

Promoting community participation and support in conservation and wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland of International Importance.

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Final Report Year One



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1.0. Executive Summary

The “Promoting Community Participation and Support in Conservation and Wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland of International Importance, Uganda” project supported by The Rufford Small Grants for Nature Conservation and implemented by Nature Palace Foundation¹, aimed at promoting local Community members’ participation and to kindle their support in Conservation and wise-use of Mabamba protected area, through community organizing; sustainable resource-based and alternative income generating activities; and, an effective information system. As a result of the project, the community has been mobilised through their association (Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association); An Eco-tourism Information Centre has been established and volunteers from the community trained to man it; cases of abuse and destruction have also been greatly reduced because of the Education and Awareness programs that were organised for community members. Community members organised under MWETA are also involved in alternative income generating projects – especially handcrafts, bee-keeping and pottery. Progressive Updates on project webpage: www.ruffordsmallgrants.org/rsg/projects/david_nkwanga

2.0. Background and Approaches

MABAMBA BAY WETLAND OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE:

The Mabamba Bay Wetland was designated as a Ramsar site (Wetland of International Importance) in the year 2006. Mabamba is one of the few places where the elusive Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*) can be spotted at any one time of the day and it has proved to be a favourable breeding place for this globally threatened bird. It is also home to approximately 38% of the global population of the Blue Swallow (*Hirundo atrocaerulea*), and the globally-threatened **Papyrus Yellow Warbler** plus other birds of global conservation concern. Mabamba is a staging area for migratory water bird species; supports rare/ endangered fish species; supports rare mammal species and invertebrate and is therefore also important for Research, Education and Eco-tourism. It is also a habitat to rare plant species like *Scadoxus species*.

Being such a new protected area, control of human activities and winning community support and participation is both a challenge as well as an urgent need. The community’s recognition of the importance of a protected area is a key to success of conservation programs of Mabamba Ramsar site. Participation of community members in conservation programs is equally important, and ensures sustainability of interventions put in place. **The project sought to address these key issues using a participatory approach.**

Key Concepts reciprocated into approaches employed in project implementation.

-  Popular participation through Community Organizing and involvement to promote sustainability and ownership.
-  Pro-poor Sustainable tourism for Biodiversity Conservation and upholding community Benefit
-  Alternative Environmentally-Friendly-Income Generating-projects to reduce pressure on sensitive resources
-  Nature school approach to inculcate love for Nature.
-  Value addition to improve Income and fight poverty – a major enemy of the environment.
-  Community Sensitization Meetings and Group Education Sessions.
-  Fact sheets for school children and community members to promote Environment Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

¹ **Nature Palace Foundation (NPF)** is a Community-Development and Human Well-being-focused organization that operates on the principle of blending Conservation with Development. NPF is accredited by The Global Environment Facility (GEF) and is a member of Clean Up the World (CUW) and Environment Liaison Centre International. More Information at www.naturepalace.org

3.0. Project Achievements

3.1. Summary Of Project Objectives Achievement

1. **Awareness and Education campaign about the benefits of protecting Ramsar site:** Implemented through community meetings and Group Education sessions. These were organised in collaboration with local leaders and partner organisations:

The Outstanding Outputs from this objective:

- Mitigating Destruction of the Wetland:** Community members through their association have been able to control the burning of the wetland by hunters from about 4 major fire incidents in the 2 dry seasons in a year to one minor incident in a year period.
 - The community has taken over the maintenance of the trade and tourism channel through the wetland, a responsibility that the local government failed to fulfil to their satisfaction
 - A community Managed Nature School with medicinal, ornamental and cultural trees established.
2. **Providing skills of alternative income generating opportunities and wise-use of the resource.** Implemented through training workshops. Twenty five Community members were identified and trained as Trainers for continuous technical support in this area.

Outstanding Outputs from this Objective:

- Twenty five members participated in the Training of Trainers program and are expected to give sustainable technical guidance to other members in the area of alternative small enterprises;
 - Handcrafts Outlet Opened up to sell community members' products. A percentage from the sale price contributes to the Association's treasury to sustain her activities.
 - Wise Use of the Wetland practiced in form of Environmentally-friendly Income Generating activities (handcrafts, bee-keeping and tourism support services) and these are expected to act as models for other community members.
3. **Developing an eco-tourism Information Centre:** The Mabamba Eco-tourism Information Centre was developed through the following stages:

- Obtaining Space for the Centre:** A provision for rent in the budget enabled acquiring of space for the Centre.
- Identification of Volunteers** to manage the Centre; 3 volunteers (Billy, Kevin and Bashir – Two males and one female) were identified by and from the Community to manage the Centre.
- Training:** The identified volunteers underwent training in Basic Computer Skills and Information Management.
- Equipping the Centre:** The Centre was equipped with one desktop and Generator. The Kasanje Sub-county Local Government and Nature Palace Foundation provided the furniture in the centre.
- Official Opening:** The Centre was officially opened on 19th September 2008 by the Hon Minister of Water and Environment in the Uganda government, Mrs Maria Mutagamba. The official opening of the centre coincided with the **Clean Up the World Week**. See more details on www.cleanuptheworld.org



3.2. General Project Results:

3.2.1. Community Empowerment for Wise Use and Conservation of Mabamba Bay

■ Institutional Development of MWETA

The Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association has been strengthened through Capacity building programs (Leadership training, Visioning and Planning Meetings etc). In collaboration with other stakeholders (Environmental alert, Kasanje Sub-county Local Government administration), the project has put emphasis on the institutional development of MWETA. The Association was assisted through the Visioning and Planning Cycle, Constitution development and a democratically instituted leadership is in place. Continuous Capability development is provided.

■ Control of Wetland Destruction and Abuse

Community members through Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association have been able to control the burning of the wetland by hunters from about four major fire incidents in the 2 dry seasons in a year to one minor incident in the same time period.

■ Influencing Policy

The community through their association have been assisted to organise dialogue meetings with the Kasanje sub-county administration. A number of issues have been discussed and positive outcomes registered. Among these are:

- **Sub-county Income Collection:** While all centres of trade/Income sources (like Mabamba) are tendered out to private developers, through dialogue with the sub-county and basing the argument on the status of Mabamba as Ramsar Site, it was agreed that Mabamba be accorded special status.
- **Taxation on Income Generating Activities:** Through dialogue the Mabamba Community managed to get a tax waiver so that they take charge of maintaining the trade and Tourism channel through Mabamba Wetland. See details below.

■ Management of Trade and Tourism Channel

The Kasanje Sub-county local administration used to take taxes from services at Mabamba Fish-landing site (fish levies, levies from transporters etc). In turn, the local government is supposed to offer social services, one of these being the Trade and Tourism Channel through the Wetland which connects the mainland to Bussi Island a major supplier of agricultural products in the sub-county. Being a wetland the marshes grow very fast and the local government failed to maintain the channel to the expectation of the community. Through dialogue and advocacy, an agreement was reached that the local government will no longer collect taxes from the people; instead the community through their association are now responsible for maintaining the channel. This has worked very well and people are proud to be in charge.

■ Economic Empowerment

Although we do not have the figures yet, a number of community members have changed their economy as a result of the intervention. The first form of economic empowerment is at association level. Because the association gets contributions from charges made to tourists, they were able to open up a bank account and are able to finance some activities of mutual community benefit e.g. repairing boreholes. At individual level, community members involved in Environmentally-friendly Income Generating Activities like handcrafts and bee-keeping have also accessed additional income.

3.2.2. Functions of the Mabamba Eco-tourism Information Centre

As one of the major outputs of the project, the Mabamba Eco-tourism Information Centre has a number of functions that include:

- **Is a focal point for documenting, sharing and disseminating indigenous knowledge:** This will help build confidence of community members and help them realize the importance of the resource, not only to them but the entire globe. E.g. some migratory birds from Europe breed from Mabamba.
- **Providing Information to Tourists and visitors:** Before the project there was no visitor's/tourist reception area. Visitors therefore missed the opportunity of interacting with the local community members and getting some basic information about the resource from an indigenous knowledge perspective.
- **Creating awareness and Education Campaign:** Community members continuously get education and Awareness messages from the Information Centre and adjacent Nature School.

- **Providing Skills in Alternative Income Generating Opportunities and Wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland.** Organized Community groups are being prepared to undergo training in alternative sources of Income as a result of the existence of this resource. E.g. making souvenirs /handcrafts from papyrus, water hyacinth etc.

3.2.3. The Mabamba Nature School

A Nature School is a ‘school’ without ‘walls’ but natural surroundings mainly in form of floral species. It is in form of a mini-botanic garden. The Nature School includes Medicinal plants, ornamental as well as tree species with cultural attachments in the community. The Mabamba Nature School was developed for the following objectives:

-  To inculcate the sense of love for nature and its attributes and this forms a basis for support of conservation efforts. This includes young children as a major target to develop their love for nature;
-  Provide a comfortable venue for community meetings, education sessions and community social events;
-  Used for camping for eco-tourists and therefore also serves as an Income Generating avenue for the association.



3.2.4. Networking

In the course of Project implementation we have worked closely and have been able to supplement our interventions through active networking with Civil Society Organisations and Government Departments. The following stakeholders have been outstanding:

No	Stakeholder Name	Status	Major Areas of Collaboration
1.	Environmental Alert	National Non-government Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Organising Community training in Alternative Sources of Income Facilitating alternative Income sources e.g. goat keeping
2.	National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Central government Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing Guidelines for Wetland Conservation and Sustainable Use
3.	Wetlands Management Department		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Education
4.	National Forestry Authority (NFA)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing Training Materials
5.	Wakiso District Administration	Local Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Mobilization
6.	Kasanje Sub-County Administration		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training Penalising law breakers (degraders)
7.	Ministry of Water Lands and Environment	Government of Uganda Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing Political Support Support in Clean Up the World Program
8.	Kiyita Family Alliance for Development and Cooperation (KIFAD)	NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training of Volunteers in Computer and Information Management

4.0. What was not achieved

- The project has not fully achieved the smooth collaboration with the private sector (tour operators) to jointly map out ways of promoting pro-poor community tourism and achieve greater community support and participation; We found out that this will be a gradual process and required more time and a series of dialogue meetings which was not provided for in this phase of the project. As business people, their major concern is profit maximization and many currently have the feeling that projects aiming at improving community benefit may infringe on their profits. With sensitization, however, at least 2 private companies have realised that actually a smooth collaboration with the community leads to more profitability of their businesses.
- Putting in place baseline data for evaluating the impact of conservation efforts; and, developing the current information centre into a bigger conservation research and education centre in order to have a bigger multiplier effect.

5.0. Way Forward

We are proposing a next phase of the project to consolidate the achievements realised as well as implementing new ideas that will lead to better and sustainable Management of Mabamba Bay Wetland of International importance:

The next phase is intending to dwell on the following issues:

- a. Improving collaboration with the service providers (tour operators) to jointly map out ways of promoting pro-poor community tourism;
- b. Expanding the tourism base from birds only to community and agro-tourism to ultimately reduce the pressure on the wetland resource that is likely to increase with the increasing in-flow of tourists;
- c. Documentation of Indigenous knowledge to further inform conservation efforts and appeal to more community support;
- d. Institutional Development and further cohesion building within Mabamba Wetland eco-tourism Association (MWETA);
- e. Further Education using Fact sheets and Video in Schools and the community;
- f. Further Improvement of the Eco-tourism Information Centre and Nature School;
- g. Further Capacity Building and motivation of volunteers.
- h. Capacity building of Nature Palace Foundation through refresher courses for staff and Strategic Networking to fill capacity gaps and learn from other organisations.

6.0. Financial Report Summary

Promoting Community Participation and Support in Conservation and Wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland of International Importance, Uganda Summary of Financial Report:

Activities	Items of Expenditure	Amount in £	Amt in UG SHS	Actual Exp.	Variance	Remarks
Objective 1&2: Community Education and organising into Conservation/Development groups and promotion of Sustainable resource-based and alternative income generating opportunities						
Community Awareness raising and Education meetings	1.Training of Trainers	950	3,259,450/=	3,320,000/=	(60,550)	
	2. Transport for volunteers	300	1,029,300/=	1,080,000/=	(50,700)	
Group formation, Education sessions in Group Dynamics, Conservation and Business skills	1.Training materials	250	857,750/=	950,000/=	(92,250)	
	2.Stationery	200	686,200/=	550,000/=	136,200	
Leadership Training, identification and development of eco-tourism opportunities	1.Trainers	300	1,029,300/=	1,160,000/=	(130,700)	
	2.Training materials	200	686,200/=	550,000/=	136,200	
	3.Meals	450	1,543,950/=	1,550,000/=	(6,050)	
Exchange visits for group leaders	1.Transport	400	1,372,400/=	1,250,000/=	122,400	
	2.Meals & Accommodation	300	1,029,300/=	1,050,000/=	(20,700)	
	3. Trainers	300	1,029,300/=	1,000,000/=	29,300	
	4. Coordination costs	200	686,200/=	650,000/=	36,200	
Objective 3:Development of an effective Community Resource and Information centre						
Train 2 community volunteers in information management		150	514,650/=	500,000/=	14,650	
Hire of space for information centre		450	1,543,950/=	1,600,000/=	(56,050)	
Acquire one desktop computer		250	857,750/=	800,000/=	57,750	
Internet connection		500	1,715,500/=	1,510,000/=	205,500	
Generator		300	1,029,300/=	1,000,000/=	29,300	
Generator Fuel		300	1,029,300/=	1,200,000/=	(170,700)	Fuel Prices have been on the Upward trend
	1) Fuel	450	1,543,950/=	1,797,700/=	(253,750)	Fuel Prices have been on the Upward trend
<i>Project Coordination Expenses</i>	2) Communication	100	343,100/=	300,000/=	43,100	
	3) Secretarial services	150	514,650/=	520,000/=	(5,350)	
	4)Report reproduction & dissemination	200	686,200/=	650,000/=	36,200	
TOTALS		6,700	22,987,700/=	22,987,700/=		

- 7.0. Annexes
 - 7.1. Letters of Acknowledgement from Stakeholders
 - 7.2. Accountability support Documents
 - 7.3. Concept for next project phase.

CONCEPT

1. Title: *Promoting Community Participation and Support in Conservation and Wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland of International Importance, Uganda Phase2.*

2. Executive Summary

This is a continuation of phase one of the project which aimed at promoting local Community members' participation and to kindle their support in Conservation and wise-use of Mabamba protected area, through community organizing; sustainable resource-based and alternative income generating activities; and, an effective information system. This to lead to protection of the globally-threatened Shoebill (**Balaeniceps rex**), approximately 38% of the global population of the Blue Swallow (**Hirundo atrocaerulea**), and the globally-threatened **Papyrus Yellow Warbler** plus other birds of global conservation concern and rare plant species like **Scadoxus species** and ultimately lay a foundation for future conservation programs for this newly designated Ramsar site.

3. Project Objectives/Activities

This phase will put emphasis on improving collaboration with the private sector to promote pro-poor community tourism, expanding the tourism base and reduce pressure on the wetland resource resulting from increasing tourists; documenting indigenous knowledge for more effective conservation education; further institutional and cohesion building of Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association (MWETA) and further development of the Eco-tourism information centre and Nature school:

- I. **Improving collaboration with the service providers (tour operators) to jointly map out ways of promoting pro-poor community tourism;** to be implemented through dialogue meetings and joint planning workshops. The project will work with tour companies to facilitate more interaction with the community to improve collaboration and the further development of community Tourism.
- II. **Expanding the tourism base from birds only to community and agro-tourism to ultimately reduce the pressure on the wetland resource that is likely to increase with the increasing in-flow of tourists;** This will involve **Community mapping of tourist attractions** whereby all potential tourist attractions within the community will be mapped in joint exercises between tour companies, tourist guides, and community with the help of a professional facilitator. As a product, a brochure will be developed for tourists indicating all attractions. This will also be publicised on the, project webpage, NPF as well as websites of participating tour companies.
- III. **Documentation of Indigenous knowledge to further inform conservation efforts and appeal to more community support;** To be implemented through volunteers and the Eco-tourism Centre Management Committee. The volunteers will receive further training in documentation so that they can carry out effective documentation that will improve the capacity of the centre as well as promote conservation education. : A data bank of indigenous knowledge will be developed for education, research, tourism and conservation values. A lot of indigenous knowledge is important for resource conservation but it is largely un-documented therefore subjected to erosion over a time.
- IV. **Institutional Development and further cohesion building within Mabamba Wetland eco-tourism Association (MWETA);** through participatory planning, review meetings and tailor-made training programs addressing leadership capacity building needs of the association. The cohesion of various community groups falling under MWETA will be built through better participatory leadership and joint social events.
- V. **Further Education using Fact sheets and Video in Schools and the community; Fact sheets will be printed and writing competitions arranged in schools.** Video conservation programs will be shown in schools and in the community to promote further the Conservation of Mabamba.
- VI. **Further Improvement of the Eco-tourism Information Centre and Nature School;** The Centre will further developed in form of capacity building of the volunteers as well as more equipment, more reliable internet and power. It is proposed that for better sustainability – if funds can allow - we install solar power instead of relying on the generator given the ever increasing and fluctuating fuel prices.
- VII. **Further Capacity Building and motivation of volunteers:** The volunteers will undergo training in documentation, record-keeping and hospitality services. In order to motivate the volunteers it is also proposed that a small monthly incentive should be given.

