

Kaigamba Francoise is an Environmental Management Specialist, working with the Nile Basin Initiative, Nile SAP. She spoke to UNEP-TEEB about the challenges for effective transboundary management of water resources and wetlands during the Kigali Forum for Wetlands, which took place 8 to 12 July 2013, in Kigali, Rwanda.



UNEP-TEEB: *What in your view is vital in order for success when working with countries with shared water resources?*

Kaigamba Francoise: When countries come together to discuss shared water management plans it is important that they have harmonized policies, because without harmonized policies it becomes difficult to properly manage shared water resources. Fortunately for the equatorial lake region, the East African Community has invested in promoting a harmonized approach for the management of ecosystems, and all the countries are trying to harmonize their policies.

When countries are not supportive of each other's plans this can hinder any shared management plans. Our advice in the face of conflicting development and management plans, is that the two countries meet and consult.

UNEP-TEEB: *How does having a policy impact the work at the grassroots level?*

Kaigamba Francoise: Communities are aware that the environment is being degraded and are conscious that something needs to be done, and that they cannot do it alone. Policies provide structure that guides how communities can work at the grass roots level. For example, to avoid over fishing, the whole fisheries population has to work in a structured manner if there is to be a tangible result.

UNEP-TEEB: *What are some of the challenges for the effective trans-boundary management of wetlands?*

Kaigamba Francoise: Managing a resource that does not fully belong to one country is a challenge. Specifically in our region finding a balance between meeting national interests and managing a shared resource is further made difficult because of the limited capacity to develop and implement programmes for shared water management. Another challenge is when countries are not supportive of each other's plans, as this can hinder any shared management plans. Our advice in the face of conflicting development and management plans, is that the two countries meet, consult and undertake an assessment to evaluate the impact of planned initiatives on the shared resource.

UNEP-TEEB: *Wise use and smart plans is the theme of this Forum what for you will be the main take home messages?*

Kaigamba Francoise: Food security is a major preoccupation for many countries and wetlands provide a solution to address this challenge. Therefore, decision makers need to be made aware of this opportunity and communication is key, so they can understand why wetlands are important and learn about the multi -services that they provide.