

APEDDH Cleanup Activity on Lake Kivu Report in Rutsiro District on 04th October 2024

Introduction

The activity took place in Bukiro Village, Karambi Cell in Kivumu Sector. This activity was attended by more volunteers than expected. 18 volunteers engaged in the cleanup work.

These photos below represent Rutsiro Cleanup Volunteers raising a massive tree trunk part from the lake's shore. Five strong men are removing the trunk with conspicuous difficulty.



As highlighted by the above images, APEDDH conducted a cleanup activity along the shore of Lake Kivu in Rutsiro. This initiative was intended to address the growing problem of pollution and waste accumulation in and around Lake Kivu.

Lake Kivu is not only an important body of water that supports livelihoods through fishing and tourism, but it is also a fragile ecosystem facing threats from human activities such as improper waste disposal. This cleanup activity represents a significant step towards protecting the lake's biodiversity, improving public health, and fostering environmental awareness within the community.

As we delve into the details of the event, this report will outline activities carried out, the stakeholders involved, and observation, among others.

Activity purpose, goal and specific objectives

Like the cleanup work in Rubavu District, the general objective of this activity in Rutsiro 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.

The specific objectives were to

- 1) 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;
- 2) 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.



Lake Kivu waters on the shore where we carried out the cleanup activity.

Course of the activity

I. Activity participants:

The activity was attended by three APEDDH staff members, 18 volunteer residents of the mentioned village, and Vincent Habimana— Kivumu Sector's agronomist. The APEDDH employees were specifically the Executive Director— Alexis Kizungu, the Program Manager— Crispain Ndatabaya Bikotwa and the Projects Manager— Jean Baptiste Ndabananiye.

List of the residents:

1. Davotha Mvunabandi
2. Théoneste Batajyina
3. Rachel Nyiramahirwe
4. Jacqueline Niyodusenga
5. Ange Gakuru
6. Christine Ayingeneye
7. Vestine Nyiramaronko
8. Emmy Niyigenabyose
9. Joseph Mbarushimana
10. Jean Claude Ntahontuye
11. Divine Ayinkamiye
12. Enoch Ndorande
13. Eric Dushimirimana
14. Jean Mukundabantu
15. Ernestine Usabuwera
16. Pétronile Nyirankundabera
17. Jean d'Amour Nsengiyumva
18. Sandrine Mukandayishimiye

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

As usual, we conducted self-introduction for the volunteers to know us and understand the rationale of the work.

III. Cleanup activity

This work started at 9:30 am and ended at 12:30 pm. We undertook the work with a strong and determined team, so we did an excellent job, as even the following photos show.



The volunteers are piling the trash here.

Based on the past experience in Rubavu, we insisted for Rutsiro officials to designate a safe site for litter removed from Kivu and its shores. As a result, the officials had determined this place which these volunteers are digging, to create a pit where this rubbish will be regularly dumped.



Habimana assured us that this is a safe place, especially since its security has been placed in the hands of informal security guards like this one, holding a stick, whom you can in this below image.



IV. Estimation of the quantity of rubbish eliminated from the lake

First, we estimate the two tree trunks not to weigh less than 400 kilograms. We estimate that biodegradable waste, which could be accommodated into 4 sacks, equaled around 80 kilos, while non-decomposing rubbish fitting around 6 sacks could weigh about 150 kilograms.

We nevertheless took the coastal litter from a very small space. Lake Kivu, with Rubavu and Rusizi as extremity points along the shoreline on Rwanda's side, stretches approximately 100 kilometers (about 62 miles). This signifies that each district, on average, covers 20 kilometers of the shoreline.

We retrieved the trash from the shoreline which doesn't even reach the length of 50 meters. We however removed the huge quantity as mentioned above; which signifies that coastal litter along the 20 kilometer shoreline in Rutsiro is immensely huge.

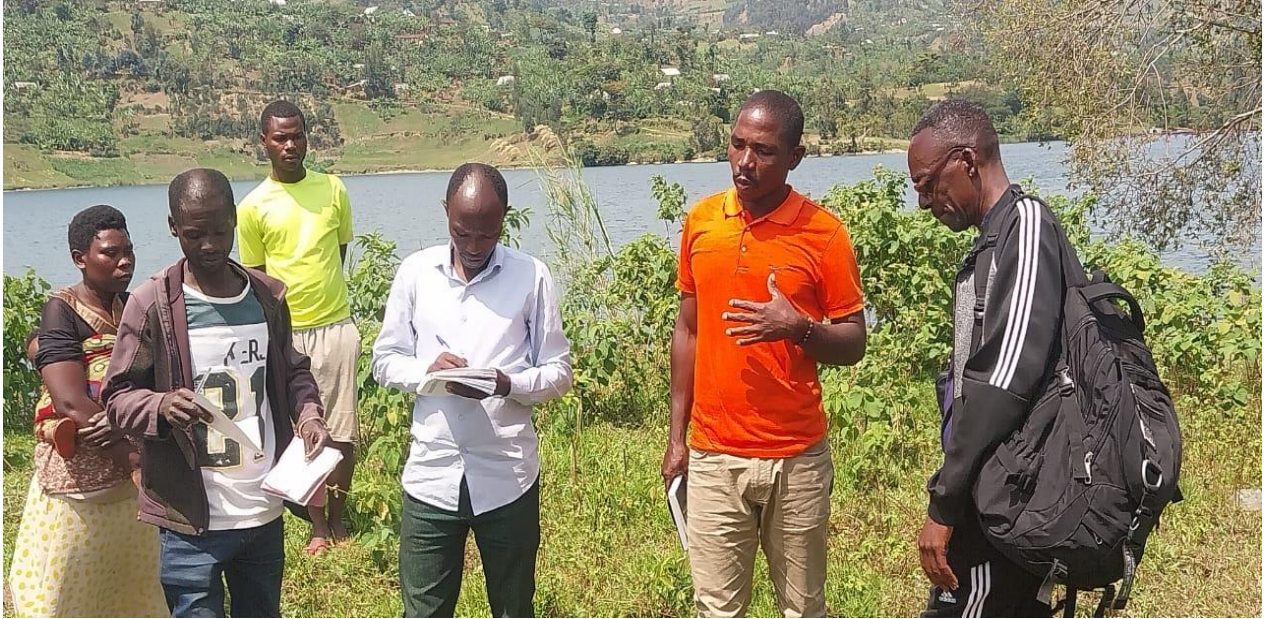


There are parts of the shore that were inaccessible for us, because of the lack of appropriate equipment. For example, the part where you see the plants looking a bit like reed in the above right picture, we were unable to it because of the plant's sharp and poking leaves. For instance, one young man said *"Attempting to get there, the plant's leaves poke me and hurt me."* This justifies the gargantuan importance of the cleanup equipment.

V. Cleanup awareness among the volunteers

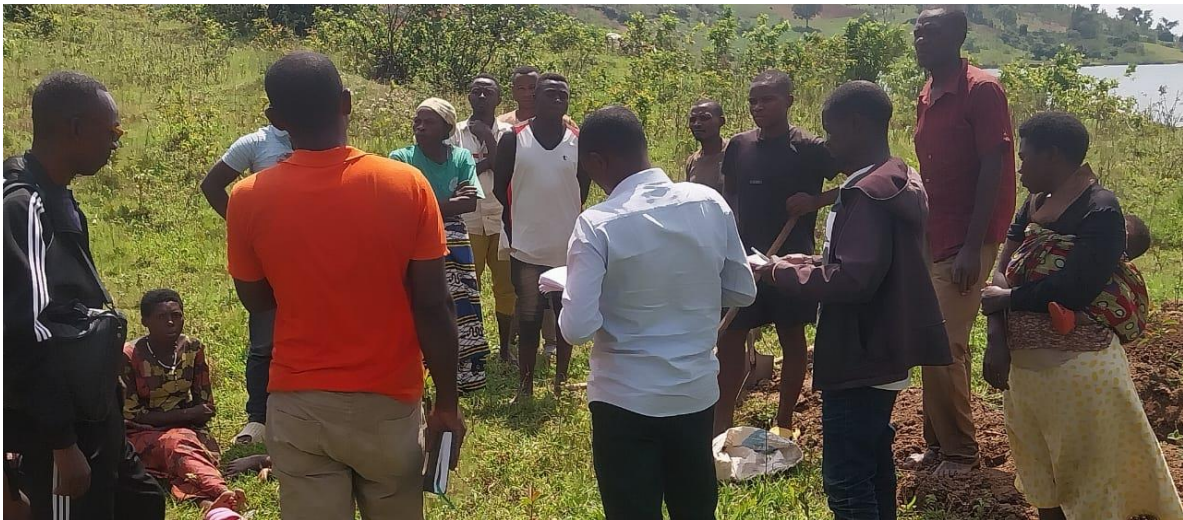
Various officials encouraged the volunteers to value Kivu Lake Cleanup as a vital program for the lake's ecosystem, directly maintaining the lives of thousands of people and indirectly benefiting millions more.

Habimana, Kivumu's Agronomist, said *"I won't say many things, I first thank you for this great work, and we seize this opportunity to request you to continue it. Let it not stop. Cleanup on Kivu shoreline is vital and I also grab the occasion to remind people cultivating the shoreline that it is forbidden."*



Vincent Habimana, the 2nd from the right, addressing the volunteers.

“We thank APEDDH a lot for organizing this work. It is the only organization in the country that has engaged in Kivu cleanup; which is exceedingly good since it will help us to have good waters in the lake; especially since this trash always comes, some of which emanates from the neighboring country- DRC.”



APEDDH Executive Director, Alexis Kizungu, said “We also thank you so much for your participation in this cleanup work and we reassure you of our accompaniment for this colossal resource to remain clean and healthy. When we get equipment, we will keep it near to you at the sector so that you can avail yourselves of it, whenever you conduct cleanup activity. We will then authorize the sector to provide you with the equipment and you will also take photos of your work and send them to us since we will remain in touch.”

VI. Observation and lessons learnt

1. Lack of Kivu Coastal Litter Disposal Mechanism

Like in Rubavu, Rutsiro doesn't possess a fishing gear disposal mechanism too. Habimana said *“When the tools are too old to continue functioning, they are burned. We actually need that mechanism and as you intervene in this sector of Kivu cleanup, we hope that you will assist us to create the system which will permit our district to sustainably get rid of the fishing equipment.”*



Cage fish farming in Rutsiro, one of major aspects necessitating a proper disposal mechanism as far as Kivu cleanup is concerned.

2. Lesson learnt

It is necessary to insist that district or sector officials should designate waste sites.

VII. Immediate outcome: Voluntary Saving and Loan Group

Like in Rubavu, on the recommendation by the Projects Manager- Jean Baptiste Ndabananiye, the Rutsiro volunteers decided to form a voluntary saving and loan group. They have not elected their committee; which they will do tomorrow, but surprisingly four days ago, they met on a certain shore and cleaned Kivu up. They plan to conduct cleanup work tomorrow on another shore. They even chose their group's name which is *“Sukura Kivu/ Clean up Kivu.”*

While we initially expected to have a group of 12 volunteers, other participants in the cleanup activity requested to be included; which increased the number to 18.

Report prepared by Jean Baptiste Ndabananiye/ APEDDH Projects Manager.

Approved by Alexis Kizungu, APEDD Executive Director.