



Hope in a changing climate

Rwanda's water source

Alex Mulisa, National Park Manager PEI Rwanda

Right to the west of here, south-west, I must say, is where it is believed to be the source of the Nile happens to be. And we know how critical the Nile is, to Africa, upstream, from Rwanda, through Uganda, Sudan, Egypt. And there are projects, like the Nile Basin Initiative, all those things speak of the importance of Rwanda. One thing actually, in recent times, there is this World Bank sponsored project called the Lake Victoria Environmental Management Plan. Lake Victoria is very critical to East Africa's livelihoods, in terms of socioeconomic, food supply through, you know, the fish. And that there has, of recent, been some fluctuations, studies were conducted to show that there is extensive degradation in that area.

And why the project was initially restricted to the three countries that formally constitute East Africa, that's Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, they had no choice but to look at Rwanda and Burundi, because of the relative importance as a watershed, as an upstream watershed position to impact everything downstream. So, Rwanda is a critical position, as a watershed country, for East African region and for a good part of Africa, because when you talk of the Nile, you even go as far as Ethiopia, through the Blue Nile. So, that's how important it is.

One of the things that I sincerely believe is the fact that, yes, there are these global events that are part of climate change phenomenon, but we must act locally. That sounds like a cliché, but a real one. So, we cannot separate the socioeconomic issues, heredity issues, livelihood issues, generally, we cannot divorce them from climate change impacts. So, we must act locally but at the same time, looking at the interconnectedness and trying to engage those partnerships, to put them in place, so that effective environmental management protection locally, regionally and globally, can actually take root. Because, quite frankly, we have no choice, either locally or globally. And we have realised that ecosystem rehabilitation and ongoing environmental management is going to leave us in a much better, comfortable position, even in improving livelihoods, locally and regionally.

The other thing that I must talk about is the fact that we are becoming part of the integral East Africa regional initiatives that are poised to raise the livelihoods, to raise the incomes, to raise revenues. So, there is a whole lot of hope. You talk to people around us and they have hope, and we did feel that we're on track to realise these hopes, they are not empty hopes.