

# APEDDH Cleanup Activity on Lake Kivu Report

## Introduction

Ocean Conservancy points out *“Every bottle, every straw, every piece of trash you clean up can lead to a cleaner, healthier ocean. Go out by yourself or with friends and family to cleanup your favorite beach or beloved park. Trash travels, so even picking up litter off a city sidewalk can help protect wildlife and communities that depend on clean waterways.”*

APEDDH also underlines *“Every bottle, every straw, and every piece of trash you remove from coasts of Rwanda’s waterbodies – especially Lake Kivu as the most important lake in the nation and crucial not only in the country but also regionally – leads to a cleaner and healthier lake.”*

It is in this context that APEDDH – as the only Rwandan nonprofit organization interested to protect Rwanda’s large waterbodies – performed a cleanup activity on a shore of Lake Kivu. The work took place in Kigufi Village in Kiraga Cell, Nyamyumba Sector in Rubavu District in Rwanda’s West Province on 20 September 2024. This work was conducted, only one day after the celebration of the ***International Cleanup Day***, also known as ***World Cleanup Day***.

## Activity purpose, goal and specific objectives

The activity was designed to eliminate Kivu coastal litter on the shore. However, the purpose proper of the work was for it to serve as a model for other cleanup activities to be implemented in the remaining districts bordering Lake Kivu, while laying the ground for these activities to be smoothly executed.

The general objective was to promote environmental conservation and protect human health by reducing pollution in and around Lake Kivu through community-driven waste removal and awareness-raising activities, inspired by the global efforts of Ocean Conservancy's Coastal Cleanup initiative.

The specific objectives were to

- 1) Formulate a model of Lake Kivu Coastal Cleanup work;
- 2) Mitigate Kivu water pollution by removing debris and other pollutants from the lake’s shores in efforts to prevent further contamination of water resources and protect aquatic ecosystems, while enhancing biodiversity;
- 3) Raise awareness and foster community engagement, while supporting global conservation efforts by creating awareness on water pollution's environmental and health impacts, promoting responsible waste management and community engagement, and supporting global conservation efforts by aligning with international initiatives like Ocean Conservancy’s Coastal Cleanup.

## Course of the activity

### I. Activity participants:

The activity saw the participation of three APEDDH staff members, 12 volunteer residents of the mentioned village, and Innocent Harerimana— Rubavu District’s

Environment Officer. The APEDDH employees specifically included the Executive Director— Alexis Kizungu, the Program Manager— Crispain Ndatabaya Bikotwa and the Projects Manager— Jean Baptiste Ndabananiye.

### **List of the residents:**

1. Fabien Kanani
2. Schola Nyirahimana
3. Oliva Nyirazaninka
4. Marie Rose Nikuze
5. Chadia Nyihembiki
6. Samirah Kubwimana
7. Innocent Iyakaremye
8. Benjamin Dusengimana
9. Theophile Hategekimana
10. Pacific Sibomana
11. J. Bosco Habarurema
12. Donathile Nyiransabimana

### **II. Self-introduction of APEDDH staff and the Environment Officer to the volunteers and justification of the work**

Before embarking on the collection of Kivu coastal rubbish on the shore, each employee and the Environment Officer took time to present themselves to these citizens who were going to be involved in the activity.

This exercise also constituted an opportunity for the staff, to amply explain the rationale of the work to both the citizens and the Environment Officer. While motivating them, this introduction secured their full support to this program. The staff also benefitted from this occasion, to tell them that there would be another opportunity to discuss the advancement of this initiative, after the cleanup activity.

### **III. Cleanup activity in two places of shore in Kigufi Village**

This work started at 10h am and ended at around 11h30. The village Leader, Samirah Kubwimana, first informed us about three places that carried significant quantities of coastal litter in relation to other places in the village. But, we chose the two places because they contained more non-decomposing litter than the other place.

The first place is this one which is depicted by these photos below:





As visible, this very small place contained a lot of coastal waste. These waste collectors separate biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste.



These volunteers below are transporting biodegradable rubbish to a banana field belonging to one of them.



As already said, we didn't manage to work on a big space, though we removed a lot of rubbish. For instance, here we covered around the area of 24 square meters. None of these cleanup volunteers carried the decomposing waste for less than three times.

Before removing the biodegradable rubbish from this place, the volunteers first gathered it here, creating this pile below:



This work has cleared this place of costal litter, as highlighted by these below photos. One of the photos was taken, after the above pile had been eliminated.



With the volunteers, we are now heading to another place. They are carrying non-decomposing litter from the first place.



This photo below is that of debris collected in the second and final place:



This photo below portrays the volunteers packing the rubbish collected in this place into the sacks that they have taken from the first place.



This non-decomposing waste such as plastic bottles and materials has been left at a household of one of the volunteers, because the District had not yet designated a site for Kivu Lake Coastal rubbish. The solution to this issue is addressed in the **Observation Section** of this report.



#### IV. Cleanup awareness among the volunteers

Various officials encouraged the volunteers to value Kivu Lake Cleanup as a vital program for the lake's ecosystem, directly supporting the lives of thousands of people and indirectly benefiting millions more.

The Environment Officer, Harerimana, said *“We exhort you to regularly engage actively in this work of cleanup because this work actually stands as a key initiative*



*Innocent Harerimana, first from the left. Since he bears another appointment with some other people, he chooses to address the volunteers at the completion of cleanup in the first place, so he can go to fulfill the appointment.*

*which will help to safeguard this lake. As you know, this lake is not only crucial for its neighboring communities, but also nationally and even the residents of Goma city in the DRC. You have already observed that this lake is marred with a lot of coastal trash which has to be removed, if we are to sustain this lake in efforts to benefit current and future generations. We considerably thank you for your involvement in this activity.*

*We also significantly recognize APEDDH which has organized this cleanup activity, there exists no other organization intervening in this field. We hope that you don't end by here since you have seen that your intervention is still very needed. In Rubavu we are facing the issue of not having a Kivu coastal trash disposal mechanism and you have observed different tools of fishing gear like those fish cages, but these tools don't possess a disposal or recycling system. Therefore, we don't doubt that you will play a key role in helping us to establish a proper waste disposal mechanism.”*





*These are the fish cages that he has just mentioned.*

APEDDH Executive Director, Alexis Kizungu, said *“We are actually committing to preserving the ecosystem of Lake Kivu, and as Harerimana has suggested it, we are the only organization in Rwanda which deals is interested in this sector. We promise you that we will conduct every endeavor for us to remain with you in this struggle of protecting this vital waterbody.”*



*APEDDH Executive Director, Alexis Kizungu — wearing trousers dominated by the red color, addressing the volunteers.*

*“We request you, volunteers, to assist us in the preservation of this lake by regularly conducting cleanup activities. We have already decided that it is you whom we will involve in Kivu ecosystem protection in Rubavu; in other words, it is you who will clean Kivu up in entire Rubavu district and we will always*

*accompany you in this work. We also maximally thank you for your passionate participation that we have noticed among you.”*

The Projects Manager, Jean Baptiste Ndabananiye, also being grateful to the volunteers for their great work; he urged them to form a volunteer saving and Loan association/group. He explained to them that this group would enable them to improve their living conditions, while inspiring them to remain focused on the cleanup program. *“If you establish the group, go to open an account in a microfinance institution and regularly conduct saving. In this regard, you will be able to access loans with which you will run income-generating activities.*

*This will permit you to regularly meet to discuss your group or association, and it will constitute an inspiration to perform cleanup as well, since when you meet, you will also work. So, go and prefer a frequency under which you'll assemble; this including a day and whether it is weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.”*

The volunteers were delighted with the work too and expressed their commitment to it. For example, Kubwimana said *“We reassure you of our full role in this program, for this lake to be protected. We also thank you so much for selecting us since this shows confidence you hold toward us. We will certainly and completely satisfy you.”*

## **V. Observation and lessons learnt**

### **1. Kivu Coastal Rubbish Site in Rubavu**

As already said, Rubavu didn't already have the site but we requested the district — through the Environment Officer — to identify a site of accumulated rubbish where removal activities will be safely conducted via this project. According to information that we have received, the district is already in the process of determining the location of the site where all rubbish will be placed. The trash temporarily stocked at the household will be moved to the site.

As a lesson, we now include the identification of the rubbish site by the district officials in our contact meeting subjects. In other words, while discussing the cleanup activity with officials in other districts, we ask them to decide a safe place where the trash will be stored. Meanwhile, we aren't entitled to identify the site since this lies in the hands of districts.

### **2. Lack of Kivu Coastal Litter Disposal Mechanism**

As highlighted by the Environment Officer, there is no such a mechanism in Rubavu. A typical example substantiating this problem is these photos below.



*A wooden boat which we photographed. We didn't manage to know whether it was abandoned or not, but we surely detected is that it is not properly managed. For instance, it is not attached/ anchored/ secured so that it is likely to be washed away by wind or even people can throw it away.*



Above are photos of an abandoned boat that we also photographed, though this wasn't used for fishing.

### **3. Illegal fishing in which children engage with the high risk of lake pollution**





One photo is worth 1, 000 words. Seen these photos that we took, we are convinced that we do not need to add any word, since they are self-explanatory as far as the title of this sub-section is concerned.

## **VI. Comments on some points of the Acknowledgement of Deliverables Document**

**Point 1-** Coordinating and hiring local contractors to carry out responsibility for site security, waste hauling, heavy equipment operators and other duties needed to successfully conduct cleanups.

In Rwanda the site security is handled by the government. In this context, this constitutes the responsibility of the district through its lower administrative entities including the sector, the cell and finally the village. As for equipment, if we obtain any, we will keep it at a district's office whereby we will request for a particular room for the equipment which the volunteers can access on our recommendation to the district. In other words, the equipment will be ours.

**Point 2.** Recording itemized data of trash collected

To be frank, we found this a bit tricky. We thus request for some training on it. For us to try to estimate the quantity, we availed ourselves of transportation tools namely sacks. For example, the non-biodegradable waste collected fits around 2 sacks of 100 kilograms each. The biodegradable rubbish can be accommodated in approximately 3 sacks of 100 kilograms each.

## **VII. Immediate outcome: formation of Voluntary Saving and Loan Group**

The volunteers instantaneously created the group. They are determined to support this initiative of cleanup. The following are the group's committee members:

1. President: Samirah Kubwimana,
2. Vice-President: Benjamin Dusengimana,
3. Secretary: Schola Nyirahimana,
4. Treasurer: Fabien Kanani, and
5. Auditors: Jean Bosco Habarurema and Marie Rose Nikuze.

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