

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AFRICA: LESSONS FROM FOUR POPULATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENT PROJECTS

The integrated Population, Health, and Environment (PHE) approach is based on the premise that people's health and the environments in which they live are inextricably linked. A functioning ecosystem sustains life and provides the necessary services for human well-being. The aim of PHE projects is to improve access to reproductive and other health services for vulnerable populations in rural and ecologically threatened areas, while at the same time empowering these communities to manage their natural resources in ways that benefit their livelihoods. By linking these issues, people are increasingly motivated to change behaviors that threaten their health and environment. The PHE approach proposes that close collaboration and coordination across multiple sectors contributes to holistic results—people with improved health outcomes, diversified livelihoods, and stronger, more sustainable ecosystems. This publication features insights from four ongoing PHE projects in East Africa—two led by Pathfinder International and two by Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)—providing recommendations for those seeking to refine the PHE development framework into an even more relevant tool for meeting today's complex challenges.



Holistic Solutions

Today, the PHE field remains vibrant, dynamic, and innovative; it is continually adapting to leverage new cross-sectoral partnerships that provide holistic solutions to a myriad of development challenges. However, the struggle to reach a wide-ranging consensus on an integrated framework is ongoing. This is due, in part, to the current primacy of sector-based development. The development of a robust PHE framework requires mutual understanding and coordinated efforts, various technical expertise, and adaptability to meet the unique challenges communities face.

Global demographic trends, natural resource degradation and depletion, and economic disparity require integrated, sustainable models for development. This is emphasized by the United Nations Population Fund in

anticipation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2011: “Policies that promote human development and address population dynamics... together with policies that encourage higher, sustained and environmentally sustainable economic growth must constitute the cornerstones of sustainable development strategies.”¹

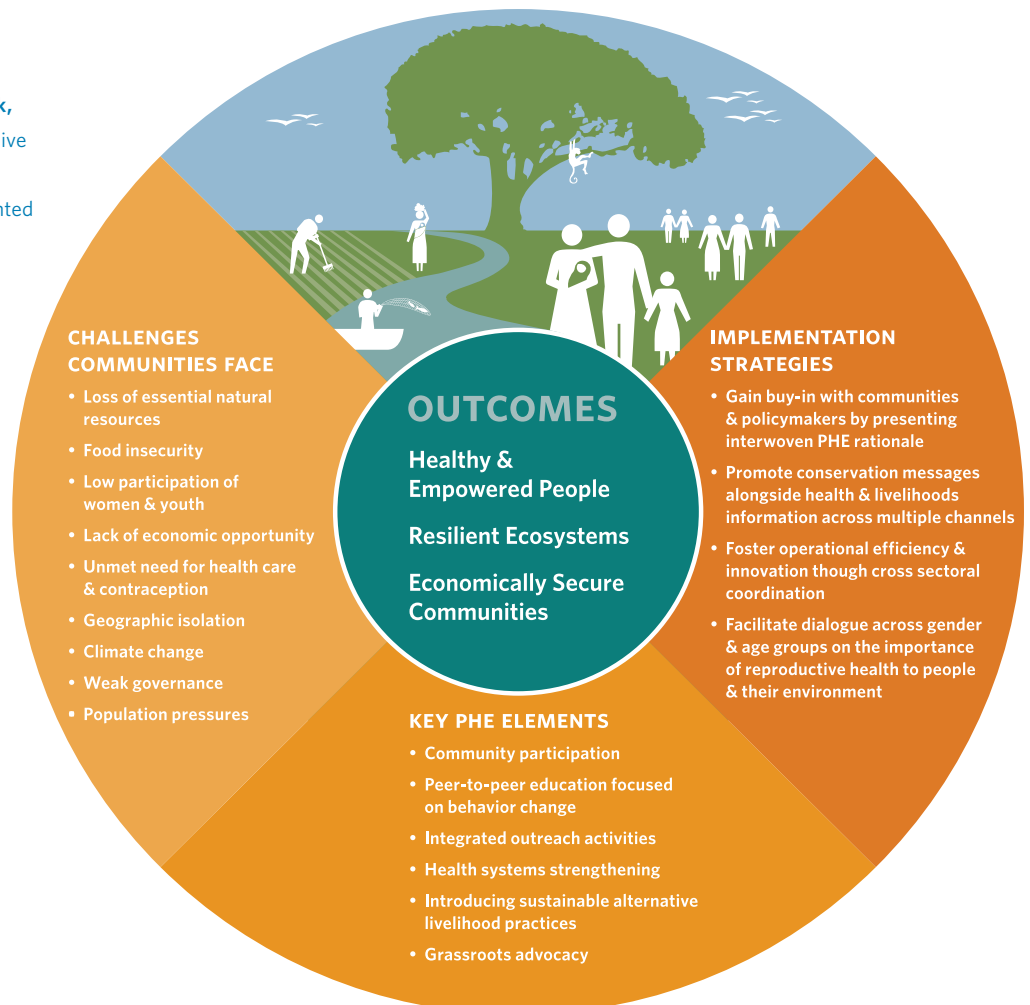
Health and conservation activities can be synergistic. Health outcomes may be more tangible and immediate than conservation outcomes. For example, water and sanitation interventions lead to fewer epidemic outbreaks, less pollution of waterways, and the protection of ecosystems. Presence of short-term health improvements can catalyze otherwise difficult conservation efforts. Improving natural resource management can have a long-term feedback effect on community health.

Pathfinder and DSW implement PHE projects in the neighboring countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. While the local context, needs of communities, and approaches vary across projects, overarching trends support the integrated PHE approach shown below.

Regional Context

In recent years, East Africa has experienced significant economic gains; however, the majority of people in project countries—73 to 84 percent—live in remote areas, where they must rely on nearby natural resources, such as fisheries and forests, for their livelihoods and nutrition.² At the site of the Pathfinder-led Health of People and Environment Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB) project in Kenya, insufficient health services in isolated communities result in as many as 48 percent

The Integrated PHE Conceptual Framework, which promotes reproductive rights and active citizen participation, captures common elements across the four projects implemented by Pathfinder and DSW.



of non-pregnant women (aged 15-49) reporting an unmet need for contraception.³

East Africa has long been a focus of conservation efforts, due to the abundance of endemic plant and animal species and countries' reliance on valuable eco-tourism. Residents' use of natural resources also necessitates conservation efforts, as seen in Ethiopia, where food security depends on the restoration of eroded landscapes.

Remarkable and varied natural resources can be found at all four project sites. However, poverty-related environmental pressures, coupled with unmet need for sexual and reproductive health information, supplies, and services, and exacerbated by inadequate governance, have threatened the health of these ecosystems.

Bonga and Kakamega Forests

In the Bonga Forest of Ethiopia and the Kakamega Forest of Kenya, communities interact with and are dependent on forests for settlement, cultivation, and livelihoods. Intensified human impacts have led to a patchy mosaic of vegetation, where vast forests once existed. Forest degradation and loss have reached crisis proportions. Actions to counteract these developments have been slow,⁴ but DSW addresses these challenges using PHE approaches with communities surrounding these endangered forests.

Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika

The lakes of the East African Rift Valley are invaluable international resources, providing power generation, transportation, irrigation and water supply, fisheries, waste disposal, recreation, and tourism. Pathfinder implements its PHE projects in catchment areas for two of the largest East African lakes—Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika.

Both lakes experience common threats to biodiversity and ecosystem health, including overfishing, siltation from deforested watersheds, industrial pollution, and eutrophication, as well as the effects of climate change.⁵

After careful examination of the challenges in these four areas, Pathfinder and DSW developed their PHE approaches.



PHOTO: Reiner Klingholz

The Integrated Bonga Forest Project

Ethiopia | Launched by DSW in 2001

Ethiopia's Bonga Forest, located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, is rich in wild-growing Arabica coffee. In 2001, DSW launched the Integrated Bonga Forest Project to curb increasing degradation of the forest, improve livelihood opportunities, and address unmet health needs of people who live in communities surrounding the forest. Together with local partners, such as the Kafa Forest Coffee Cooperatives Farmers Union, DSW educates participatory forest management groups on the socio-economic benefits of protecting the forest while maintaining the production and marketing of farmers' quality organic coffee products with international corporate partners.



DSW's primary role is based on the youth empowerment approach of its Youth-to-Youth initiative (Y2Y). DSW supports a network of youth clubs to provide peer education on issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights and environmental protection, while also developing the business and leadership skills of club members. Clubs engage in information and sensitization campaigns in their communities and with participatory forest management groups. The project also strengthens health systems to expand access to quality health care, including youth-friendly services, for the community.

For more about the Integrated Bonga Forest Project visit www.DSW.org/BONGA

The PHE Strategy

Historically, PHE efforts have relied on the theory that smaller, healthier families are better able to survive where natural resources are rapidly dwindling. However, Pathfinder and DSW have recognized the need to expand the PHE strategy to include reproductive rights and active citizen participation. This commitment to support people and their rights begins with fostering

community engagement and empowerment. Pathfinder and DSW conduct activities that expand people's access to health information and services and build their advocacy skills, so they can demand the healthcare they need and make informed choices that benefit their families and ecosystems.

Elements for Success

Pathfinder and DSW approach PHE projects with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the similarities do not end there. All four projects—the *Integrated Bonga Forest Project* in Ethiopia; the *Kakamega Environmental Education Programme* (KEEP) in Kenya; the *Tuungane* project in Tanzania; and *HoPE-LVB* in Kenya and Uganda—feature the following strategies Pathfinder and DSW recommend be considered when developing a cohesive PHE strategy:

Start with Communities

The PHE approach is inherently community-based. Pathfinder and DSW place particular emphasis on communities to promote human rights, empowerment, and sustainability. All activities are designed to use local wisdom, respect customs, and sustainably utilize available natural and human resources whenever possible. Both organizations engage local leaders and community groups in dialogues about the projects and their intended outcomes. This allows for activities to be shaped by community feedback and promotes local ownership of the projects.

Leverage Existing Assets

Pathfinder and DSW design projects around ‘what is already working’ in communities to gain community support and improve operational efficiency.

FIELD EXAMPLE Pathfinder’s projects build on local governance, working with women’s and youth groups to bolster existing community systems. In Tanzania’s Greater Mahale Ecosystem, self-governing Community Conservation Banks (COCOBA)—established by the Frankfurt Zoological Society to support conservation-promoting businesses—existed before the *Tuungane* project began. Because COCOBA already recognized the relationship between conservation and livelihood goals, and were valued by the community, Tuungane included them within the project. Project partners—Pathfinder, The Nature Conservancy, and the Frankfurt Zoological Society—scaled-up COCOBA, and ensured the groups’ community meetings now include discussions about health.



Tanzania | Launched by Pathfinder in 2011

Lake Tanganyika forms the western boundary of Tanzania’s Mahale Mountains National Park. The lake and the park foster an incredible diversity of life—home to 90 percent of Tanzania’s endangered chimpanzees and more than 300 species of fish. The people residing in the villages neighboring the park are still entirely dependent on the lake and surrounding natural resources for their livelihood. However, extreme poverty, isolation, evidence of climate change, and inadequate access to health services significantly threaten the well-being and future survival of both the people and the environment.

To address a constellation of challenges in this isolated region, Pathfinder International joined conservation partners, The Nature Conservancy and the Frankfurt Zoological Society, to implement the Tuungane project (meaning “Let’s Unite” in Kiswahili) in collaboration with local communities.

Initial measures to strengthen local governance, and the community development of action plans to conserve ecosystems, set the stage for the continued success of integrated activities. Some features of the project include land and fisheries management; health system strengthening; reproductive health demand, supply and services; community conservation microfinance banks; and the establishment of community forest reserves. Tuungane intends to scale up from six pilot villages to all 24 villages in the Greater Mahale Ecosystem area.

Learn more about the Tuungane project at www.pathfinder.org/Tuungane



PHOTO: Catherine Manegold

Design for Scalability

Traditionally, because PHE projects have been tailored to meet specific local contexts, they have been difficult to replicate. Pathfinder and DSW recognize this from the start.

FIELD EXAMPLE The HoPE-LVB project partners with ExpandNet—an international network of experts whose aim is to “advance the practice and science of scaling up”⁶—to test the potential of project activities to be

adopted and eventually replicated by stakeholders in other LVB districts. The project followed necessary steps to design activities with the “exit strategy” in mind.

FIELD EXAMPLE DSW’s Youth-to-Youth initiative (Y2Y) has already proven its scalability across East Africa. As of late 2013, the program had expanded to include a network of approximately 400 youth clubs in the region, some of which are fully self-sustaining.

Empower Youth

DSW's strategy is grounded in the belief that if younger generations are empowered, they can speed the transition towards sustainable green economies. This transition can be further propelled by providing young people access to new technologies that offer livelihood options and informed reproductive choice.

FIELD EXAMPLE Through its Y2Y initiative, DSW facilitates the formation of youth clubs and equips young people with sexual and reproductive health information and advice in a trusted environment, as well as engaging them in peer education for PHE, coupled with leadership and entrepreneurship training.

Advance Gender Equality

Pathfinder International and DSW believe not only in empowering women and girls but also in addressing broader gender roles through open communication. The PHE approach addresses a wide range of topics that have great potential to bridge gender divides by encouraging input and support from entire communities—women, men, girls, and boys. By setting criteria and collecting gender-disaggregated monitoring data, both organizations design projects to ensure full participation of both genders.

FIELD EXAMPLE Through the HoPE-LVB project, Pathfinder effectively uses evening “campfire gatherings” to enhance male participation in PHE discussions, including addressing common myths and misconceptions regarding contraceptive use.

Promote Behavior Change

Behavior change strategies cut across integrated components and are critical for promoting lasting transformation in community attitudes and practices—thus ensuring sustainability.

FIELD EXAMPLE Pathfinder has incorporated behavior change principles into its project designs to ensure communication activities with communities are grounded in what actually motivates change. Through the HoPE-LVB project, Pathfinder has identified

PHE champions among village leaders and model households, who display good health and conservation practices, to improve peer advocacy and inspire behavior change.

Drive Economic Empowerment

Pathfinder and DSW recognize that income-generating activities improve economic situations and empower individuals to address health and environment issues.

FIELD EXAMPLES Through the Integrated Bonga Forest Project, DSW encourages youth to distribute and plant seedlings, participate in beekeeping, and collect wild coffee beans. In the Kakamega Forest, DSW supports briquette production from local waste to reduce wood fuel that puts pressure on the forest.

The Pathfinder-led HoPE-LVB project has supported the establishment of tree nurseries and energy-saving stove businesses. These activities simultaneously provide much-needed income and improve conservation.

Forge Strategic Partnerships

Leveraging public-private partnerships can be a powerful way to facilitate sustainability of livelihood interventions that incentivize communities to sustain PHE efforts on their own, long after a project ends.

FIELD EXAMPLES For more than a decade, DSW's Integrated Bonga Forest Project has leveraged public-private partnerships to facilitate the sustainability of project achievements. Early on, mutually beneficial partnerships were established between the Kafa Forest Coffee Cooperatives Farmers Union and German private organizations—Original Food GmbH, GEO schützt den Regenwald e.V., and Naturschutzbund Deutschland e.V. These partnerships continue to provide valuable quality control and international coffee markets. Pathfinder and DSW recommend further exploration into private-sector partnerships that move beyond corporate responsibility models.

PHE projects often attract interest from organizations with a range of expertise. In Uganda, an unplanned partnership with We Care Solar secured lighting for a

HoPE-LVB clinic, ensuring no woman has to give birth in the dark.

Pathfinder and DSW recommend that PHE teams build advantageous partnerships, but carefully consider the time it takes to manage multiple collaborations.

Strengthen Health Systems

The strengthening of community systems is a fundamental strategy for providing a firm foundation for PHE activities and sustaining long-term goals.

FIELD EXAMPLE Year one of both the HoPE-LVB and Tuungane projects focused on thoroughly assessing needs, as well as the subsequent strengthening of commodity logistics and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

Pathfinder and DSW address all facets of inadequate health systems. Projects build the capacity of health care providers to deliver quality youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and commodities. In addition, the establishment of consistent boat service in the LVB and Greater Mahale Ecosystem areas improved transportation for staff, patients, and supplies. The Tuungane project invested significantly in the refurbishing of crumbling health facilities.

Invest in M&E

PHE interventions are developed with the expectation of long-term change. Measurement is difficult when projects are limited by funding timelines.

FIELD EXAMPLES An important feature of Pathfinder's PHE projects has been the significant investment in a rigorous baseline study. Comparison to mid- and end-line surveys, which can establish much-needed evidence of PHE impacts, will only be possible with additional long-term support. HoPE-LVB also supports a participatory monitoring model, building the capacity of communities to collect and analyze data.

After a decade of implementing the Integrated Bonga Forest Project, DSW invested in an external evaluation. The study assessed the extent to which sexual and

reproductive health and rights knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and access to services were improved in project sites as compared to non-project sites. Results revealed that the project increased uptake of sexual and reproductive health services by youth.⁷ The local economy has been enhanced and the community's sense of responsibility for the forest has been strengthened.⁸

Advocate at Every Level

Advocacy for policy adoption and enforcement by community members, local leaders, government and international stakeholders creates an environment for successful implementation. Corruption and violations of environmental laws are common. Health systems are also under-resourced, so advocacy to demand greater budget allocations is crucial.

FIELD EXAMPLE The Tuungane project provides governance training to village health sub-committee and village council members, with the aim of increasing the communities' ability to request additional health staff from the district authorities to serve at remote and perpetually under-staffed health facilities. The need for citizen participation to promote good governance cuts across all sectors, so while progress is slow, Pathfinder will continue to emphasize this element in Tanzania.

Challenges and Recommendations

As organizations, such as Pathfinder and DSW, continue to refine the PHE framework, a variety of common challenges must also be considered.

Much of the global development field remains structured as isolated sectors; hence, PHE project teams and partnerships are often comprised of single-sector experts working together. Identifying managers that have some sectoral expertise as well as a good understanding of integrated community development is challenging, yet imperative for project success.

Historically, basic financial support and advocacy for PHE integration from policymakers have



Health of People and Environment, Lake Victoria Basin

Kenya & Uganda | Launched by Pathfinder in 2011

The Lake Victoria Basin includes five countries where economic and social development depends upon the health of a shared ecosystem. Lakeside communities are among the densest, poorest, and least food secure populations in the world, due to many intertwined challenges.

The Health of People and the Environment Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB) project is led by Pathfinder International, in consortium with local communities and implementing partners—the Ecological Christian Organization (ECO) of Uganda and OSIENALA-Friends of Lake Victoria of Kenya.

HoPE-LVB has been planning for scale-up from the start. A scalable model, to be adopted by other partners and governments, is being developed by testing and fine-tuning two PHE-integrated intervention models in Kenya and Uganda. Project themes include fisheries and land management, wetlands protection, alternative income generation, women's empowerment, health systems strengthening, and specific activities to promote maternal health and family planning. Early efforts focused heavily on the strengthening of existing community systems, as well as advocacy to position the project within the Lake Victoria Basin Commission, which has provided excellent partnership support in disseminating and promoting project results to all Lake Victoria Basin countries.

Learn more about the HoPE-LVB project at www.pathfinder.org/HOPE

been inadequate, partially due to a lack of scientific data and evidence to support these efforts. Attention to rigorous M&E is imperative for future support. However, due to the complex adaptive and integrated systems involved in PHE projects, traditional evaluations that use direct cause-and-effect methodologies may not be appropriate. Alternative evaluation methodologies that adequately capture the added value of integrated PHE should be explored and validated.

Next Steps in Positioning PHE

The DSW and Pathfinder strategies, lessons, and challenges discussed in this publication are not exhaustive. Many questions remain unanswered, and new lessons are still emerging. These should be examined in light of other organizations' PHE program implementation experiences. *Are there other*

PHOTO: Lucy Shilling



The Kakamega Environmental Education Programme



PHOTO: DSW

Kenya | Supported by DSW since 2005

The Kakamega rainforest in Western Kenya is the last remnant of the Guineo-Congolese rainforest, historically spanning the length of East and Central Africa. DSW began partnering with the Kakamega Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) in 2005 by integrating sexual and reproductive health and rights activities into their existing efforts to protect the remaining forest ecosystem. KEEP, a community-based organization, has been promoting conservation through ecotourism and expanding sustainable livelihood opportunities for forest communities since 1995.

Similar to the Integrated Bonga Forest project, DSW activities through KEEP are based on the organization's Y2Y initiative, supporting youth clubs and peer educators in raising awareness and conducting integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights and PHE information campaigns in communities. DSW also empowers communities through sustainable income-generating activities for youth, forest groups, women's groups, as well as for other community members. Advocacy efforts on behalf of DSW and the KEEP membership have improved governance and natural resource management in the area.

Learn more about KEEP at www.youth-to-youth.org/countries/KENYA

It is time to show the world that the PHE approach can holistically address today's development challenges.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon describes the strategy beyond 2015 as one which "transcends limiting sector-specific thinking," and "is rights-based, with particular emphasis on women, young people and marginalized groups."¹⁰

"[The strategy] must protect the planet's resources, emphasize sustainable consumption and production and support action to address climate change,"¹¹ said the Secretary General, emphasizing that democratic governance and full respect for human rights are key prerequisites for empowering people to make choices that promote sustainability.¹²

The post-2015 era demands commitments to practical, locally relevant, and sustainable solutions. Under this new global framework, the PHE approach has the potential to gain much-needed support and momentum. PHE strategies outlined in this publication parallel the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goal agenda, emphasizing integration, human rights, climate change adaptation, gender and youth empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods.

It is time to show the world that the PHE approach can holistically address today's development challenges. By analyzing the diverse lessons of Pathfinder, DSW, and other PHE implementers, stakeholders can now develop and promote a cohesive PHE strategy that promises to be one of the most appropriate ways to achieve a bright, sustainable future.

PHE theories of change which should be considered? How can synergies and positive feedback loops often observed by implementers in PHE projects be articulated for universal understanding? Pathfinder and DSW hope this brief will inspire stakeholder knowledge-sharing and dialogue on these questions and more.

Global development is shifting to accommodate the dynamic and complex needs of the world. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) have served as a framework for global

cooperation, advancing the most unified anti-poverty effort in history. As the world approaches the MDG target date of 2015, global leaders have agreed to renew their commitments by adopting new development targets. International stakeholders across sectors agree that the overarching themes for the post-2015 development agenda will be based on the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship.⁹



Max Nalongo (center) is a mother of four. She's also a family planner, a conservationist, and a leader in her village. As a Village Health Team member for the HoPE-LVB project, Max distributes contraception and counsels on family planning. Not only does family planning enable better resource conservation, but it also means a brighter future for Max's children. PHOTO: Jake Lyell

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cover: In Ethiopia, DSW's Integrated Bonga Forest Project supports youth clubs like this one to address issues related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as environmental protection. PHOTO: DSW



**A GLOBAL LEADER IN SEXUAL
AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**



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