

Leaders to create shared value over water resources within the Ewaso Ng'iro river basin ecosystem



Leaders from counties within Kenya's Ewaso Ng'iro river ecosystem have vowed to integrate initiatives to create a coherent and inclusive use of water resources within the basin.

During the inter-country dialogue held on 7-8 December 2018 at Samburu Lodge in Samburu County, the Deputy Governor of Isiolo County Abdi Hussein emphasised the need for dialogue between water users upstream, such as Narumoru Water Resources Users Association, and those further downstream, such as Koru-Bisan in order to ensure sustainable utilisation of the resources within the Ewaso Ng'iro river basin for improved community livelihoods. Issues identified as the main threats to the basin ecosystem include sand harvesting, deforestation, water pollution and unsustainable investments.

"Water flow has reduced from 300 to 60 days a year because of ecosystem degradation as a result of unsustainable human activities within the basin. The reduced flow has created water resource-based conflicts between farmers and pastoralists," said Hussein, speaking in Samburu. "There is a need for leaders from communities within the basin to spearhead dialogue."

Hussein appealed to the county governments, in conjunction with the water resources authority and relevant stakeholders, to strengthen the capacity of the water resource users associations in the 10 counties covering the Ewaso Ng'iro basin.

The 2-day Inter-country dialogue—jointly organized by Wetlands International, IMPACT Kenya and the county government of Samburu—brought together 60 participants including the Deputy Governors of

Isiolo, Samburu and Laikipia, County Assembly Speakers and Chief Officers for Water from the respective counties.

Hon. John Mwaniki, the Deputy Governor of Laikipia county, urged all stakeholders to lobby for joint budget allocation for management of water resources by all 10 counties within the basin.

“We have a common problem that is affecting our economic growth. This is the degradation of the Ewaso Ng’iro basin ecosystem,” Mwaniki said.

He stressed the need for each county to create separate budget allocations for water management. He also emphasised the need to formulate and implement policies and laws to control investments along the riparian land and enforce corporate social responsibility by commercial beneficiaries within the basin. He further recommended the formation of an inclusive multi-agency enforcement team comprising of key stakeholders from the relevant institutions to protect the basin.

Titus Wamae from Wetlands International noted the need for social inclusion, particularly from the most vulnerable groups including young people and women. “Communities particularly the vulnerable groups such youth and women are the most dependent on the Ewaso Ng’iro ecosystems for their livelihoods and consequently the most severely affected by ecosystem degradation. Involvement of these groups in local level planning and empowerment through income generating activities would enhance their livelihoods and ensure a healthy ecosystem”