness and Partnership to reach project goals:
 - a. Key stakeholders such REMA/UNFCCC Focal Secretariat, UNDP/UNEP country office, LDCF – AAP National Consultant and Local Government Officials were fully involved from the inception of the projects and are also members of the Project Steering Committee.
 - b. The development of a pool of trainers from Civil Society Organizations (Networks of NGOs and Journalists) promotes the availability of a critical mass to enable continuous capacity building and sensitization of communities;
 - c. RENGOF collaborated with REMA, UNDP/UNEP country office and Nyabihu District Officials in mobilizing and capacitating the grassroots level communities through workshops and community meetings with Local Authority and using TV and Radio programmes.
 - d. Full involvement of the communities in the Gishwati area in all decision making, facilitation and participation in project activities particularly in the:
 - choice of land for demonstration activities;
 - choice of plant and grass species to be used in the demonstration activities; and
 - mobilization and sensitization of communities on the need for relocation from high risk to low risk areas of the District;
 - e. Maintaining close working relations and partnership with the National Consultants for the UNDP LDCF and AAP Projects for which the outputs of the CC DARE projects would serve as inputs.
 - f. The determination, through the demonstration activities, of the major:
 - plant and grass species that allow soil conservation and reduction in soil erosion in a sustainable manner;
 - fruit trees (apples and tomatoes) that will do well in both the agricultural and pasture lands of Gishwati for the elevation of food security and economic levels of the communities;
 - g. The development of the Land Suitability to identify and take into consideration the potentials available for the establishment of





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carbon sinks and participation in the global carbon trade;

- h. Forging partnership between the Local Government Authorities of the Districts and ISAE, ISAR, RHODA for the implementation of the Land Suitability and Land Use Plan
- i. Incentives for resettlement and up-keep of communities from high to low risk areas particularly alternative enterprises and income sources to maintain and improve their livelihoods have been identified and include non timber forest products, biogas and solar energy sources, handcraft, new modern market, poultry and small stocks (sheep and goats) and ecotourism activities;

is highly growing at a very accelerated pace. What the Rwanda – CC DARE Projects has particularly generated is to awaken the thirst and hunger for awareness and capacity building on climate change issues leading to increased demand at all levels as realized from the various recommendations made by participants, policy makers, local investors, academic institutions, local administrative units, etc. The achievements and interest generated by the mode of support despite its limited funding and life span, merit replication in all parts of the country with similar characteristics employing ap-

Opportunity for Replication and up-scaling

The expected outputs of the completed Rwanda-CC DARE projects have been achieved but for a limited percent of the population and national economy. In the various sensitization workshops, participants mainly those who operate at grassroot levels, have expressed need for more support to integrate, translate and extend all the projects's activities through NGO members and other Forums to all sectors in the communities where vulnerability



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appropriate up-scaling of funding, activities and coverage.

Interacting with local level communities, sharing knowledge and resources at all these levels have proven of great demand for CC DARE activities in Rwanda. What is needed is further transferring and detail interpretation of the products in indigenous and grassroot level languages in a decentralized sense so that at every sector and level of the communities has access to the information and is able to utilize it to build and strengthen resilience to climate change vulnerability. Regional and transboundary strategies may also be supported to ensure wider involvement and support beyond Rwanda.

In addressing gender, minorities and other vulnerable groups, partnerships between Civil Society Networks, Government (Central and Local) and grassroots level communities were found to be effective. These partnerships need to be strengthened and expanded.

As indicated in the outputs and outcomes of the project activities, mass participation was limited due to limited time and finances. More support to further extend the project's activities and integrating them in all sectoral and household levels is needed urgently as the impacts of climate change are not patient. Loss of life, loss of property, food

insecurity, emerging diseases are very rampant occurrences that all the grassroot levels cannot adapt to without extra support.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Based on the expectations at the onset of the Project and the highly interactive style of delivery, the training workshops, sharing of information, interviews, and other modes of sensitization and awareness raising activities have been found to be very effective in generating and sharing information on climate change, lessons learnt in reducing vulnerability and adapting to climate change and the process of mainstreaming climate change into development activities at local institutional and national levels. The partnerships established have been found to be very effective. It is strongly recommended that this activity should be replicated and upscaled to include other actors and regions of the country.

An effective mentoring program should be developed that can complement the workshop learning programs in future. This can be specifically tailored to suit various media houses. However this can be best achieved after creating a core group of trained journalists who can act as the key players in the mentoring process.

To support the already established initiatives



through the NBDF Rwanda-CC DARE Project components and others in place, joint initiatives at community levels maybe through CBOs and CSO; self help strategies, establishment of community coordination units to increase sensitization and raising awareness on climate change issues, women and youth groups, cooperatives, working together to coordinate these activities should be forged.

The process for the updating of the Land Suitability and Land Use Map and Plan of the Gishwati has been found to be very effective in providing a useful tool to the Local Government

Authorities of the Nyabihu District to enable them manage the ecosystems of the Area. The concrete demonstration activities have been found to provide useful information. With this tool, the Local Government Authorities of the District and the Government of Rwanda are also able to access and utilize bigger funding programmes for the implementation of climate change adaptation activities.

It is recommended that such an activity should be replicated and up-scaled in other districts of Rwanda that have similar vulnerabilities.





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Acknowledgement

Funds for the implementation of CCDARE Programme were provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

The Programme is hosted by UNEP Regional Office for Africa and supported by the director, Mr. Mounkaila Goumandakoye. The government of Rwanda, the national and international institutions and the stakeholders made the implementation of this project possible. The project team of NBDF and RENGOF guided the implementation in Rwanda. The review suggestions provided by Drs. Richard Munang and Johnson Nkem greatly improved the document. The publication of the document was facilitated by Ms Angele Luh and Sylvia Kariuki.

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