



# Collaborative efforts for successful water management in Uganda

Limited levels of accountability and duplication of activities by water actors led to suboptimal results in the Albert Water Management Zone in Uganda for years. This trend has now been broken as government bodies, civil society organisations, communities and private sector players started working together and increased their efforts to jointly monitor water management interventions.

The Albert Water Management Zone (AWMZ) covers approximately 56,600km<sup>2</sup> – 1.4 times the size of the Netherlands – and stretches across 42 districts of Uganda. The AWMZ includes four main water basins and a significant number of river catchments, and proper coordination is of great importance. However, Lydia Biira, WASH officer at

the organisation IRC Uganda, notes that stakeholders rarely worked together: “Initially, NGOs, civil society organisations, and the private sector, would work on their own. They would work in silos, they would never have a forum where they would meet, nor safeguard collaborative efforts together.”

### Bringing actors together

Therefore, coordination and collaboration in the AWMZ have been key points for the Watershed Empowering Citizens programme in Uganda. The programme brought water actors together, improved the capacities of the Catchment Management Committee (CMC) and supported the development of Catchment

The Watershed Empowering Citizens Programme 2016-2020 builds the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs), at international level and in The Netherlands, for evidence-based lobbying and advocacy on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) issues. The programme is implemented by IRC, Simavi, Wetlands International and Akvo. In Uganda, the programme is supported by local partners HEWASA and Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE).

### Uganda

According to [Civicus](#) repressed.



Water & sanitation Climate





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Management Plans. Richard Rwabuhinga, District Chairperson for Kabarole and head of the Mpanga CMC, explains the value of the programme: “District committees are not well funded, but Watershed supported us by bringing actors of the Mpanga catchment together, ensuring the coordination between the actors and supporting us with the development and implementation of the Catchment Management Plan.” The team leader of the AWMZ, Brian Guma adds: “We came to realize that we are serving the same people and we have transitioned to catchment-based water resource management whereby we involve all the stakeholders in managing the water resources.” The coordination is now assured as the AMWZ will continue to chair the Catchment Management Committee.

### Coordination and collaboration takes time

For the Watershed programme partners, increased coordination and collaboration took time and patience. Lydia Biira from Watershed partner IRC underlines that

advocating for integrated water resource management requires a different approach: “Some of our advocacy work may sometimes look like it is attacking duty bearers, so we have to make sure we package our message very well.” She continues: “Most civil society organisations work in their own space, but now we had a space where we openly discussed work plans and aligned activities within the Catchment Management Plan. We couldn’t do that without emphasis on coordination.” An infamous story that reminds of the past times is the loss of a District bulldozer as a civil society organisation tried to dredge a river without consulting the Catchment Management Committee and local authorities. The machine was never exhumed and remains a silent witness of the previous lack of coordination between actors in the AWMZ.


### Power to the stakeholders

The stakeholders have left these kinds of practices behind. Richard Rwabuhinga explains how collaborative actions now positively affect communities


in the area: “We have worked together to confront the problem of riverbank management. For example, upstream [river Mpanga] we have been promoting good soil conservation practices and people who have been involved in stone quarrying are now in productive agriculture.” He attributes the changes to improved collaboration and coordination by the Catchment Management Committee and the Albert Water Management Zone. AWMZ team leader Guma smiles and says: “The advantage of catchment-based water resource water management is that we give the power to the stakeholders. Those who are using the water [decide on] how they want to use the water.” With this revived approach, structures like the Albert Water Management Zone and the Catchment Management Committees not only exist on paper or in offices, but actively and practically fulfil their water resource management mandate. ●

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#### Learn more:

 Watch this [10 minute video](#) to learn how communities, civil society organisations and government bodies around the catchment area of River Mpanga in Uganda are finding a much-needed balance between water use and water conservation.

Find out more about the [Watershed Empowering Citizens programme](#).

 Website [Watershed Empowering Citizens](#).

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