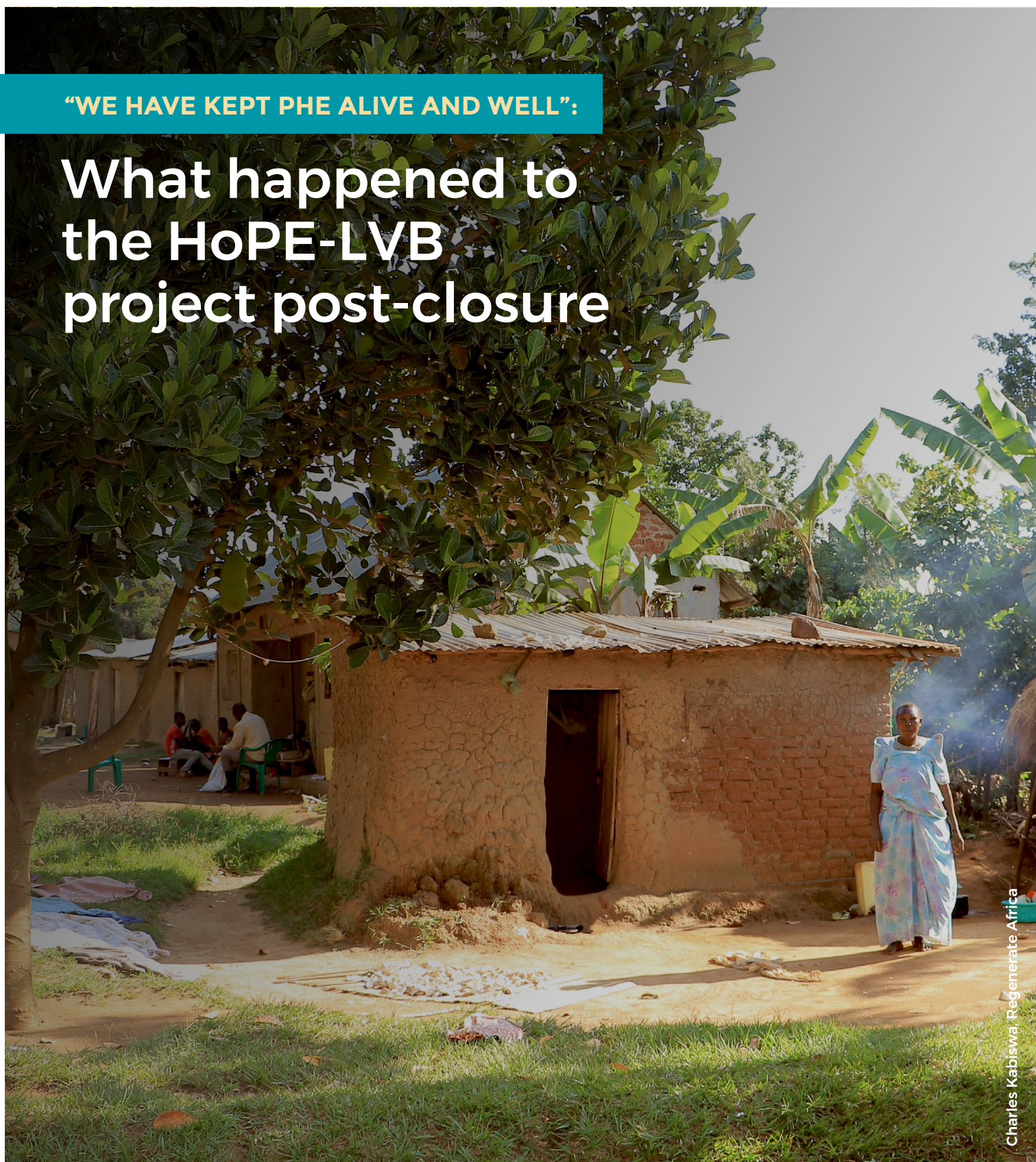


"WE HAVE KEPT PHE ALIVE AND WELL":

What happened to the HoPE-LVB project post-closure



Charles Kabiswa, Regenerate Africa



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About HoPE-LVB

The HoPE-LVB project was implemented by Pathfinder International in partnership with Ecological Christian Organization, Osienala, Nature Kenya, Conservation through Public Health (CTPH), and ExpandNet. The project was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, with additional support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) via the Evidence to Action, IDEA, PACE, and BALANCED projects, and the Winslow and Barr Foundations.

Methodology

This stock-taking activity included a desk review, one focus group discussion (FGD), and 17 in-depth interviews (IDIs) conducted in April 2022. FGD and IDI participants included HoPE-LVB project staff from global, national, and community levels; community members from HoPE-LVB sites; and government officials. Each FGD/IDI lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in English via videoconferencing. All quotes included in this brief are taken directly from the FGD or IDI transcripts. Knowledge SUCCESS received ethical approval from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Institutional Review Board. We also received ethics approval in Kenya and Uganda through Amref's Ethical and Scientific Review Committee. Each participant provided informed verbal consent prior to participation. The FGD and IDIs were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed manually. Knowledge SUCCESS coded and analyzed the transcripts using grounded theory to identify common themes and findings.

Introduction

For development work to be truly sustainable, results and outcomes from short-term program cycles need to continue across generations, long after donors have concluded their support. Projects designed to consider scale-up and sustainability from the outset are more likely to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

One such project is the Health of People and Environment-Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB), a cross-sectoral integrated Population, Health, and Environment (PHE) effort implemented by Pathfinder International and a range of partners in Kenya and Uganda during 2011-2019.¹ The purpose of HoPE-LVB was to improve interconnected health, environment, and development challenges in an ecologically biodiverse region facing degradation. A 2018 **external evaluation** details the results of the successful project—from improved reproductive health and environmental outcomes to PHE institutionalization. Overall, the project demonstrated an innovative proof-of-concept model to inform future cross-sectoral programs.

Several years after the external evaluation, partners and donors had an interest in gauging the sustainability of the outcomes. Ideally, this would have taken the form of a full ex-post evaluation, but this is not a

¹ The HoPE-LVB project was implemented in a combination of island, lakeshore, and inland sites in Uganda and Kenya. The project catchment area comprised sites located in Uganda's Mayuge and Wakiso districts, as well as in Kenya's Siaya and Homa Bay counties.



routine practice within development projects. With this in mind, USAID, through the Knowledge SUCCESS project, partnered with Preston-Werner Ventures to conduct a rapid stock-taking exercise to do the following:

- 1 Document continued implementation of HoPE-LVB activities in project communities
- 2 Report the status of systems, networks, and policies set up during HoPE-LVB
- 3 Identify challenges and opportunities for continuing PHE activities
- 4 Outline recommendations to improve the scale-up and sustainability of current and future cross-sectoral programs

This brief summarizes the results of this stock-taking exercise, and is anticipated to inform stakeholders—including funders, policymakers, and advocates—on enhanced design, implementation, and funding of cross-sectoral integrated programs to ensure sustainable development planning and programming.



Key Findings & Lessons

Sustained results and impact

The HoPE-LVB project demonstrated a holistic PHE model for engaging communities and achieving a range of social, environmental, and health benefits. From contraceptive knowledge to eco-friendly fishing and farming practices, HoPE-LVB improved communities’ resilience and capacity to apply a range of sustainable practices.

This stock-taking activity confirmed the program’s lasting impacts. HoPE-LVB communities were engaged, empowered, and motivated to implement PHE, and many activities have continued.

“Our community has seen a tremendous change. Even right now, you can see how the area is evergreen because many people have been taught and they are even planting more trees. With family planning, families are practicing it without any stress from couples because male engagement is so paramount right now. With food production... in each household, you can see they are doing something that brings food on the table...”

– Focus group discussion participant, Rachuonyo Women’s Group, Kenya



Stefan Magdalinski

Charles Kabiswa, Regenerate Africa

“The program really has impacted us through the lessons and tools, because it is continuing even after implementation ended by [the HoPE-LVB team]. What I learned during the project period, it is still really a big part of the community.”

– **Daniel Abonyo**, Program Coordinator, Rachuonyo Environmental Conservation Initiatives (RECI), Kenya

Communities have sustained many HoPE-LVB model household practices—for example, tree planting, awareness of modern contraception, improved sanitation, kitchen gardens, fruit cultivation, use of energy efficient stoves, encouraging girls’ education, and promoting sustainable fishing practices. HoPE-LVB’s community-centered approach helped sustain these activities, and communities have generated demand for the HoPE-LVB model even years later.

“The practice of working with ‘village health teams’ [VHTs]—volunteers who give advice to their fellow community members—[HoPE-LVB] put this into practice through training, record keeping, and encouraging referrals...That practice is really continuing in Bussi Island and is in use elsewhere.”

– **Rebecca Ssabaganzi**, Wakiso District Natural Resources Officer, Uganda

“If you go to our community, you’ll find model households...which have actually improved since the project ended.”

– **Kifutuko Emmanuel**, Ecological Christian Organization (ECO), Mayuge District, Uganda




Institutionalizing and Sustaining PHE

In addition to model household practices, participants in this stock-taking exercise emphasized HoPE-LVB systems and structures, including policies, networks, and trainings.

HoPE-LVB was unique in that it applied a scale-up lens from the outset, with support from partner **ExpandNet**, and began the project “with the end in mind.” Specifically, the program applied ExpandNet/WHO’s **scaling-up framework and guidance tools**. Even now, HoPE-LVB’s learnings and tools continue to inform and influence other cross-sectoral work.

“The success of HoPE-LVB has greatly informed the expansion and replication of PHE integration both in policy and practice.”

– **Charles Kabiswa**, Executive Director, Regenerate Africa
Former Program Director, Ecological Christian Organization (ECO)



“We’ve secured additional funding from several donors to continue replicating HoPE-LVB with an integrated gardening program for nutrition, maternal and child health, and environment conservation. We’re looking at contraceptive utilization, gardening for nutrition, adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights... also household tree planting, livelihoods, regenerative agriculture, energy-efficient cooking stoves, and climate resilience among smallholder women gardeners and families.”

– **Jostas Mwebembezi**, Founder and Executive Director of Rwenzori Center for Research and Advocacy, Uganda

National policies

HoPE-LVB advocacy contributed to broad-scale government buy-in for PHE, and ultimately to the incorporation of PHE into national policies, which are still being implemented. To date, national policies in Kenya and Uganda provide guidelines and frameworks to stimulate integrated solutions. Elements that continue to shape the national development landscape include inclusion of PHE within overall development plans, PHE-specific policies, and sector-specific policies.

Within Kenya’s decentralized system,² HoPE-LVB successfully advocated for supportive policies, and this influence is still felt. At the national level, PHE was incorporated into the Vision 2030 national development plan.

² In Kenya, the 2010 constitution created a system where legislative and executive functions were devolved to the 47 administrative counties.

“In Kenya, [PHE] has been mainstreamed into the policies and the development plans. And based on that, then it is a requirement that PHE projects must be designed, because a policy cannot be developed and not implemented.”

– **Dr. Doreen Othero**, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)

In Uganda, where the government is more centralized, advocates integrated PHE into national policies, which then flowed to sub-national levels. By cultivating and motivating PHE champions, HoPE-LVB contributed to PHE’s inclusion within the Uganda Vision 2040 development plan.

“[PHE] is fully integrated in our strategic plan, which goes to 2025. It has a budget line; therefore, it will be attracting budget allocation annually and quarterly for us to proceed with scale-up. There’s buy-in from both cabinets, but also the technical staff in other ministries and agencies even up to the permanent secretary levels. There’s a lot of support from civil society as well.”

– **James Peter Olemo**, National Population Council, Uganda

Both countries also have ongoing strategic plans specific to PHE. Uganda’s began in 2016, and Kenya’s was launched in 2018—with budget line items and broad support from government and civil society. In addition, HoPE-LVB contributed to PHE’s inclusion within sector-specific policies—for example, family planning and climate change. This continues to legitimize PHE among decision makers, and has inspired a range of partners to prioritize a more holistic perspective.

“We shared a lot of lessons learned [from HoPE-LVB] and actually the PHE model was integrated in the national climate change policy.... When we talk about environmental challenges, we are no longer looking at them just from the perspective of conservation and environment. We are now looking at it from a holistic perspective. And the policies capture this.”

– **Isaac Kabongo**, Board Member (Treasurer) of Climate Action Network International, Executive Director of Ecological Christian Organization (ECO)



Sub-national policies and coordination

PHE has also been mainstreamed at the sub-national level. For example, a number of Kenyan counties have incorporated PHE into their County Integrated Development Plans. After HoPE-LVB ended, champions continued to lead community-level PHE efforts, often relying on partners trained by HoPE-LVB.

“We don’t have any [financial] support.... [Local] leadership was empowered [after working with HoPE-LVB]...our leaders were trained. We have community volunteers that are tasked to manage their respective areas... So we don’t have support from any donor, but we picked it up because the project was ending. We had leadership that was strengthened to pick up the role beyond the project period.”

– Daniel Abonyo, Program Coordinator, Rachuonyo Environmental Conservation Initiatives (RECI), Kenya

“Once governments—and in particular in Kenya, the county governments—have conceptualized the PHE model, then it is much easier to institutionalize PHE into their systems.”

– Tom Guda, National Chairperson, Beach Management Unit (BMU) Network, Homa Bay, Kenya

District and village working groups started under HoPE-LVB are still functioning where there is a budget to support them. These groups provide an important opportunity for sustainability and scale-up.

“Setting up of village committees...is a PHE approach that brings sustainability because the community is able to agree on their priority areas and do what needs to be done.”

– Maurice Oduor, PHE Champion, Western Region, Kenya

Even though Uganda is more centralized than Kenya, strategic alignment with sub-national development helps maintain champions at all levels.

“HoPE-LVB empowered district leadership to integrate population, health, and environment and they [still] apply our plans. When you see the districts... They have working groups supported by the project to integrate PHE in their development plan. And this has been achieved both at the district level and at the national level.”

– Raymond Ruyoka, Former Advocacy Officer, Reproductive Health Uganda

In addition to continuing activities in HoPE-LVB communities, new ones also started after the project ended.

“The government has pushed the model household, which was really introduced by the HoPE-LVB project. So we are still even leveraging it, taking [HoPE-LVB’s] best practices to other districts where the project didn’t reach.”

– Betty Mbolanyo, Senior Environment Officer, Directorate of Environment Affairs at the Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment

Another key opportunity that has arisen in Uganda since the HoPE-LVB project ended is the new Parish Development Model (PDM)—a last-mile strategy for service delivery in the country.

“We make sure the parish chiefs are part of all of the [PHE] trainings....We let them know that we intend to run PHE as part and parcel of the package of the parish development model and in our aligned strategic plan....When we introduce the PHE approach and we speak to the PDM, the districts are excited about it.”

– James Peter Olemo, National Population Council, Uganda

PHE networks and working groups

HoPE-LVB helped institutionalize PHE structures like national networks, which are still active and important to the continued PHE prioritization.

“In [Uganda] we have kept PHE alive and well.... We have done a lot to inform and replicate the model in a number of geographical settings by different user organizations and communities, most of whom are members of the Uganda PHE network. The PHE network that was started comprises cross-sectoral state and non-state actors and is still active and functional. National Population Council is the secretariat.”

– **Charles Kabiswa**, Executive Director, Regenerate Africa
Former Program Director, Ecological Christian Organization (ECO)

“Through the Kenya PHE network, whose secretariat is based at [the National Council for Population and Development] and co-chaired by Pathfinder, the PHE approach has evolved, growing its membership to encompass over 65 civil society organizations. The network has facilitated PHE advocacy and policy development, and multi-sectoral government and private-sector responses to achieve diverse SDGs and government ICPD+25 Commitments.”

– **Pamela Onduso**, Acting Country Director,
Kenya and Regional Advocacy Manager,
East & Southern Africa, Pathfinder International

Regional expansion of PHE

When HoPE-LVB began, PHE was relatively new to decision makers. Now, PHE is more mainstream, and tools informed by HoPE-LVB are still used to implement activities and advocate for supportive policies. Using HoPE-LVB evidence, new partners, funders, and communities helped replicate the approach throughout the region, even beyond Kenya and Uganda.

“There’s a continuation of some of [HoPE-LVB] activities. We also came up with new ones, using the same model. We also have an awareness [campaign] called ‘Caring for God’s Creation’.... which brings in the faith component.... It is a model we are promoting within four East African countries—Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Rwanda.”

– **Isaac Kabongo**, Board Member (Treasurer) of
Climate Action Network International, Executive Director
of Ecological Christian Organization (ECO)

Inspiration for other projects

The HoPE-LVB approach has also been adapted and scaled by subsequent USAID-funded projects. For example, the Sustainable Health and People’s Environment in Lake Victoria Basin (SHAPE-LVB) program—part of the Advancing Partners and Communities (APC) Project—drew from HoPE-LVB’s approach. Also, the Evidence to Action (E2A) project supported the scale-up of interventions tested in HoPE-LVB. In addition, the MEASURE project drew upon an extensive field visit to a HoPE-LVB site to update their **Guide for Monitoring and Evaluating Population-Health-Environment (PHE) Programs: Second Edition**. Individuals in HoPE-LVB communities were also featured in the **PHE Voices** publication, a joint storytelling effort by the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) and the Knowledge for Health (K4Health) project.

Adoption of PHE by academic organizations

HoPE-LVB’s impact on the academic space provides further evidence that PHE has been mainstreamed. After collaboration with HoPE-LVB staff, the PHE approach is being taught in universities in East and Southern Africa. For example, at **Makerere University in Uganda**, more than 20 academic departments—including public health, business, education, and women and gender studies—came together to advance the PHE agenda through a multidisciplinary research and curricular program. HoPE-LVB staff also introduced the concept to a diverse cohort of students from across Africa during a program in South Africa.

“I was hosted for two years for a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Pretoria (Future Africa Institute), where I introduced the concept of PHE to people from over 15 countries in Africa from different backgrounds, different trainings, and different disciplines. I introduced PHE to them and they embraced it.”

– **Dr. John Mushomi**, Faculty Member, Department of Population
Studies, Makerere University

Sustaining the Impacts Beyond HoPE-LVB

“[My hope is that] in 10 years from now, households will have embraced PHE as an approach to help them escape poverty.”

– **Jostas Mwebembezi**, Founder and Executive Director of Rwenzori Center for Research and Advocacy, Uganda

Overall, participants in this activity were hopeful about the future of PHE—and many pointed to a direct link between HoPE-LVB and the capacity of communities to sustain PHE. However, in speaking about the future, participants stressed the need to continue collaborating with a broad network of partners to maintain multi-sectoral efforts.

“Some young people are marrying people from outside the community who don’t know much about PHE. So we need donor support and partnership to continue sensitizing our community [about PHE].”

– **Focus group discussion participant**, Rachuonyo Women’s Group, Kenya

Continued advocacy is needed to make sure government programs continue to champion PHE in the face of other priorities. While some organizations had the capacity to replicate the HoPE-LVB model, many lacked funding for implementation. Several participants mentioned that insufficient resources prevented them from hiring PHE technical experts. In addition, COVID-19 diverted funding away from PHE beginning in early 2020, and advocates are still working to resume systems and activities after this setback.

“There is momentum as many organizations scale up the PHE model.... However, potential funders seem to be struggling from the impact of COVID-19 and the political differences that have impacted the donor landscape.”

– **Charles Kabiswa**, Executive Director, Regenerate Africa
Former Program Director, Ecological Christian Organization (ECO)

“The National Population Council asked for a [PHE] concept which we submitted...and they allocated 500 million [shillings]. That 500 million has been used to scale PHE....That was before COVID. So they had started the initial introduction training, but when COVID came, that was halted. I’m told much of the money was sent to COVID response.... But they told me they are picking it up now that COVID has gone down.”

– **Dorah Taranta**, Gender Technical Advisor, Pathfinder International, Uganda

Participants also mentioned the importance of taking advantage of existing structures—like the Parish Development Model in Uganda—that can offer key opportunities to scale up.

“In Uganda, the Parish Development Model (PDM) introduced by the government works very well with the PHE program. It is an entry point for PHE interventions. We can work at the parish level as well as the community level. If PHE can be integrated in the PDM, which is being rolled out across the country, it would go a long way in implementing PHE interventions instead of introducing PHE as a parallel program.”

– **Andrew Tiondi**, Former Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, National Population Council, Uganda



Charles Kabiswa, Regenerate Africa

Supporting PHE national coordination networks is also a key opportunity for continued scale-up. However, participants discussed the need to increase funding and clarify roles.

“What I want [for scale-up] is to put in a budget to facilitate integration of PHE, and this budget would cover community outreach—for instance, dissemination meetings and exchange visits for best practices. This would help in scaling up PHE.”

– **Tom Guda**, National Chairperson, Beach Management Unit (BMU) Network, Homa Bay, Kenya

“There [is a] need to have clear-cut roles and responsibilities, probably additional human resources at the national level, and to double efforts at the district coordination level. I think that resources that appreciate PHE are thin on the ground at the secretariat...I would recommend strengthening, expanding, and equipping the secretariat.”

– **Dr. John Mushomi**, Faculty Member, Department of Population Studies, Makerere University



Lessons for Sustained Impact of Integrated Programs

From reproductive health to poverty to food security, communities around the world—particularly those at highest risk of environmental degradation—face complex and interconnected challenges. To advance the SDGs and improve both human and environmental health, multipronged development approaches must be mainstreamed.

The following lessons, based on the results of this stock-taking exercise, can be used by advocates, donors, and decision makers to plan stronger and more sustainable cross-sectoral programs.



Build community partnerships, capacity, and evidence

1. Plan forward-looking programs that prioritize strong partnerships and policy advocacy. HoPE-LVB staff in both Kenya and Uganda came from different organizations but worked as one united multi-sectoral team. They formed strong local partnerships with community leaders and created local by-laws at the village levels to codify PHE activities.

“PHE integration is not for the boardroom. It’s not something you will sit in the boardroom and say, ‘Now let us integrate PHE.’ This is best achieved within the family, the community, and the society.”

– **Maurice Oduor**, PHE Champion, Western Region, Kenya

2. Build community capacity from the beginning. Broadly engaging with local NGOs and existing community groups can help sustain and scale community-led cross-sectoral approaches.

“The communities that HoPE-LVB worked with are still practicing PHE. We have young mothers who are still doing PHE. We have community-based organizations that are still doing PHE. The reason is because we started off by building the capacity of the communities. The communities were trained to understand the integrated approach and [its] value.”

– **Dr. Doreen Othero**, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)

3. Replicate integrated approaches in different settings. PHE can take many forms depending on the needs of the individual community. Showing the relevance of the cross-sectoral models in diverse settings—from coastal to inland areas—provides evidence that they can be scaled to different contexts.

“There is an urgent need to pay close attention to successful cross-sectoral approaches and programs like HoPE-LVB if countries like Uganda want to meaningfully contribute to fast-tracking the attainment of SDG targets and climate ambitions. I strongly believe that tested models like HoPE-LVB present opportunities and lessons that can help deliver on so many SDG goals and climate actions.”

– **Charles Kabiswa**, Executive Director, Regenerate Africa;
Former Program Director, Ecological Christian Organization (ECO)



Nurture government champions

4. Meaningfully engage government champions at all levels. HoPE-LVB prioritized advocacy among regional, national, and local governing bodies from the beginning—after working regionally to establish PHE as a regional priority, the East African Community (EAC) encouraged national governments to do the same. PHE programs can then work to institutionalize systems for more effective implementation.

“The beauty of the NPC [National Population Council] approach is that they’re part of the government...and the plan was that they would then work to link or leverage on the other government initiatives..... So for them, it’s easier because they have the mandate. It’s all government work.”

– **Dorah Taranta**, Gender Technical Advisor,
Pathfinder International, Uganda

5. Transfer leadership of integrated programs and networks to government stakeholders and sectors. This helps ensure accountability and sustainability. This activity showed that these networks and systems led by government partners are still functioning three years after the project’s closure.

“What HoPE-LVB did—and this was a big lesson—was that it increasingly ceded leadership to government over time. In other words, it deferred the leadership of scale-up processes to government stakeholders, which was the best thing to do from a scaling perspective, because government [institutions] are the ones that remain after any one project is gone.”

– **Laura Ghiron**, President, Partners in Expanding Health Quality and Access and Member, ExpandNet Secretariat



Mobilize financial resources

6. Advocate for local budgets. Even in the presence of national policies, funding must be continuously lobbied for, if not already in place, to actually implement community-level integrated activities. Advocacy should not only focus on securing funding, but also on accountability and monitoring of spending.

“As I speak, the National Population Council receives a budget from the government [of Uganda] for PHE activities. The government has allowed the PHE initiatives to be implemented in all districts of Uganda.”

– **Dr. John Mushomi**, Faculty Member, Department of
Population Studies, Makerere University

7. Plan for the long term. Advocates need to mobilize future resources (both domestic and external) before their current funding expires. They should also ensure that adequate resources are available to sustain all areas of cross-sectoral programs, and be prepared to secure funds from additional partners (both public and private).

“We have seen an increase in local resources for healthcare, but also for the social work and the planning unit to integrate population, health, and environment. So...those district plans and policies have helped [PHE] to survive.”

– **Raymond Ruyoka**, Former Advocacy Officer,
Reproductive Health Uganda



Learn and evolve

- 8. Share evidence-informed learnings broadly to inform future integrated programs.** Making learning generalizable (not specific to one area or context) helps demonstrate the effectiveness of PHE models in different contexts. This is further evidenced by learnings shared in other regions—for example, among **PHE programs in the Philippines**.

“The project was quite visible, and papers were presented in conferences. And [the East African Community] used a lot of evidence from HoPE-LVB to convince our ministers to agree to come up with the PHE strategy. There was quite a bit of evidence being generated in the form of data, in the form of information, in the form of knowledge products, and being shared among different audiences. That was a major strength of the HoPE-LVB project.”

– **Dr. Doreen Othero**, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)

- 9. Conduct post-program evaluations.** It is important to conduct rigorous ex-post evaluations to fully understand sustained program impact and outcomes beyond typical project cycles. This includes monitoring scale-up and the extent to which integrated development projects, like PHE, have been institutionalized in a range of policy and program settings.

“The HoPE-LVB project succeeded in large measure because of several factors: it was anchored in existing community and public-sector structures and was evidence-informed from inception. Additionally, there was rigorous monitoring, evaluation, adaptation, and learning throughout implementation. Evidence gathered improved and informed program design and implementation.”

– **Pamela Onduso**, Acting Country Director, Kenya and Regional Advocacy Manager, East & Southern Africa, Pathfinder International

Conclusion

From technological advances to climate disasters and pandemics, the current development landscape is increasingly complex. Cross-sectoral partnerships are imperative to tackle these interconnected challenges and achieve the SDGs. While challenging, integrated programs are more likely to ensure lasting impact—particularly those that are planned “with the end in mind.” A strength of cross-sectoral development models like HoPE-LVB is that partners can shape the model into something most appropriate and sustainable for their local contexts.

Global momentum is building for these multipronged programs, as evidenced by active communities of practice that focus on integrated development. For example, a global network of PHE professionals regularly exchanges knowledge from disparate locations like Ethiopia, Madagascar, and the Philippines. Sharing lessons and good practices allows the development community to apply innovative partnership models that join governments, non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, young people, and civil society to tackle multiple challenges.



Successful integrated programs like HoPE-LVB—ones that prioritize sustainable and community-led integrated approaches—are not singular phenomena. However, as post-program evaluations are not currently the norm in the development field, we may be losing important opportunities to share lessons and strategies. Making such evaluations routine could inform future integrated approaches and build on global momentum to address complex and interconnected global challenges in a community-centered, sustainable way.

Recommended Resources

López-Carr D, Kibombo R, Ondego D, et al. Health Of The People And Environment In The Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB) Project Evaluation. Washington, DC: Global Health Program Cycle Improvement Project. 2018.

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