

Project Update: July 2010

With the support of the Rufford Small Grants Program and other partners, Honko vzw has succeeded to set up a new community-run association (named '*Mamelo Honko*' which means '*Life for the Mangroves*') that will look after the mangroves and the associated natural resources. This process was a slow one, but nevertheless after 2 years on the 4th June 2010 a contract was signed between this new association and representatives of the Ministry of Forests and Environment. This contract will give the local communities a backbone to manage and control the exploitation of the natural resources.

The lack of ownership and the lack of governmental support creates problems when it comes to managing local resources. From now on this association can authorise and/or refuse people to come exploit local resources. Before charcoal producers could come and destroy at a large and alarming scale the remaining mangroves, and no local laws were in place to assist local people protecting these important forests.

It is now of outmost importance to continuously educate local people about the new laws and regulations, as well as train the newly formed association and its members to have a functional entity that is thinking about the future, and not only the present.

Since the creation of Mamelo Honko, over 100 people from the five villages have signed up to start working towards a durable future. Also a team of five local guardians survey on a daily basis the mangroves to control permits and utilisation of its resources.

Honko also started to look at alternative livelihoods and started training members in artisanal production of handicrafts and usable items. Also a test phase has started to teach local fishermen in cultivating and fattening mangrove mud crabs.

