

The Protecting Lake Hawassa Partnership, Ethiopia

A case study on natural resources stewardship





Lake Hawassa under threat

Lake Hawassa, located in the Ethiopian Rift Valley, is known for its rich biodiversity. Many plant and animal species call the freshwater lake their home. In addition, the lake plays an essential role in the economic development of the region, sustaining a diversity of rural and urban livelihoods. Farming and fishing are the largest sectors of employment, but also tourism and industry are of growing importance. In recent years, rapid economic and demographic growth, coupled with changing climate conditions, are affecting the lake and its sub-catchment. Soil erosion increased in the past decade, largely due to deforestation and unsustainable farming practices. Pollution resulting from poor solid and liquid waste management is another challenge - plastic and other waste from the city and the surroundings find their way into the lake.



Soil erosion upstream and the consequences of siltation downstream pose significant risks to the Lake Hawassa catchment.



Pollution of the lake with liquid and solid waste has increased rapidly over the past years.

Joining forces for Lake Hawassa

The lake is a source of income, a basis for diverse livelihoods, and a crucial ecosystem. Its increasing pollution and siltation lead to a variety of risks for businesses and communities alike. However, uncoordinated solutions and a widespread lack of responsibility have hindered efforts to effectively reduce these risks in the past.



In fact, stakeholders from different sectors have varying interests when it comes to Lake Hawassa: private companies focus on securing water sources for the continuity of their businesses, public institutions aim at fulfilling their mandate in the allocation of natural resources and communities strive for improved availability and quality of water and soil as basis for their livelihoods. Nevertheless, what all stakeholders have in common is the recognition of threats to the lake, which affect everybody.

Recognizing the urgent need to find solutions, stakeholders started discussing the joint risks they face due to the environmental degradation around the lake and how they could tackle them together. Recognising the need for cross-sectoral efforts to develop lasting solutions, representatives of private, public sector and civil society joined forces in 2018 and decided to form a multi-stakeholder partnership.

The “Protecting Lake Hawassa Partnership” is supported by GIZ’s Natural Resources Stewardship Programme (NatuReS). It aims at reducing environmental and social risks stemming from the threats affecting Lake Hawassa, preserving its ecosystem services and promoting sustainable development.

Natural resources stewardship means that all users of natural resources take responsibility for the shared resources nobody owns but everybody relies on. By forming partnerships, public sector, private companies and civil society work together on eye-level to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources.

Laying a foundation for joint action

With the partnership shaping up, partners assessed risks more in-depth. They identified siltation and pollution as the two main threats affecting Lake Hawassa. These lead to various risks for the different sectors. Businesses not only face operational risks due to the decreasing amount and quality of water in the region, but also reputational risks if conflicts with communities and public authorities about the limited natural resources arise, as well as regulatory risks if they are not adhering to environmental regulations. Public authorities find themselves accused of not fulfilling their mandate of public service delivery due to the decrease in fertile soil and clean water, resulting in conflicts and the reduced attractiveness of Hawassa as a business and tourism location. Finally, civil society suffers from the increasingly endangered and scarce natural resources around Lake Hawassa: be it smallholder farmers whose fields do not yield sufficient harvests anymore due to the erosion of fertile soil, fishermen whose incomes are threatened by the reduced amount of fish due to pollution and eutrophication of the lake, or communities whose health is endangered due to the lack of clean water.



Partners visiting gullies that have emerged from the extensive soil erosion in the catchment.

Sharing responsibilities for the protection of Lake Hawassa

Once the various sectors brought forward their risks under the partnership, they all realized that the siltation and pollution around Lake Hawassa need to be tackled for the sake of everyone. Therefore, they defined thematic core areas of interventions: afforestation and soil erosion control to reduce siltation, and solid and liquid waste management to reduce pollution. An additional activity, community and stakeholder engagement, was set up by partners as a cross-cutting intervention to raise awareness for natural resources management and to make partnership activities inclusive.

In a next step, partners established the governance structure of the partnership. A steering committee, including representatives of all stakeholder groups, is responsible for strategic decision-making and oversight. Task force teams, for afforestation and soil erosion control, solid and liquid waste management, and community and stakeholder engagement, are dedicated to the design, implementation and monitoring of specific activities. They meet quarterly and report back to the steering committee twice a year. NatuReS initially fulfilled the secretarial role together with the Rift Valley Lakes Basin Development Office, who will take over this role on its own in the future. Having decided on a mutually agreed governance structure builds trust, enshrines the regularity and durability of activities and prevents power imbalances between partners.

Protecting Lake Hawassa Partnership



Objective

Protect Lake Hawassa from environmental and social risks, preserving its ecosystem services and safeguarding sustainable development



Partners

Public Sector:

- Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
- Hawassa City Administration - Environment Protection, Forest and Climate Change Office (EPO)
- Hawassa University
- Rift Valley Lakes Basin Administration Office
- Sidama Region Environment Protection Forest and Climate Change Agency
- Sidama Region Agricultural and Natural Resources Bureau
- Sidama Region Livestock, Husbandry and Fishery Bureau
- Hawassa Zuria Woreda Agricultural and Natural Resources Office
- Industrial Parks Development Corporation

Private Sector:

- PVH Corp.
- Haile Resort
- Coba Impact Manufacturing
- Fruit Hawassa PLHC
- Solid Waste Collectors Associations

Civil Society:

- Affiliation of Friends of Lake Hawassa
- Stockholm International Water Institute
- Southern Ethiopia People Development Association
- Water Witness International

Partner contributions

- EPO: € 10.500
- Hawassa University: € 26.000
- PVH Corp.: € 375.000
- Haile Resorts Hawassa: € 5.000

"PVH has been an active partner in the Protecting Lake Hawassa partnership since 2018. PVH provides annual financial support and programmatic guidance to the partnership to scale its environmental and social efforts. Both the environmental and social efforts of the partnership have been scaled through community and stakeholder engagement, which is key to collaborative basin work."

Vincent van Reenen,
Senior Corporate Responsibility
Specialist
PVH Corp.

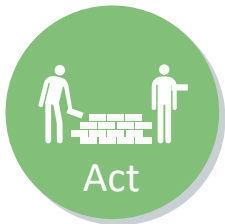




Commit



Partners of the Protecting Lake Hawassa Partnership during a training on project cycle management.



Act

Joint action across sectors

Partners developed joint solutions under the three task force areas:

1. Afforestation and Soil Erosion Control
2. Solid and Liquid Waste Management
3. Community & Stakeholder Engagement

Committing to a common goal

As a next step, partners discussed their respective contributions to the partnership. Only if every partner contributes according to their available resources, partnership activities have the buy-in from all sectors and can be sustainable. Discussions revolved around the different technical and financial capacities of partners. In addition to financial commitments, there are significant in-kind contributions from partners in terms of labor, time and technical backstopping. Examples include the provision of vehicles for the constant follow-up on activities in the catchment, or the assignment of engineers from the Construction and Urban Development Office by Hawassa Municipality, who provide technical support to the partnership. Local communities for example support the partnership's afforestation efforts through their workforce.

On top of the co-establishment, planning and management of the partnership, the public sector is involved in hosting, monitoring and technical backstopping of PLH. The private sector has contributed to financing the partnership, which is not frequent practice in Ethiopia. Communities and civil society contribute in-kind.

TASK FORCE 1: AFFORESTATION AND SOIL EROSION CONTROL (ASEC)

Ecohydrology to restore degraded land

Partners chose to apply ecohydrology, a cost-efficient approach using local materials to rehabilitate gullies, in the sub-catchment. This involves setting up slim wooden structures and plant vegetation along them. The structures slow down the speed of runoff while the vegetation improves infiltration. Materials are available locally, meaning that local communities can source, place and repair the structures themselves at costs that are significantly lower than the conventional methods. Hawassa University, as part of the partnership, had already worked on ecohydrology in the Lake Hawassa sub-catchment, and was able to upscale the ecohydrological approach more widely in the sub-catchment with financial support from PVH Corp.



Erosion prevention structures set up in the Hawassa catchment under the Partnership.

"If we only focus on rehabilitating the gully, farmers might not show interest. However, if we rehabilitate the gully and reduce sedimentation while creating additional benefits for farmers, the intervention will be more sustainable."

*Dr. Mulugeta Dadi,
Assistant Professor, Hawassa University
Institute of Technology, Hydraulic
Engineering Department*



So far, partners managed to rehabilitate more than 450 hectares of degraded farm and grazing land. This way, every rainy season more than 15.000 m³ of silt are trapped – the equivalent of more than 1.000 load trucks – which would otherwise end up in the lake!



Rehabilitated gully with ecohydrology in Shalla woreda, Lake Hawassa catchment.

Afforestation

Due to the widespread land clearings resulting in erosion, afforestation is one of partners' main goals under the partnership. By joining efforts, they have planted two million trees so far, ensuring that 776 hectares of land are now covered with vegetation. While public sector and Hawassa University provide technical knowledge and coordination support, financial resources for the tree seedlings and logistics were contributed by the private sector. Local communities, guided by partnership focal points, prepared planting pits, carried out the planting and maintain the planted trees, protecting the areas from cattle grazing and watering the trees during prolonged areas of drought.



Community members during afforestation activities under the Partnership.



The Partnership promotes apiculture as an alternative, less environmentally harming, income source for local communities. Diversifying livelihoods also enhances communities' resilience as it reduces their over-reliance on agriculture.

Diversifying livelihoods of local communities

Communities, businesses and local farmers are not intentionally degrading the land in the upstream areas of Lake Hawassa. They are relying on economic activities for their livelihoods and those of their families. Therefore, partners from the very beginning of the partnership put a focus on supporting the local population in diversifying the activities from which they make a living to balance economic needs with the environmental sustainability of the catchment area. This included the provision of beehives, poultry or fruit trees among other things through partnership funds, as well as training and mentoring support to accompany recipients with know-how and best practices for the different activities. Also, partners supported communities on how to create a business or fund cooperatives for these new, less environmentally harming practices, to ensure their take-up, usefulness and longevity for the local population.

"Through the partnership activities, we managed to safeguard more than 3.000 jobs. This motivates others to join. New private sector partners are joining because the recent successes have attracted them."

Mulugeta Molla,
owner of Fruit Hawassa



This area is prone to floods, eroding our soil and washing away agricultural inputs. Our agricultural production has been impacted because of that. The structures placed to reduce erosion are showing good results. Flood is significantly reduced. In addition, I use the elephant grass to build the roof of my house. I'm benefiting in many ways".

Getahun Denamo, farmer in the Lake Hawassa catchment

TASK FORCE 2: SOLID AND LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT (SLWM)



By establishing a market linkage between collectors in Hawassa and recyclers in Addis Ababa, the Partnership stimulated the plastic value chain. This leads to less plastic polluting the environment.

A constructed wetland & the plastic value chain

Pollution resulting from poor solid and liquid waste management is a major threat to the water quality and biodiversity of Lake Hawassa. Rehabilitating the Amora Gedel constructed wetland is one of the activities implemented by the Partnership to reduce pollution of the Lake. The wetland collects and treats the first flash of storm water before it flows into the lake, thereby significantly improving the quality of water entering the lake. Moreover, partners established a market linkage between waste collectors in Hawassa and recycling companies in Addis Ababa. Every day, 5.2 tons of plastic are collected and prevented from entering the environment. A total of 890 tons of plastic has been supplied to recyclers in 2021 alone!



The rehabilitated constructed wetland Amora Gedel.

TASK FORCE 3: COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Bottom-up engagement for Lake Hawassa

Partners believe that any activity to protect Lake Hawassa can only be sustainable in the long term through bottom-up engagement. Therefore, they so far organized events at 27 schools and during action days like World Environment Day, or broadcasted a six-month radio show to raise the awareness of communities on environmental protection and natural resources management.



Pupils during an awareness raising event about the importance of proper waste disposal and recycling, organized by the Partnership.

“If communities and their livelihoods are not a substantial part of solutions, activities are destined to fail. Under the partnership, all stakeholders take decisions jointly. Strong local-scale systems of social-ecological governance increase the likelihood that the protection of Lake Hawassa will be successful.”

Dr. Daniel Woldemichael, Association of Friends of Lake Hawassa



Improving water supply & sanitation

The importance of access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in preventing diseases was even further highlighted due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Partners reacted by taking joint measures to improve water supply and sanitation in the area. By providing pumps and accessories, they supplied water to 81.000 residents of Hawassa City.



Scale & Exit

Looking ahead

The Protecting Lake Hawassa partnership is here to stay. Partners have early-on taken steps to ensure that the continuity of their work is enshrined in the partnership set-up. One important aspect in this regard is that the public sector partner, Rift Valley Lakes Basin Administration Office, has taken up the role of partnership chair. This not only ensures the institutional anchoring of activities within the public sector, but also the long-term duration of the partnership itself. Furthermore, meeting structures for continuous exchange between partners have been established. Regular partner meetings set the pulse of the partnership and are therefore an essential part of its long-term strategy.



Partners are committed to continuing and upscaling activities initiated under the Partnership.

The Natural Resources Risk and Action Framework

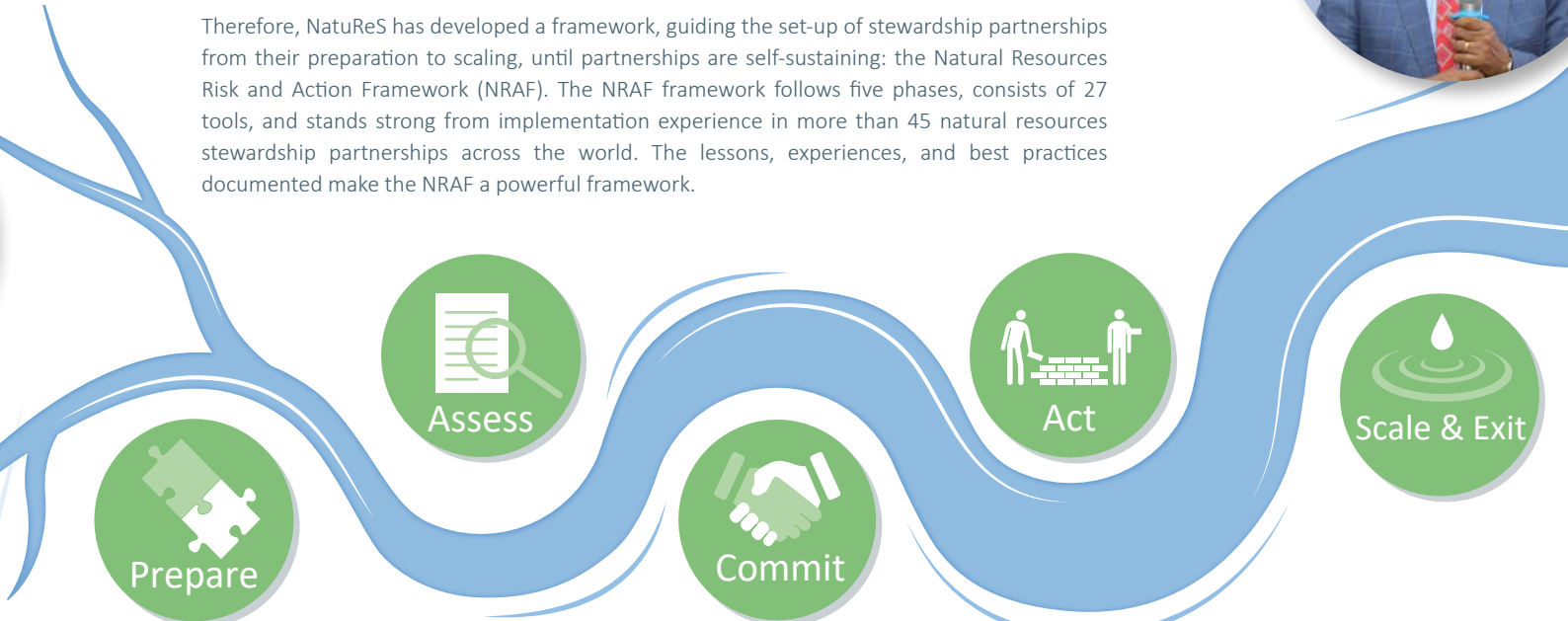
NatuReS supported the Protecting Lake Hawassa Partnership throughout the whole process from its initiation to the joint implementation of activities, facilitating a participatory approach to natural resources governance. This is essential, as no single sector actor has the mandate nor the capacity to address natural resources risks by itself. If the root causes of natural resource risks are to be addressed, collaboration among different sectors is needed.

However, multi-stakeholder stewardship partnerships are not easy to realise. Often, stakeholder groups are used to working in silos, gaps in capacity impair joint decision-making and implementation, intentions and objectives are not always easy to align, and power imbalances between partners pose integrity risks.

Therefore, NatuReS has developed a framework, guiding the set-up of stewardship partnerships from their preparation to scaling, until partnerships are self-sustaining: the Natural Resources Risk and Action Framework (NRAF). The NRAF framework follows five phases, consists of 27 tools, and stands strong from implementation experience in more than 45 natural resources stewardship partnerships across the world. The lessons, experiences, and best practices documented make the NRAF a powerful framework.

“Our Ministry wants to take the experience and lessons of the Protecting Lake Hawassa Partnership to protecting other lakes in Ethiopia. We learned that it is more effective to engage all stakeholders to protect and sustainably manage our water resources and we will follow a similar approach in the future.”

*Dr. Abraha Adugna,
State Minister,
Ministry of Water and Energy*



PARTNERSHIP CREATION

PARTNERSHIP EXECUTION

Prepare

- Identify stakeholders and markets
- Share problems and recognise interests
- Prepare road map

Assess

- Assess risks and opportunities
- Determine costs and benefits
- Shape partnership
- Socio-economic analysis

Commit

- Develop business cases
- Develop modes of delivery
- Secure commitment of actors
- Business case support

Act

- Empower and advise actors
- Coordinate and manage implementation
- Monitor progress

Scale & Exit

- Evaluate impact and lessons
- Leverage impact at scale
- Phase out

About NatuReS

The partnership is supported by the Natural Resources Stewardship Programme (NatuReS) in Uganda. NatuReS is a multi-donor programme commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), co-financed by the European Union (EU) and the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). It is currently active in Ethiopia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

In Ethiopia, the NatuReS programme aims to reduce water and environmental threats that pose significant social and economic risks to sustainable economic growth in the Lake Hawassa area and in Addis Ababa.

NatuReS has so far contributed to creating or safeguarding more than 72.000 jobs and investments worth more than EUR 232 million through 14 currently active partnerships across the five countries of implementation.

Scan to find out more:



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Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5
65760 Eschborn, Germany

Contact:

James Njeru
NatuReS Country Coordinator in Ethiopia
james.njeru@giz.de
www.giz.de
<https://nature-stewardship.org/>

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