

Water for People and Nature in the Wami River Sub-Basin

Whether or not there will be clean and abundant water, fertile soils and healthy villages for the 1.8 million people in the Wami river sub-basin depends a great deal on what is done right now to take care of water and forest resources.

One important question we face in the basin, and in each village is: “will we have enough water at the right time and in the right place for all of our needs?” Another important question is: “are we keeping the water clean enough so it can be safely used?” A third question is: “are we keeping ourselves clean enough to ensure that the people in each village, especially children stay healthy?”



Businesses and communities need to work together to assure the life-giving services of the Wami river basin

The Wami Ruvu Basin Water Office joined together with the Tanzania Coastal Management Partnership and other partners, with support from the Water and Development Alliance (WADA), throughout the basin to learn the answers to these questions and address the most important problems.

Water and sanitation focusing on schools

We learned that, unfortunately, most schools in the Wami sub-basin are still being constructed without proper sanitation for pupils and teachers, and water access remains a problem, so there is much more to do. As an example for all, the villages of Dumila, Msowero, Madizini, Hale and Miono were helped to construct much needed latrines at elementary schools

The Water and Development Alliance (WADA) is a collaboration between the Coca-Cola System (including corporate, foundations, and bottling partners) and USAID to improve water resource management and expand access to improved drinking water and sanitation services for poor and marginalized people in developing countries.



A properly constructed latrine keeps children safe from disease only if good habits such as hand washing are a part of the picture

and other public places. In some cases the schools were at risk of being closed. In each village, leaders and water committees underwent training on good hygiene practices, such as the importance of handwashing. It is now time to encourage more villages to study the model facilities and find ways to construct their own so children can remain healthy and complete their schooling.

In Hale, a rainwater collection system has been built to help a rapidly growing high school. There is a great need for more clean and easily accessible water in the Wami sub-basin not only for schools, but for all village uses, and rainwater harvesting is one idea for meeting this need.

Water for nature

In another project activity called “Environmental Flow Assessment” a team of experts analyzed whether there is enough water at the right time and in the right place for all our needs—both the needs for nature and for livelihoods. We learned that at present, the Wami remains in relatively good shape, so now is the time to put protective measures in to keep the Wami healthy. Expansion of farming and industrial activities without water conservation and waste management can quickly lead to shortfalls in water, and conflict among villages and water users.



Land Care

Several villages have taken a strong interest in land care, which helps areas recover from excessive tree cutting and is essential for protecting how the soil protects the flow and storage of water. The trees are not only good for protecting the water basin, but also provide shade and wood that can be used for fuel or construction. The nursery and tree planting work has been carried out with much enthusiasm by local leaders, teachers and children. These are good examples to learn from, and so much more remains to be done in the watershed.



Farmers and villagers are on the frontline for restoring the landscape in local areas, but larger initiatives are also needed

Environmental management systems

Large agricultural and industrial activities, such as sugar and sisal production, use water from the Wami sub-basin and generate wastes that sometimes are disposed of in the streams feeding the Wami, putting at risk both people and natural systems downstream. A team of experts is working with the excellent cooperation of companies such as Mtibwa Sugar Estate and the Kigombe Sisal Plantation to identify ways to reduce water consumption and lower the amount of pollutants that escape from their operations. More companies can and should follow these examples.



Industries are finding it profitable to reduce harmful waste discharges and improve production process efficiency

The way forward

We need to continue and increase the level of effort in all these areas. More latrines and improved water supply are needed in schools and public places, but first more villages need to receive training and find sources of funding to build model facilities. Now is also time for sugar and sisal companies to put into action some of the measures for reducing or avoiding altogether water contamination and excessive water use.

There needs to be many more organizations and regional leaders to help extend tree planting and land care from small village projects to an area wide replanting and stewardship scheme.

With what the team of experts learned about water supply needs in the Wami, it is now possible for the Wami Ruvu Basin Water Office to improve its map database of the sub-basin for water supply and water use planning. New understanding of the water sub-basin also needs to be shared with the villages and major water users. More village leader training and the creation of Water User Associations are needed as a first step toward local problem solving to prevent a water crisis. The basin water office can also take the lead in bringing these messages into the school curriculum.

Acknowledgements

Generous financial contributions to the Wami river landscape to seascape initiative have been made by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), USAID Tanzania, the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation and the Coca-Cola Atlanta Foundation as part of WADA. Key partners include the Coastal Resources Center of the University of Rhode Island through the Tanzania Coastal Management Partnership (TCMP), Florida International University and World Vision. Other partners include the Tanzania Health, Environment and Sanitation Association (THESA), Wami-Ruvu Basin Water Office, Kwanza and Bonite Coca-Cola bottlers, the agro-industrial sugar companies of Mtibwa and TPC, Kigombe Sisal Estate and village water committees.

Contacts for more information

Julius Sarmett Wami-Ruvu Basin Water Office. P.O. Box 826, Morogoro.
Tel: 255-23-261-4748.
Email: juliussarmett@yahoo.com



Mrs. Appa Mandari, project coordinator at the Tanzania Coastal Management Partnership, Tel. (255- 22) 278-0520. Email: apmandari@yahoo.com. Old Bagamoyo Road, Mikocheni B, Plot 390, P.O. Box. 71686, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Donald Robadue and James Tobey, Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island. Narragansett, RI, USA. Tel: 401-874-6224. Email: robadue@gso.uri.edu, tobey@crc.uri.edu