

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING INTO GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS: A VIEW OF HOMA BAY COUNTY

Communities in and around the Lake Victoria Basin experience a number of interconnected challenges, including dependence on diminishing natural resources, pervasive poverty, food insecurity, poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes, and inaccessible health services. At the same time, the ecosystem itself faces substantial degradation. To address these intertwined challenges and foster healthy, engaged communities, Pathfinder International is currently advancing an integrated population, health, and environment (PHE) initiative called Health of People and Environment—Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB), in partnership with several environmental and health sector partners in Uganda, Kenya, and the US. Funded primarily by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, with technical support from the USAID-funded Evidence to Action project, the HoPE-LVB project is implemented in a combination of island, lakeshore, and inland sites in Uganda and Kenya.

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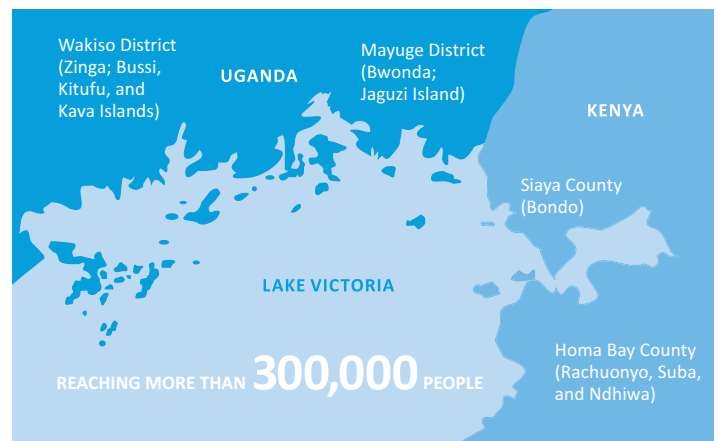


Applying ExpandNet’s systematic scaling-up approach of “beginning with the end in mind²,” advocacy has been an important component for the HoPE-LVB project to ensure successful institutionalization and expansion, and for fostering innovative policies and guideline changes to accommodate integrated multi-sectoral programming in a predominantly vertically organized system. HoPE has been unique from prior PHE projects around the world, which did not necessarily have this explicit focus. HoPE set out not only to ensure sustainable capacity would remain in the communities it served, but also to ensure that its advocacy efforts would yield supportive changes all the way up to the national and even regional East Africa levels. This brief discusses the project’s experience with advocacy, and offers lessons for other implementers on how to lay the groundwork to sustain integrated PHE projects at the sub-national level.

Population and Environmental Dynamics within the County

Located along the shores of Lake Victoria, Homa Bay County is characterized by high population growth and high population density currently at around 303 people per square mile, compared to the national average of 65.3. Homa Bay’s rapid population growth is largely attributed to high fertility rates, with an average of 5.2 children per woman. Attempts to address the rapid growth, through increasing access and quality of family planning services, is progressively achieving results; however, more needs to be done to reduce multiple barriers to family planning use. The County’s contraceptive prevalence rate³ stands at 45.5 percent⁴ and the unmet need for family planning⁵ at 25.5 percent.

Rapid population growth in the County is placing pressure on public services and natural resources, thereby threatening sustainable development. Communities face interconnected challenges, including dependence on diminishing natural resources for survival,



pervasive poverty, food insecurity, poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes, and inadequate health services. Long-term solutions require a holistic approach that integrates policy, programming, and implementation.

Testing the PHE Model as a Solution—HoPE-LVB

To address these intertwined challenges, Pathfinder International, along with partner organizations, piloted an integrated Population, Health, and Environment project—Health of People and Environment in Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB) in the County. HoPE-LVB began implementation in 2012 in Uganda and Kenya with the goal of designing and testing a scalable model for integrating efforts to strengthen community and facility-based family planning services with maternal and child mortality prevention, environmental conservation, and environmentally sustainable livelihoods. In a departure from the prevailing paradigm of integrated PHE projects, HoPE-LVB sought to lay groundwork for future scale up of tested and successful interventions by: 1) mobilizing and building the capacity of existing institutions and their personnel, as well as community structures; 2) involving potential future implementation partners early and throughout the process; 3) incorporating strong advocacy components; and 4) maintaining focus on sustainability.

Champions for Sustainability

With guidance from the community, the HoPE-LVB project has identified and built the capacity of community groups, creating a pool of multipurpose resource persons who serve as trainers of various project activities. In addition, the project developed a cadre of PHE champions, comprising local and County leaders deemed influential within and beyond their communities, to lead advocacy efforts. The champions were oriented to the PHE approach through multiple briefings and a training curriculum, complete with take-home message kits and some training on group facilitation. Follow-up support was provided to ensure they were well-equipped and could advocate for the PHE integration agenda. The champions were tasked with spreading the word about the benefits of PHE, and promoting the integrated approach among communities and other development projects. Over time, the project has developed over 200 community and County-level PHE champions.



PHOTO: NATAZIA FISTROVIC

Establishment of a County-Level PHE Steering Committee

HoPE-LVB worked with County-level officials to form a steering committee with terms of reference. The Committee was tasked with promoting the integrated Population, Health, and Environment approach, as a mechanism for sustainable development, to all stakeholders, including the County government. Led by the County representative of the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, the committee meets quarterly to review progress, share ideas, and set new targets. While this steering committee is not directly involved in project implementation, they have been kept informed of the data and results achieved by the HoPE-LVB project and have used this evidence to advocate with policymakers to advance the PHE agenda.



PHE champions lead advocacy efforts within and beyond their communities.

PHOTO: Sharon Atieno

Pathfinder International holds the position of Secretary to the steering committee, and has been working closely with NCPD, which chairs the committee. Together, the two organizations plan for the committee activities, which are then approved by the whole committee. The majority of committee meetings have been held with support from the project, although other partners are increasingly stepping in to support them.

Building Support with Key Stakeholders

Together with the steering committee, the HoPE-LVB project mapped potential stakeholders who could support institutionalization of PHE in the County's integrated development plan, workplan, and budget documents. These included directors of Health, Environment, Forestry and Fisheries within the County, County executive committee members, and members of the County Assembly from the project implementation areas. The HoPE-LVB project then organized meetings to sensitize leaders on the benefits and viability of the integrated PHE approach, with a call to action to have integrated planning across maternal and child health, livelihoods, and natural resource management sectors.

These were followed up with one-on-one meetings to further push for inclusion of cross-sectoral approaches in the ministerial and departmental workplans and budgets. The project's strong advocacy focus generated broad interest within various departments in the County, persuading some County directors to join the steering committee, as well as supporting implementation of the project. The Chief of Staff, Mr. Isaack Abuya, became a PHE champion and supporter of broad adoption of successful HoPE-LVB approaches.

The HoPE-LVB project has had an equally close working relationship with other single sector organizations to advocate for issues arising across the three sectors of Population, Health, and Environment. Some of the successes arising from these include: providing technical support and information during the development of the Homa Bay County Family Planning Strategy in collaboration with another Kenya sexual and reproductive health organization, K-MET, and reviewing and improving the County Environmental Action Plan in collaboration with the Kenya Forest Services and National Environmental Management Authority.

Hello Mr. Governor!

After two years of project implementation, project monitoring data showed substantial increases in family planning uptake and facility-based deliveries in all supported health facilities, especially among young mothers aged 12-24 years, as compared to baseline. The contraceptive method mix at health facilities was expanded to include long-acting methods such as implants, IUDs, and tubal ligation, and for community-based distribution, condoms, pills, and CycleBeads. Environmental conservation indicators improved as well, showing increased use of energy saving stoves, and improved sustainable agricultural, agroforestry, and fishing practices. A key finding from the midterm review was that integrating family planning and environmental interventions yields additional value for each area, while also improving gender relations and male

involvement in family planning uptake and safeguarding maternal health. Interviews conducted during the midterm review also revealed a more optimistic outlook for the future among communities, and a willingness to pass on their knowledge to neighboring communities.

With this evidence, the steering committee scheduled a meeting with the Homa Bay County Governor, H.E. Cyprian Awiti. This meeting sought to share insights on the opportunities and added value that integrated PHE implementation would yield to the County. The Committee further challenged the Governor to consider setting up an office to oversee integrated PHE activities within the County. Though new, the Governor welcomed the approach, praising its impressive outcomes within such a short time. He further pledged his support whenever called upon. Subsequent actions from his office included appointing a County focal person for PHE, sharing his enthusiasm for PHE with visitors from Siaya County, where HoPE-LVB has expanded into, and working on including PHE deliverables into activities of various departments.



Embedding PHE into County Programming

As a follow-up to the initial meeting with the Governor, the project team, together with other members of the Steering Committee, sought his audience again to discuss a way forward for the County to incorporate the PHE approach into its programming. Though convincing, this posed a challenge, as the committee struggled to justify how, and into which existing department PHE would be housed. This is because the approach is not yet nationally recognized and Homa Bay County would be pioneering this approach.

The idea of having a standalone department for PHE was discussed, but was challenged for fear that the activities would duplicate the efforts of the single-sector ministries. After much consideration, the Governor created a new position within his office—County PHE Liaison Officer/Civil Society Organization and Diaspora Coordinator—mandated to oversee CSO efforts within the County, with special inclination to PHE. The County has recruited the staff person and the position is now functional.

The Budget

The County's budget development process is detailed and complex, running from July–June. The budgets are formulated between August and February, then amended and finally approved between April and June.

The office of the CSO and Diaspora Coordinator is budgeted for under the Office of the Governor. The proposed budgets undergo the above-mentioned process for approval. In its first year 2014/2015, the office had no funding. Continuous efforts by HoPE-LVB and the steering committee have since achieved success. For the year 2015/2016 budgets, the office was awarded USD \$10,000. Though minimal, this was useful in preparing the office to deliver on its objectives.

Resources

HoPE-LVB has invested substantial manpower and resources to achieve the above-mentioned success within Homa Bay. These include supporting stakeholder and County activities in honor of global events and recognition days. These forums provided platforms to share PHE messages and make the approach known. The project also invested in training of multi-purpose community persons, who have been very resourceful

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in promoting PHE at all levels, from the community up to County levels. All staff within the project had a role to play to make this a success through advocacy and generating evidence through implementation and monitoring.

Challenges

- The PHE concept, being new, was perceived as complex, thus taking more time to convince partners of its feasibility.
- There are no explicit policies supporting integrated PHE programming yet, although many previous development strategies, including population policies, called for greater multi-sectoral collaboration and integration. This makes it difficult for policy level advocacy at the County level as there is minimal reference. However, in the near future the project anticipates that there will be a national level Kenya PHE strategy in response to a call from the East African Community, which policymakers could reference to guide activities and allocations.



PHOTO: Sharon Atieno

Summary of the County-level budget making process

The Kenya Public Finance Management Act, 2012, Section 125, provides a guide on the County-level budgetary process as outlined below:

- Developing an integrated development planning process which includes both long-term and medium-term planning
- Planning for and establishing financial and economic priorities for the County over the medium-term
- Making an overall estimation of the County government's revenues and expenditures
- Adopting the County Fiscal Strategy Paper
- Preparing budget estimates for the County government and submitting estimates to the County Assembly
- Debating and approving the budget estimates by the County Assembly
- Enacting the appropriation law and any other laws required to implement the County government's budget
- Implementing the County government's budget
- Accounting for and evaluating the County government's budgeted revenues and expenditure

Next Steps

Homa Bay County is in the process of institutionalizing the HoPE-LVB initiative. To achieve long-term success, the HoPE-LVB team will need to identify additional resources and provide stakeholders with the necessary tools and support to replicate tested and successful approaches. Strategic planning, budgetary allocation, and resource mobilization are critical to sustain the energy generated around PHE in the County. Without such actions, hopes of expanding and institutionalizing the PHE approach to other areas will be at significant risk. To ensure sustainability and opportunities for scale-up, including into neighboring Siaya County, the HoPE-LVB team is engaging a wide range of stakeholders. Partnership with regional bodies, the private sector, development banks, and donor partners in Kenya and abroad will ensure that the incredible momentum created by the HoPE-LVB initiative continues to contribute to Kenya's success in achieving progress towards the global Sustainable Development Goals.



PHOTO: Christine Night

¹ <http://www.pathfinder.org/publications-tools/sustaining-health-rights-environment-lake-victoria-basin.html>

² <http://www.expandnet.net/>

³ http://pai.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PAI_HomaBay-3.pdf

⁴ Contraceptive prevalence is the percentage of women (usually married or in-union aged 15-49) who are currently using, or whose sexual partner is currently using, at least one method of contraception (World Health Organization).

⁵ Kenya Demographic Health Survey 2014

⁶ Unmet need for family planning is defined as the percentage of women of reproductive age, either married or in a union, who want to stop or delay childbearing but are not using any method of contraception. <http://dhsprogram.com/Topics/Unmet-Need.cfm>

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