

Project Update: November 2017

Introduction

Native tilapia fishes, Victoria tilapia (*Oreochromis variabilis*) and Singidia tilapia (*Oreochromis esculentus*) are critically endangered fish species endemic to Lakes Victoria and Kyoga basins in Uganda. However they disappeared from these main lakes majorly due to environmental degradation and aggressive competition for food, breeding and nursery grounds from introduced fish species such as Nile tilapia. Although these fish species are now surviving in satellite lakes including Kayanja and Kayugi, their survival in these small lakes are at risk due to various threats such as habitat degradation, fragmentation, modification and competition from introduced Nile tilapia. This project was aimed at fostering populations recovery of these threatened native tilapia fishes through working with Fish Conservation Committees (FCCs) and other stakeholders to undertake various conservation activities to achieve project goal. The activities implemented by FCCs and other stakeholders included; (a) daily surveillance of these lakes to protect the mapped breeding and nursery areas, and safe havens of these native tilapia fishes on lakes Kayanja and Kayugi, (b) conducting quarterly surveys to monitor the population and abundance of these critically endangered fishes in the two lakes and (c) participation in landing site talks, direct involvements in protecting and monitoring of threats to fish fauna and their habitats, and engagements of school pupils in conservation awareness about the conservation status of native tilapia fish and their habitats. The main project achievements recorded included:

- a) Increased chances for the recovery of the populations of these threatened fish species, and this was based on the findings of the quarterly fish surveys which showed increase in the numbers of these threatened fish species, relative to the numbers of other fish species caught in both lakes.
- b) Increased commitment and enthusiasm of fishing communities and public to conserve fish fauna and their habitats.
- c) Increased level of awareness about threatened fish species and their habitats among fishermen, pupils and the general public.
- d) Increased chances for the survival of endangered Grey crown crane bird on Lake Kayanja

Look ahead

- a) Continue to create awareness about the conservation status of threatened fish species and their habitats among youth, fishermen and other stakeholders.
- b) Continue to work with the FCCs and other stakeholders to protect and conserve the mapped critical habitats of these threatened fish species.
- c) Continue with conducting the quarterly fish surveys to estimate the abundance of these threatened fish species in the two lakes.



Left: Head teacher making welcome remarks before awareness creation. Right: Group photos after awareness creation.



Left: FCC team Monitoring Mapped Breeding and Nursery sites on Lake Kayanja. Right: FCC team from quarterly fish survey on Lake Kayugi.