

Project Update: January 2010

One of the objectives of this project is to reduce reliance on one tourist attraction for Mabamba Ramsar site (birds) which is likely, in the long-run, to increase stress on the wetland resource. Working with community members, through their association, Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association and a resource person, Nature Palace Foundation organized participatory mapping of other tourist attractions in the vicinity aimed at expanding the tourism base with a long-term objective of reducing the pressure on the wetland resource that is likely to increase with the increasing in-flow of tourists.

1. Building and strengthening collaborations to enhance project sustainability and ecosystem conservation:

The community association that is supported by Nature Palace Foundation to enhance community participation and ensure sustainable conservation of Mabamba Wetland, Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association (MWETA), was assisted to develop and formalize collaboration with Mpanga Ecotourism Programme. Mpanga is a tropical and historical Forest Reserve that was gazetted in 1932. Over recent years, the management implemented a community forest management programme that has ensured greater participation of local communities. For more information please: <http://www.nfa.org.ug/tours.php>.

Expected benefits from this collaboration include:

- I. *Further capacity building of MWETA* Since Mpanga Eco-tourism program is more developed having been in this business for many years, guides from Mabamba will learn and share from this rich experience. Already one exposure and learning visit has been conducted at Mpanga with two more planned this quarter, one of which will be at Mabamba.
- II. *Referral of visitors* The distance between Mabamba and Mpanga is relatively small (about 25 km). This makes it easy for visitors or tourists to visit both sites. This collaboration will promote referral of visitors in either case. Because there are already collaboration arrangements, a guide from one site shall be able to move with the visitors to another site – if that is the wish of the visitor(s).
- III. *Promotion of pro-poor community ecotourism* The two institutions agreed to share and publicise materials that promote responsible pro-poor and sustainable ecotourism in both sites.

2. Initiation of an Interactive web-domain for generation and sharing of Information on Uganda's wetlands (Nature Palace EcoLife)

Nature Palace EcoLife (<http://ecolife.naturepalace.net/>) is an interactive source of information about Uganda's wetlands initiated by the project. In order to aid a more convenient avenue to get information about Uganda's wetlands, especially Ramsar sites, Nature Palace Foundation created an interactive sub-domain. This facility will enable accumulation and sharing of information about Uganda's wetlands with different

stakeholders who include conservationists/scientists, researchers, students, policy makers, tourists etc. The facility is still being updated and soon will have information of all Ramsar sites and other wetlands with scientific and/or cultural values. It will also be interactive to allow the various stakeholders to contribute to its data base.

3. A sub-domain for Mabamba Wetland Ecotourism Association is created (<http://mweta.naturepalace.net>)

In order to be in a better position to promote their activities, the project opened up a sub-domain for the association which will be regularly updated and promoted. Some of the expected outcomes from this include promoting the association's cause of conserving the wetland resource and publicity of the association's activities and services.

