1. Introduction

The idea to establish a regional centre was first conceived in 2005 as a legacy for Uganda’s hosting of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar COP9). RAMCEA is a regional initiative established under Article 5 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and endorsed at the 10th Conference of the Contracting Parties held in Changwon Republic of Korea in 2008. The Centre started its operations in 2009 and is hosted by the Wetlands Management Department in the Ministry of Water and Environment of the Republic of Uganda.

The goal of RAMCEA is to “support the East African Contracting Parties, Non-Contracting Parties and other stakeholders to improve their capacity to implement the Ramsar Convention in the respective countries and institutions”. This includes among others, sharing regionally the policies, legislation, procedures, systems, tools, techniques, Best Practices, lessons learnt and experiences in wetland management.

The Vision of the RAMCEA Strategic Framework is “Eastern Africa wetlands understood, valued and sustainably managed”. This is inspired by the mission of RAMCEA which is to “Strengthen wetland management through institutional coordination, capacity building and experience sharing”.

The overall goal of RAMCEA is to have a “well-coordinated, strengthened and networked institutions for wise use and conservation of wetlands in the region”.

The Centre initially covers the five countries of the East African Community namely: Republic of Kenya, United Republic of Tanzania, Republic of Rwanda, Republic of Burundi, and Republic of Uganda, but will seek to establish links with other interested relevant Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties’ in the region such as Djibouti, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

RAMCEA will also have links to other African regional and sub-regional wetland initiatives such as the Lake Victoria Basin Commission, Nile Basin Initiative, The Centre for African Wetlands of Accra Ghana, Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute Naivasha and the network for wetland professionals based in UNESCO-IHE (Delft).
2. 2016 activities

Table 1 summarizes RAMCEA work and activities undertaken during the year 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Activities planned</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Coherence with SP4 (Ramsar Targets)</th>
<th>Indicators (verification of success)</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
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<tr>
<td>To promote and ensure best practices on sustainable wetlands management in the region</td>
<td>Publish and disseminate Lessons learnt documents and case studies that demonstrate best practices</td>
<td>A wetland wise use model was developed printed A regional symposium with 53 participants comprising of Local and Central Government Technical Officers, a Wetland Specialist from the Nile Basin, the Regional Director for Africa, BirdLife International and the National Focal Point for Ramsar from Burundi, was held to disseminate lessons learnt in Uganda.</td>
<td>Goal 3 Targets 8 - 13 And Goal 2: Target 5</td>
<td>Wetlands best practices publication</td>
<td>Practitioners at local, national and regional levels</td>
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<td>To determine the status and trends of wetland resources in the region to guide decision making</td>
<td>Conduct Wetland Assessments</td>
<td>Development of the wetland assessment tool under the Globwetland Africa project technically supported A tool for detailed wetland assessment for Uganda developed and printed</td>
<td>Goal 1: Target 1 Goal 3: Targets 8 and 11</td>
<td>Technical support reports/ tools</td>
<td>Technical Officers, Academia and Decision Makers</td>
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<td>To Enhance the knowledge base and stakeholder awareness on sustainable wetland management in the region</td>
<td>Conduct periodic update and upgrade of the RAMCEA Website</td>
<td>RAMCEA Website routinely maintained</td>
<td>Goal 4: Target 14</td>
<td>Functional website</td>
<td>The Public, Academia, Wetland Professionals and stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conduct refresher courses and tailor made capacity development programmes on Wetland Management</td>
<td>National training for all District Natural Resources Officers (104 Officers in total) on wetland wise use conducted Hands on skills imparted through Field excursions to the National Wetland Management Project pilot sites in Eastern Uganda to facilitate learning for selected Local Government Officials (104 Officers in total) undertaken</td>
<td>Goal 3: Targets 11, 12 and 13 Goal 4: Targets 16 and 17</td>
<td>Number of Trainees, Training Reports</td>
<td>Natural Resources District Technical Officers</td>
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| To support wetland policies and institutional processes in the region to enhance wetland management | Facilitate preparation of sustainable wetland management policy briefs | Not undertaken | Goal 1: Target 1  
Goal 3: Targets 9 and 13  
Goal 4: Targets 14 and 15 | Policy brief | Policy and Decision Makers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To develop and maintain a regional network of Ramsar sites and other wetlands that provide important ecosystem services | Carry out consultations for twinning of three Ramsar sites namely Lake Natron (Tanzania), Lake Nakuru (Kenya) and Lake George (Uganda) Ramsar sites | Concept note on the Modalities for twinning developed and yet to be shared with partner states | Goal 2: Targets 5, 6 and 7  
Goal 3: Targets 9, 10, 11 and 12  
Goal 4: Targets 15, 15 and 19 | Reports  
Twinning agreements | National Focal Points, Administrative Authorities and Riparian Communities |
| To facilitate the operations of the RAMCEA Regional Advisory Council and Secretariat | Hold 1 meeting of RAMCEA Regional Governing Council | There was no face to face meeting held during the period under review due to limited funding. | Goal 4: Targets 14, 15, 18 and 19 | Record of Discussion  
Approved annual work plan and budget | National Focal Points and Administrative Authorities |
| Update the Ramsar information Sheets of Ramsar Sites in the RAMCEA country member states | Capacity building of Ramsar focal points and Ramsar site managers on the use of the new Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) | 6 Wetland Officers from Uganda trained by the Africa team of the Ramsar Secretariat.  
12 Ramsar site maps for Uganda updated  
1 Ramsar Information Sheet for Nabugabo Ramsar site updated. | Goal 2: Targets 6 and 7  
Goal 4: Target 19 | SC54 document on status of Ramsar sites | RAMCEA Partner States |

3. On-going activities

RAMCEA has over the last year engaged in a number of collaborations geared at effort to mobilise resources to support the implementation of the RAMCEA strategic framework and also creating networks for implementation of the various outputs. Joint proposal were developed between European Space Agency, Danish Hydraulic Institute and Geoville to harness on the strengths of the various players.

RAMCEA is currently implementing several projects that include “Sustainable use of critical wetlands in the Lake Victoria Basin Project” which is collaboration with Birdlife International; GlobWetland Africa, a large Earth Observation application project funded by the European Space Agency (ESA) in partnership with the African Team of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands. GlobWetland Africa project is initiated to facilitate the exploitation of satellite
observations for the conservation, wise-use and effective management of wetlands in Africa and to provide African stakeholders with the necessary Earth Observation (EO) methods and tools to better fulfill their commitments and obligations towards the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

However, there have been challenges with implementation of several planned activities due to limited funding. Much as Government of Uganda contributed substantially to most of the implemented activities, the funding was inadequate. Therefore, a lot of effort will be placed in resource mobilization, lobbying of the various partner states to support implementation of key outputs and creating of networks with other local, regional and international institutions that can finance and support implementation.

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4. Photos

Figure 1: Participants listen attentively during the Regional Wetland Symposium in Mbale

Figure 2: Director Environment Affairs, Paul Mafabi chats Mr. Murakami Wetland Focal Officer, JICA during the Regional Wetland Symposium in Mbale
Figure 3 Dr. Paul Ouédraogo giving a key note addresses during the symposium

Figure 4: Participants of the Regional Wetland Symposium during a group photograph