Project Update: July 2016

Reporting period; 8th January to 8th July 2016

Background,

The overall aim of this project was to reverse the decline in the population of critically endangered Victoria tilapia (*Oreochromis variabilis*) and Singidia tilapia (*Oreochromis esculentus*) fish species in Lake Kayanja and Kayugi, satellite lakes of Lake Victoria basin.

During the above period, fisherfolk of the selected lakes and other stakeholders were engaged in various activities outlined below to promote the recovery of the population of Singidia tilapia and Victoria tilapia, cichlids fish species endemic to Lake Victoria basin.

- Two meetings were organised and hosted to establish Fish Conservation Committee (FCC). Each meeting was attended by fishermen, local leaders and government representative in addition to research team. A total of two FCCs were formed and operating with total strength, one FCC for each Lake.
- A total of 14 breeding and nursery habitats of Singidia tilapia and Victoria tilapia were identified and mapped in Lake Kayanja by research team together with FCCs. These critical sites vital for the conservation of these fish species were identified using both indigenous knowledge of the fishermen and technical knowledge of the researchers. The sites are characterised by shallow muddy bottom, submerged aquatic plants and riverine forest.
- A series of fish surveys were conducted at various sites in each lake using gill netting and electric fishing techniques to determine the breeding spawning and nursery habitats for these fish species. Locations of these sites were geo-referenced using Global Positioning System (GPS).
- 15 fishermen were trained on how to use GPS; they were given practical sessions to make them understand the relevance of GPS in monitoring and conservation of fish.
- Conservation awareness messages about critically endangered cichlids were conveyed to fishermen through meetings and engaging them in various conservation activities such as identification and mapping of the breeding and nursery habitats.
- Secondary and primary schools namely; King Fahard Primary School, Turbuk Secondary School, St Kizito Vocational Secondary School, St Benard Primary School, Green Valley-Kasanje Primary School and Bright Academy Primary School, all located within the 2 km radius from Lake Kayanja and Kayugi were identified and selected to participate in the awareness creation. Consultative meetings with the head teachers of these schools were conducted to come up with best strategies to convey conservation messages to students through their teachers.
- Preparation of awareness materials such as factsheets and maps have been started for the forthcoming awareness creation among school children, teachers and other stakeholders
- A total of four of fish conservation zones (FCZs) were mapped and zoned by research team and Fish Conservation Committee (FCC). All these zones established are located in Lake Kayanja. A meeting was conducted for approval of the established FCZs by FCC and government agencies

- Placards are being developed for marking the established and approved FCZs in the two lakes

Looking ahead

- Continue with creating awareness among school children, teachers, fishermen and local leaders.
- Continue with zoning of FCZs in Lake Kayugi.
- Mapping of breeding and nursery habitats in Lake Kayugi.
- Drawing and distribution of spatial maps to key stakeholders.
- Distribution of awareness materials to relevant stakeholders.
- Installation of placards to mark the established and approved FCZs in both lakes.