

# Diversifying ecosystems services for additional income in the Albertine Rift of Uganda



**PRESA has** partnered with two local organizations that are helping communities adopt sustainable land use practices and benefit from stronger links to markets for ecosystem services.

Photo \ NAHI

**T**he Albertine Rift in western Uganda rises from an altitude of 700 metres to 5,000 metres at the peaks of the Rwenzori Mountains. It is a nature paradise of trees, plants, animals, birds and fish.

Population increase, and the resultant demand for agricultural land and timber, necessitates means of ensuring that ecological resources are not exploited to depletion. Rewarding communities for environmental services is one way of doing this as it creates incentives for conservation. However, the development of

reward mechanisms requires a thorough understanding of the ecosystem services in question, potential buyers, intermediaries and suppliers, institutional arrangements and the policy environment.

In western Uganda, PRESA has partnered with two local organizations: Ecotrust Uganda and Nature Harness Initiatives (NAHI). Both are helping communities adopt sustainable land use practices and benefit from stronger links to markets for ecosystem services.

## Activities

### *Ecotrust and trees for carbon*

Ecotrust is facilitating negotiations for carbon payments to encourage farmers to plant trees. Carbon funds are provided by companies wishing to offset their greenhouse gas emissions through afforestation and reforestation programmes.

Farmers participating in the Trees for Global Benefits programme are already earning income from the sale of carbon. Apart from providing additional income, trees protect soils from erosion while providing shade, medicine, fruit,

wood fuel and construction materials.

PRESA is working with Ecotrust to assess carbon stocks accumulated in different agroforestry systems in order to have more farmers benefiting from carbon payments.

### ***The work of Nature Harness Initiatives in the Albertine Rift***

With assistance from PRESA, Nature Harness Initiatives sought information on the status of environmental services in the Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetland landscape and Wambabya riverine forests system.

A number of intermediary institutions that are attuned to rewards for environmental services schemes already exist in the area; hence, there are immense opportunities to easily and quickly bring together seller communities through existing farmer institutions.

In the Wambabya riverine forest system, Nature Harness has begun working with private sector firms to aid in developing plans for managing and offsetting their biodiversity footprints.

### **Next steps**

Researchers collaborating with PRESA will assess the socio-economic impacts of community carbon projects. The research work will support the design of suitable payment mechanisms that take into account the interests, needs and cultural values of local inhabitants.

PRESA – Pro-poor Rewards for Environmental Services in Africa is working at sites in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Guinea to facilitate fair and effective agreements between stewards and beneficiaries of environmental services. Voluntary, conditional and negotiated agreements can reward poor farmers for good land use practices, while ensuring a clean and sustainable supply of environmental services for local and global communities.

This programme is implemented by the World Agroforestry Centre, with funding from the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the European Commission and the Government of Finland. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders.



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Both Ecotrust and Nature Harness are driving policy engagement activities with public agencies while leading research aimed at supporting the expansion and improvement of existing mechanisms.

PRESA is exploring sustainable 'basketry' as an income generating activity and how this can evolve as a viable industry considering the triple-bottom line principles of sustainability. Eco-labeling could be a potential trajectory once farmers gain confidence and create a brand that can be eco-labeled.

Coffee certification is one way of increasing the premium value of sustainable coffee production. By working with Ecotrust Uganda and Nature Harness, PRESA plans to expand the geographical scope of the Trees for Global Benefits project to Central Uganda, specifically Mabira Forest and focus more on the ecosystem services provided by coffee.

### **Partners**

- Ecotrust (Uganda)
- Nature Harness Initiatives
- Makerere University

### **Stakeholders**

- Smallholder farmers
- Farmers engaged in carbon forestry activities
- Women's basket making groups
- International carbon buyers
- International buyers of biodiversity offsets

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