



Water for Life Newsletter

February 2021

Message to the reader, from the head of NABU's Africa team and deputy head of international affairs and the project coordinator

Dear partners, colleagues and supporters,

We are glad to present you the second edition of the Water for Life newsletter. Despite the challenges we have all faced the last year, we were still able to create positive change.

Still, we expect a very positive 2021. In this year many activities will be developed, such as the research and implementation of different approaches for using water hyacinth biomass, interventions will take place in various businesses to increase their sustainability, the restoration of degraded ecosystems in the project's region, the establishment of the Multi-Stakeholder-Partnership structure, conducting the behavioural change campaign and many others. About those, you can find further information in this edition's newsletter.

We hope you enjoy!



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Water, pollution and water hyacinth at Lake Tana watershed

Around four million people reside in the Lake Tana Watershed (LTW), and are directly or indirectly dependent on the water resources of the region. In the present scenario, the water bodies have been challenged by different threats, which mainly emanate from humans, like agriculture, a dense population and in parts highly degraded landscapes. One of the main threats to the ecosystems is pollution. The LTW water resources are mainly jeopardized due to untreated inflow of sewage from cities and communities, residues of pesticides and inorganic fertilizers, increased turbidity due to severe erosion of soil and eutrophication. Those factors combined induce the infestation of the rapidly spreading exotic weed water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), which can induce serious ecological and socio-economic problems.



In this way, there is an alarming mixture of the presence of an invasive exotic weed combined with

the perfect condition for its proliferation, promoted by untreated sewage discharge, industrial wastewater and agricultural runoff. Hence, in order to address long lasting solutions for these problems, the project “Water for Life” aims to tackle those issues with a multi-disciplinary approach.

For the first part, with the support and leading action of The Debre Tabor University, a monitoring program will take place to determine the water hyacinth areal coverage and distribution in the LTW. To control the present infestation, the University of Gondar will lead an innovative approach for testing alternative utilization of water hyacinth biomass for producing organic fertilizer in Yeshiha Gomengie kebele and at Gondar Zuria woreda.

This fertilizer will therefore serve as an inexpensive alternative to the ones being currently used, and at the same time contribute to control the proliferation of the weed. Last, but not least, the project will also count on the support of German partner, the Snow Leopard initiative. They will develop a production of BioChar out of water hyacinth biomass, as well.

BioChar is a natural soil enhancer, which has multiple advantages for agriculture. This activity is still in negotiation, but is planned to start in mid-2021.



To avoid further pollution in the water bodies and as second step for minimizing the harms presented so far, a strategy is being planned to address companies and industries in the region. This activity aims to increase the sustainability of local businesses by the means of trainings, interventions, structural improvements, and others. The plans are ranging from small to big interventions, and among the smaller ones, a campaign for replacing plastic bags for reusable textile ones will be taking place in six kebeles within the region.



For the biggest interventions, a study will be prepared in the next months to find solutions to improve the wastewater treatment systems of three different industries and the Bahir Dar municipal solid waste management system, aiming to reduce the presence of harmful compounds in the natural water bodies of the region. All those interventions will be supported by an annual water quality monitoring in critical locations, which will be conducted by the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute, Bahir Dar Fishery & Other Aquatic Life Research Centre.

The multiple partners involved in the undertaking of those activities are a confirmation that a

stakeholder network is needed to create change. With the MSP (multiple stakeholder partnership) structure of the project, key stakeholders strive to guarantee and attain a sustainable and adequate water supply for all users in the future.



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Multi-stakeholder Partnership (MSP) Structure Implementation

The United Nations (UN) has established in 2015 an ambitious plan, known as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and supported by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve numerous targets in many thematic fields such as people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The latest, is emphasized through the SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), which main objective is to enhance and promote inclusive partnerships, aiming to share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources to support the achievement of all other 16 SDGs in all countries, in particular developing nations.

With this in mind, the WfL project and its MSP approach at the Lake Tana watershed (LTW) aims to sustain the functionality of the regional water bodies as an important supra-regional water supplier in the long term. The particular nature of a complex stakeholder network with poor coordination, makes the decision making processes in the region challenging, and therefore hinders the possibility to achieve positive change on environmental protection. Hence, the mobilization, engagement and empowerment of the local stakeholders into a structure are essential to guarantee the achievement of the project's goals, and contribute to the UN 2030 Agenda. So far, 123 stakeholders were identified in the region, being them divided into the following sectors:

- 42 Private companies
- 25 Civil societies
- 5 Local community institutes

- 9 Academia
- 42 Public/governmental sectors

The MSP structure is organized into:

- An annual WfL conference;
- A Board with 33 members;
- A Secretariat with 12 members;
- The Working Groups (at regional and woreda levels), that are divided into 6 different themes.

The success of the strategy is based on a continuous process with regular meetings, and currently has been challenging to conduct those encounters due to COVID-19 and the political instability in northern parts of the country. Nevertheless, the situation is improving, and we are very positive that creating significant change will be possible in the next years with the MSP structure.

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Ecosystem Restoration

Restoration and sustainable management of degraded land and forest are a priority to Ethiopia. Each year, the country loses about 140,000 hectares of forest due to anthropogenic causes, such as deforestation, overgrazing, uncontrolled logging, & unsustainable forest land management.

To face this emergency, NABU jointly with Amhara National Regional State have established 28 pilot community restoration sites in Lake Tana Watershed (LTW). Ecosystem restoration benefits crop yields and food security, wood and fodders stocks, not to mention poverty reduction. The Pilot project sites cover an area of 15,000 km² and are divided into 29 districts, 429 kebeles and 4 administrative zones (West Gojjam zone, Awi, South Gondar and Central Gondar zone).

Our main goal is to raise the environmental awareness in local communities, aiming to mobilize ecosystem rehabilitation, and avoid further disturbance by human interference in the natural landscapes of the LTW.

Our major progresses so far are:

- Jointly with the local communities, 28 degraded ecosystems for rehabilitation were identified;
- A awareness rising meeting was conducted, in which 2934 farmers households from 29 districts participated;
- A training was thrown to 104 Government experts (Development agents) in four zonal towns;

- Physical soil conservation measures (stone check dam, micro basin, and soil band) were carried out in each site;
- Plantation of 140,000 natives and exotics seedlings in 150 ha of degraded lands.

We still have a lengthy way to go. Even though we face challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, we intend to restore 400 ha of degraded ecosystems within the 29 woredas in the Water for Life project's region.



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NEWS

Challenges of COVID-19, and the political situation

Ethiopia took several steps to detect, manage, and control COVID-19. Among those, The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia declared Proclamation 3/2020, also known as the “State of Emergency Proclamation Enacted to Counter and Control the Spread of COVID-19 for 5-month (April 10, 2020-September 9, 2020).

Subsequently, the state of emergency issued regulations such as: prohibiting all public gatherings of more than four people at any type, closing schools and universities, among others. To address this challenge, the government has been mobilizing different stakeholders and devising strategies to contain the virus through aggressive health measures and law enforcement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially affected the operation of NABU. By its nature, the project required intense communication, encounters and meetings. Consequently, COVID 19 pandemic has hindered to conduct trainings and public meetings which are a crucial part of the project implementation. In addition, the political instability in the northern parts of the country also affected the implementation. In spite of this, we are trying to cope with the new established regulations, hygiene measures and reduction of number of participants in our events.

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Legal Gap Assessment

To transform national and regional legislative processes for secure access to and protection of water resources, the following laws have been assessed for the legal gaps:

- Environmental impact assessment proclamation No.299/2002
- Environmental pollution control proclamation No.300/2002
- Solid waste management proclamation No. 513/2207
- Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation No. 1065/2018
- Ethiopian water resource management proclamation No.197/2000 and regulation No.115/2005
- Environmental impact assessment (EIA) proclamation No.81/2011
- Fishery development prevention and utilization proclamation No.92/2003 and regulation No. 50/2007
- Administration and use of watershed rehabilitated and being rehabilitated with community participation proclamation No.204/2013
- Water transport regulation No.118/2013
- Transport and Road Construction Bureau, Port construction, administration and ownership guideline No.11/2006





A validation workshop has been organized, with 32 participants. Now, the document is ready to distribute to stakeholders, for next actions to revise the laws.

Capacity buildings

As one of the core components of the WfL project, the capacity buildings are planned to be aimed to the local population as well as NGOs (non-governmental organizations), CBOs (community based organizations), scientific institutions and the private sector. In order to cope with the new hygiene measures to avoid the spread of the COVID-19, we have reduced the number of participants of our planned trainings and workshops, and taken all the precautions needed such as the use of face masks, provision of hand sanitizers and maintaining a safe distance from one another.

With that in mind, a Training of Trainers (ToT) for Development Agents took place in August, with the main themes on behavioural change and ecosystem restoration. There were 104 trainees present, and key regional level stakeholders have provided the training. Similarly, another training has been undertaken in September, thrown by professional consultants, with focus on project management, fundraising, budgeting, and impact evaluation. This was aimed for NGOs, CBOs, CSOs (civil society organizations), and scientific institutions. There were 22 participants attending the three-day event.

Finally, in collaboration with the Environment, Forest and Wildlife Development and Protection Authority (EFWDPA), a further training has been organized for environment school club leaders and CSOs engaged in solid waste management. Present were 55 trainees, from environmental school clubs, 15 CSOs and 6 EFWDPA staff members, summing to the total of 76 participants.

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Waste Management training to CSOs and environmental school clubs. Photo: NABU

Final message

We hope you have enjoyed this edition. For further contact, don't hesitate to write us on:

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And visit us on social media:

Facebook: [Lake Tana Biosphere Reserve](https://www.facebook.com/LakeTanaBiosphereReserve)
Instagram: [@nabu_international](https://www.instagram.com/nabu_international)





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