

WILDLIFE CLUBS OF UGANDA

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION IN THE ALBERTINE RIFT REGION

RUFFORD FOUNDATION GRANT

MAY 2004 – APRIL 2005

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report describes conservation education activities carried out by the Wildlife Clubs of Uganda in the Rwenzori Region in Uganda. The activities carried out between June 2004 and May 2005 form a pilot attempt at Forest Landscape Restoration through schools in the region funded by the Rufford Foundation.

The report describes achievements from generating consensus on the need for forest landscape restoration amongst stakeholders, establishing a long term tree nursery in the region, engaging young people in wildlife clubs to participate in landscape restoration, producing conservation education publications, supporting student activities and monitoring the impact of this work through school visits.

The report emphasises the fact that biodiversity degradation is on the increase in the region and its effects are real. Conservation education in modified ways such as Forest Landscape Restoration is going to be important to equip the population to repair the environment. In addition, efforts to improve the capacity of teachers and young people to manage community-based conservation action are very important to amplify local people's contributions to the conservation biodiversity in the region.

2. INTRODUCTION:

This is a report on the Forest Landscape restoration Initiative in the Rwenzori region in Uganda by the Wildlife Clubs of Uganda with support from the Rufford Foundation. The initiative that started in 2004 has now been completed. The Wildlife Clubs of Uganda received GBP 5,000 (Five thousand Pounds) from the foundation to implement the initiative.

The activities described in this report were aimed at promoting active engagement and support of stakeholders in implementing Forest Landscape activities within the Rwenzori region, establishing a long-term tree nursery close to the Rwenzori Mountains National Park, engaging students in wildlife Clubs in schools in the region to participate in pilot Forest Landscape Restoration activities, and developing newsletters as a medium for young people in the region to exchange conservation experiences in the Rwenzori region and in Uganda as a whole.

Implementation strategy:

A decision was taken to conduct restoration activities in a pilot manner. A location that was occupied by internally displaced people around the National Park and school clubs that are willing to take up the initiative and use it for the education of others were identified. In addition a location was selected on the basis that the lessons would be easily linked to Nature Conservation within Rwenzori National Park. Other important criteria considered were schools that had a Wildlife Club and some land on which to plant trees.

After a careful search supported by the community conservation warden at Rwenzori Mountains National Park, Bugoye Sub-county of Kasese District¹ was chosen as the appropriate location.

Within this Sub-county we worked with the following schools and their head teachers.

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Ruboni Primary School: | Mr. Apollo Baryebuga |
| 2. Bikone Primary School: | Mr. Alex Tahimba |
| 3. Ibanda Primary School: | Mr. Edson Baluku |
| 4. Rwenzori High School: | Mr. Robert Amashaka |

¹ Please note that original plans mention Kabarole District.

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In addition, we worked with Rwenzori Mountaineering Services², the LC3 Councillor for Environment (Mr. Mulyangasu), the Community Conservation Warden and the Community Conservation Rangers. Our choice of working with CCRs was based on the need to continuously monitor progress of the initiative and actively link it to conservation of the national park through the conservation education programs.

3. ACTIVITIES:

3.1 PUBLICATIONS:

Two editions of the Wildlife News letter were produced. The first edition reported on the proceedings of the visioning workshop for Forest Landscape restoration and featured various articles on the threats facing biodiversity in the Rwenzori mountains region as an important water catchment area. Within this edition, we also highlighted survey results of biodiversity within the region as conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society. Through these newsletters we have contributed to the growth of publications on conservation education and provided information and guidelines for conservation activities among the youth.

3.2 FLR VISIONING WORKSHOP

The workshop was organised to develop a common vision for forest landscape restoration in the region amongst local stakeholders. It was held on Tuesday August 31, 2004 at the Rwenzori Mountaineering Services Hall. The workshop was attended by The Chief Park warden for Rwenzori National Park – Mr. Nelson Guma, the District Environment Officer for Kasese – Mr. Athur Kule, 2 Wildlife Club Patrons each from Ruboni Primary school, Bikone Primary school, Ibanda Primary school, and Rwenzori High School. In addition, there were Community Conservation rangers from Rwenzori national Park, the Local Councillor from Bugoye Sub-county, and a WWF Community extension agent.

The participants discussed the FLR concept and reached consensus on the need to restore degraded areas of the Rwenzori mountains ecosystem. During the workshops, emphasis was also laid on selection of the site for a long term tree nursery, selection of species for planting and other tools for facilitating holistic conservation education.

3.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF A TREE NURSERY

Participants at the FLR Visioning workshop participated in a tree species selection exercise and selected a site close to the National Park for establishing a nursery. One key factor in selecting the site was proximity to the schools participating in the pilot FLR initiative. The key species selected for planting include *Maesopsis eminii*, *Casuarina*, *Markbamia*, and a host of fruit trees.

A tree nursery was established at Karungibate. With support from the Forestry department of Kasese district, the initiative has resulted into a tree nursery that provides tree seedlings to schools in the area (Please see picture). In addition to this nursery, Rwenzori High School and Kasese High School have established school nurseries that provide students with seedlings to plant at school and at home.

There is now a new thrust in restoration and rehabilitation of degraded areas which has encouraged the growth of wildlife clubs in schools. Increasingly more students are taking part in environmental education activities in school because they provide additional learning opportunities for them, which is also good for environmental education.

² RMS owns a large chunk of land in this area that was used as an IDP camp.

3.3.1 Tree Planting

The pilot schools have attempted tree planting with various levels of success. There are promising plantations at Rwenzori High School, Ruboni Primary school and Kasese High School. (Kasese High School is participating in the program because the teacher transferred the idea from Rwenzori High School). The existing plantations are an indication that schools and young people are indeed key stakeholders in any landscape restoration effort.

3.4. CONSERVATION EDUCATION SEMINARS

Two one-day school seminars were held to keep base with the teachers and students that participate in the FLR initiative. They were designed to concretise the learning that student have acquired through participating in the FLR activities.

The one-day conservation education seminars were held at Kasese High School and the Mweya Conservation Education Center within the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area in October 2004 and April 2005 respectively. During the seminars, we emphasised to the students the value for rehabilitating participants emphasised the importance of designing community-based initiatives that will re-enforce the conservation education messages imparted in the workshops.

The seminars have provided an important avenue for monitoring the growth of the FLR initiative and the concept amongst the stakeholders and wildlife clubs participating in the pilot program. In addition they have provided opportunities for receiving feed back about the impact of the FLR initiative.

3.5 ADMINISTRATION AND PROJECT CO-ORDINATION

The initiative was co-ordinated by Joel Musaasizi the Programme officer. Over the course of this phase there a re number of volunteers, university interns and resource persons who have assisted with the preparation of the tree nursery, newsletters, and in the preparation of conservation education seminars.

3.5.1 EQUIPMENT PURCHASE AND MAINTENANCE

Using the funds provided by the Rufford foundation, WCU procured nursery equipment including 3 wheel barrows, 3 hoes, 3 shovels, 10 rolls of potting material, poles, polyethylene, horse pipe and tree seed from the National Tree seed Centre.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

- (a) This plot phase has demonstrated to us the usefulness of valuing consensus in rehabilitating degraded lands. Landscape restoration requires support from multiple interests that are affected by attempts to restore ecosystem functions in any given place. In our case we have been able to learn that while the local government environment department is concerned about the values trees and forests have, the school administrators are concerned about the future fuel-wood sources in the selection of species for planting.
- (b) At a broader level, additional means are required to target politicians and decision makers to support school efforts at landscape restoration. There is now a new Forest and Tree Planting Policy in Uganda, but its implementation is still inadequate.
- (c) In many areas across the Rwenzori region, biodiversity degradation continues to be driven by inadequate information on the use and economic value of biodiversity resources. Conservation

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education will continue to be an important intervention in the region to add to other efforts for conserving the remaining areas of richness and to encourage community-based conservation action.

- (d) School based conservation activities are important to provide examples to local communities and to enhance collective action for conservation. Our goal in the future therefore is to re-enforce the success we have exhibited in this pilot initiative, to plan and implement further restoration initiatives together with the government and private sector (for example through eco-enterprises, land trusts etc) in the region.