**INTRODUCTION**

Lake Victoria with a surface area of 68,800 sq km is Africa’s largest lake, the largest tropical lake in the world and the planet’s second largest freshwater lake. Only North America's Lake Superior is larger. Lake Victoria and its basin cover an area of 193,000km² with an average population of over 40 million. The lake and the basin have abundant resources such as fish, forests, minerals, wildlife, water etc. However, there are also numerous environmental, health, and socio-economic challenges that cause the populations to overexploit these resources in an unsustainable manner.

The Basin supports a fairly dense rural population that depends almost entirely on the natural resources. Human activity has resulted in increased deforestation, poor agriculture and land use practices, air and water pollution and overfishing among others. Consequently, the natural resources cannot adequately sustain livelihoods of the inhabitants of the basin hence the resultant manifestations in ill health and malnutrition. The interrelations between health and environmental challenges in the basin must be addressed concurrently in an integrated manner in order to build synergies between the sectors in a bid to achieve sustainable development. The integrated Population, Health and Environment (PHE) approach would therefore be a preferred option.

**What is Integrated Population, Health and Environment?**

Population, Health and Environment (PHE) is an approach to development that integrates health and environmental conservation initiatives in order to seek synergistic successes for greater conservation and human welfare outcomes than single-sector approaches. PHE operates with the assumption that people, their health, and the environment are interrelated and interdependent; changes in the number, state, and/or distribution of any of the above affects...
the other because human needs, their livelihood and a healthy environment are linked by chains of cause and effect.

PHE approaches represent a variety of efforts to bring a holistic, integrated set of activities and services to the communities. It refers to a flexible set of interventions or activities that communities, partner groups or non-governmental organizations adopt in response to unmet community needs for improved health services, livelihoods and natural resource management. PHE projects strive to simultaneously improve access to health services and assist communities to manage their natural resources in ways that improve their health and livelihoods and to conserve the critical ecosystems upon which they depend. The underlying philosophy is fundamentally one of integration and multi-sectoral partnerships.

What is **POPULATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT (PHE)?**

**P** stands for **POPULATION**: Services targeting Population include: Voluntary Family Planning (Birth Spacing or limiting births), Sexual and Reproductive Health, Alternative livelihoods, etc.

**H** stands for **HEALTH**: This includes a range of services such as: Maternal, Neonatal and Child health, malaria prevention, safe water and sanitation, prevention of communicable diseases, Nutrition, HIV/AIDS etc.

**E** stands for **ENVIRONMENT**: Environmental conservation, Fisheries management, forest management and governance, conservation of endangered species, etc.

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The Value-Added of PHE Approaches
Evaluations conducted in different parts of the world reveal that PHE initiatives are cost efficient, generate added value and can create synergies not found in vertical programs and projects. In general PHE programs:

- Strengthen voluntary family planning efforts, particularly in remote underserved communities.
- Create greater access to men for communicating family planning messages and improving male involvement in family planning decisions.
- Create greater access to youth especially young men who are traditionally out of reach for family planning program.
- Increase credit access and labor participation by women in economic development activities, which influences gender norms and capacity for decision-making.
- Increase benefits to environment and conservation programs due to increased community support and buy-in as basic needs are met.
- Contribute to better management and conservation of natural resources, improved land use practices and eases population pressures on local ecosystems.
- Reduce indoor air pollution and logging through promotion of fuel-efficient stoves,
• Improve, diversify and create opportunities for sustainable livelihoods by reducing community morbidity and mortality and dependence on finite natural resources.
• Can improve access to water and sanitation
• Promote sustainable agriculture for improved child nutrition and food security,
• Enhance malaria prevention through bio-environmental controls and promotion of insecticide-treated bed nets,
• Improve access to appropriate latrines and promotion of other hygiene behaviours
• Improve management of protected areas

THE LVBC POPULATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT (PHE) PROGRAM

Cognizant of the interrelationships and the interlinkages between environment and health, LVBC with support from USAID EA regional office designed an integrated Population, Health and Environment (PHE) Program that addresses in an integrated manner the multifaceted health and environmental challenges in the basin.

The program aims at strengthening PHE regional coordination, knowledge management and advocacy. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the sustainable development of the Lake Victoria Basin through integration of Population, Health and Environmental conservation initiatives.

i) Specific Objectives
  i) Establish and operationalize national PHE frameworks
  ii) Mainstream PHE into regional and national level policies and institutional frameworks
  iii) Promote generation of PHE information and Knowledge Management in the region
  iv) Strengthen PHE coordination at local, national and regional levels
  v) Reduce environmental degradation and increase access to and utilization of quality population and health services
  vi) Increase the participation of women, men and youth in sustainable livelihood improvement initiatives

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHE PROGRAM

The integrated PHE program at LVBC is not just a health project. It is a cross-cutting initiative that aims at adding value to the environmental conservation programs of the Lake Victoria Basin. It is implemented by a PHE team of health, environmental, and communication experts. The team has undergone induction on the PHE approach and they are collectively responsible for ensuring that the PHE approach is integrated in all projects and programs of the Lake Victoria Basin. At Partner States level, the LVB PHE Program is implemented by the national PHE networks that work closely with the National Program Coordinators for the LVEMP II and LVWATSAN Programs as well as the MERECP stakeholders.
ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LVBC PHE PROGRAM

1. In collaboration with partners (ECSA, AFIDEP, RCQH, HOPE-LVB and CTPH) Planned and hosted a PHE symposium at the 4th EAC Annual Health Scientific Conference in Kigali, Rwanda in March 2013: The conference mandated Lake Victoria Basin Commission to be the regional coordination office for PHE in Eastern Africa.

2. Introduced and promoted the PHE program to the Sectoral Council of Ministers (SeCoM) for Lake Victoria Basin

3. Held PHE induction workshops for the LVBC Senior Management, all project/program coordinators, and LVBC National Focal Point Officers from the Ministries of Environment, EAC Affairs and Health

4. Established a regional integrated PHE Technical Working Group (TWG) for the Lake Victoria Basin and inducted the TWG on PHE. The TWG has representation from governmental and non-governmental organizations

5. Held a PHE induction/sensitization meeting for committees on environment and health from the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and the national parliaments of the EAC Partner States

6. Held an induction and capacity building workshop for Permanent/Principal Secretaries for the Ministries responsible for EAC Affairs, Health, Environment and Planning.

7. The PHE Program facilitated participation of a delegation from the LVBC and Partner states to the following international conferences and workshops held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia in November 2013:  
   a) Population and Sustainable Development Alliance (PSDA) workshop   
   b) M-health international workshop   
   c) PHE international conference

LVBC PHE induction meeting for Members of EALA and Members of the National Parliaments (25th-26th July 2013)
d) International conference on Family Planning

 Networks and collaborations were established with the following organizations:
  i) Population Action International
  ii) Population Reference Bureau
  iii) Danish Family Planning Association
  iv) Woodrow Wilson Centre

8. In February 2014, at the invitation of the Population Action International, the LVBC PHE Regional Program Coordinator

   i) In New York City, attended the UN General Assembly 8th Open Working Group meeting on drafting of the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals
   ii) In Washington DC, made a presentation on the EAC, LVBC and PHE to scholars at the Woodrow Wilson Center
   iii) In Washington DC, made a PHE Congressional Briefing at the Capitol Hill
9. Established a Regional Policy Steering Committee (RPSC) for the PHE Program comprising of Permanent/Principal Secretaries for Ministries responsible for Environment, Health, Planning, EAC Affairs and Local Government: *The RPSC is providing policy guidance to the PHE Program*

10. Supported the establishment and strengthening of PHE national networks in the EAC Partner States of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The networks have representation from governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as academic institutions.

11. PHE Program developed a regional Monitoring & Evaluation Framework and Plan (2015-2020) that provide a structured mechanism for the day to day tracking of progress in PHE Programming in the basin.

12. The program developed a regional PHE Operational Plan (2015-2020) for the basin that guides PHE actors on priority intervention areas and sites in the basin.

13. The PHE Program conducted a study on the Inter-linkages between Population, Health, Environment and Sustainable Development in Lake Victoria Basin. The study findings are informing PHE Policy, Programming and Resource mobilization.

14. The programme is integrating Population and Health into the LVBC environmental management projects and programs namely;
   i) Mt. Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Program (MERECP)
   ii) Lake Victoria Environmental Management Program (LVEMP II)
   iii) Planning for Resilience in East Africa Through Policy, Adaptation, Research and Economic Development (PREPARED)
## LVBC PHE Collaborating Organizations

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<td>i) Population Action International- Washington DC</td>
<td>i) OSIENALA (Friends of Lake Victoria)</td>
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<td>iii) Danish Family Planning Association- Denmark</td>
<td>iii) Conservation Through Public Health-Uganda</td>
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<td>iv) The Lucille and Packard Foundation</td>
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<td>v) Woodrow Wilson Center- Washington DC</td>
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<td>ix) Health of People and the Environment Project in Lake Victoria Basin – HOPE-LVB</td>
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### Contacts

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