

Project Update: March 2009

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

1. The training on planting, crafts and weaving materials.
2. Building of fuel efficient stoves.
3. Skills training workshops.
4. M&E visit to homesteads offering advice on planting, weaving and stove building.
5. Marketing of the produce within the local town to local people as well as tourists visiting the region/community.
6. Extending training to further improve household's income from the sale of the handicrafts in order to ensure the project is self-sustaining.

The training on planting, crafts and weaving materials

Thirty women have been trained on the types and planting of the craft weaving materials. These include millet and other natural materials. This has led to the increase of craft production of **60%** among the members and **30%** among the non-members living near the members and selling to the community shop. The variety of crafts being produced has increased by over **300%** moving from the originally one type produced to up to **6** types being produced now. Originally, the women were only producing millet baskets in one shape/design. Today, the women are producing up to **7** types of products including table mats, women's bags, beads and jewellery, sun huts, millet baskets, key rings and honey jar holders.

The materials being used include banana fibres, millet stocks, raphia, palm leaf, natural dye materials, seeds, both wild and domestic - covering legumes, grains and others growing locally. This is supplementary to the millet stalks that were the only material being used before the project.

Up to four household natural resource gardens have been set as demonstration sites and more set on each of the **30** homesteads. **5** indigenous trees including *Prunus Africana*, *Podocypus latifolia*, wild Mongolia, *Newtonia buchanani* and *Symphonia glubelefera* have been re-introduced in the community environment in these demonstration gardens and are still being monitored. Other plants/trees including Omukikimbo, *Erytherina obyssinica*, *Aloe terox*, elephant grass, *Spathodia campanulata*, *Vernonia amygdiana* and calyandra have been identified of great local domestic value as in drugs, food/ nutrients supplements, useful to other ecosystem such as birds, bees, agriculture and grazing. These plants are also being protected in the natural resource gardens and the members/ community have been encouraged to create reserves of these on their farms.

The natural resource gardens are being monitored and sustainably harvested for household income and production activities. The elephant grass for example is being used for feeding animals on zero grazing, mulching the banana and coffee plantation, the trees supplying the household firewood needs, medicinal and simple wood needs, fencings of the garden and other roles.

The families have also planted the fuel wood including calyandra and muzaba (local) in their farms. These are known to provide firewood, nitrogen to the soil and feeds for the animals.

Every home has a number of these and some fruit trees. These will supplement the reserved forests in terms of firewood and other natural resources needed at the homes. The few who have planted or who will succeed in this will act as an example to the rest of the members and community.

However, some of the planted materials have not yet reached full harvesting level. It is only the ones who had them grown and that are already using them. These are also acting as learning lessons to the rest of the community therefore used as basis for the creation of the resource gardens.

Building of fuel efficient stoves

30 homes have acquired improved wood stoves. Besides the **30**, another **9** have constructed them. The women were trained with the guidance from the Ruboni Community Conservation and Development Program and the Rwenzori Mountains National Park rangers, so that they can both learn to build and maintain the fuel wood stoves for sustainability. The aim of the project was that each woman trained would train another one outside the membership so that the project can leave a minimum number of **60** improved wood stoves in the village. More are still to report their achievement in replicating this ideas as the project goes on in the remaining three months.

The comments from all women who have the stoves include; they have cut the amount of fire would used by **75%** though **10%** of the women complain that their family is lacking an opportunity to get the warmth from the fire on the cold days/nights. The three stone heaths are normally used as a get together point in the family when the family members enjoy the fire and use the time for learning and knowledge exchange. The improved wood stove having only one outlet limits the number of people who can feel the heat.

However, as it has been commented that sitting near the fire for very long times is not healthy due to the excessive smoke, this is an advantage to the families who have the fuel efficient stoves. Through the saving scheme, we shall encourage the women to save for worm clothing and we can buy it at once from Kampala to increase the bargaining power.

After the constructing of the stoves, the women have got extra time to attend to other family needs, on the farm, in business and to relax. **705%** of the time used by the family to collect firewood has been saved. **5** members have managed to establish small-scale businesses at the local trading centre using their savings from the saving scheme. This has also contributed to the increased crafts production among the members resulting into more income from crafts for more savings in the saving scheme.

Consisting of 8 workshops run by a number of the women from the savings group. Targeting 30 households of local women who have already shown an interest in being part of project.

The project has facilitated the savings group to pass on the saving skills to other community members. **2** groups of **60** members have been trained and now have two running saving schemes besides the group implementing this project. The two groups are savings group two and Nyakabugha village savings group.

Other 5 trainings covered have included the herbal medicines training, indigenous seed collection training, indigenous tree planting particles.

M&E visit to homesteads offering advice on planting, weaving and stove building.

The project has achieved a number of **40** cooking stoves in **40** homes. These have resulted in the timely self training with advice from the collaboration with the national park and community conservation efforts. The homesteads have also planted up to **6** different dye plant species and then have invited other few locally available natural materials as potential crafts materials. During the **12** household visit that have so far been conducted around the **30** project direct beneficiaries and other **30** community interested members, as the indirect/ secondary beneficiaries, the members have had an opportunity of sharing hands on experience and hence setting the examples to the rest of the community.

Marketing of the produce within the local town to local people as well as tourists visiting the region/ community

Thanks to the local community and tourist industry, the current produce has not yet gone outside the community and is being sold within the local community since we were still in the training and establishment stage. The products so far produced include the crafts up to **6** types including table mats, hats, baskets, honey jars, handbags, baskets and others.

The foods (up to **9** types including pineapples, bananas, eggplants, green peppers, cabbages, onions, tomatoes, carrots and coffee). As we start the mass production, it will necessitate the trapping of external markets. This is likely to be the second phase of the project. The major buyers of the produce are shown in the following table

| Item | Main buyers |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Handicrafts | Tourists and UCOTA |
| Mushrooms | Local homes and tourist facilities |
| Vegetables | Local homes and tourist facilities |
| Medicinal plants | Local homes self consumption |

Extending training to further improve household’s income from the sale of the handicrafts in order to ensure the project is self-sustaining

As the project is in its final stages, three months to go, we have realised the need to set ground for sustainability and continuity in the following approaches;

1. Setting the farmers and crafts weavers into a sales cooperative.
2. Strengthening the capacity of the saving schemes.
3. Planning to commercialise the production of both crafts and other agro products of the project.
4. Selecting the best practice at the end of this project and basing on them for commercial production of their relevant products in the next phase.

This stage will help to determine focus for the activities after the project ends. About three farmers/ households will be selected and taken on to improve their activities so that the rest of the community can voluntarily learn from them. The group will try to solicit local support in organising a sales cooperative that will collect and distribute the produce while

advising the producers. This will help to prepare the products relevant while increasing the bargain power of the local producers. The project will also look for some other external support to facilitate the major marketing activities that can not be achieved locally. The cooperative will be based on self-help and voluntary approach whereby each person selling through it will leave a percentage for the administration and management.

Next phase plan

In the remaining time of the project the following will be emphasised.

- Exploring new markets.
- Increased production.
- Targeting members and non members.
- Increased variety of products.
- Farmer’s sales team/ cooperative.
- Establishing each household as a business.
- An indigenous tree nursery to prepare, raise and supply indigenous seedlings to the local people.
- Selecting a number of best practices and supporting them further to bring out the idea clearer to the rest of the community/ members.

Problems and observation

| No. | Problem/ Observation | Attempted Solution/ Response |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | Low rate of learning and replication. | Building on voluntary /self learning from observing fellow members. |
| 2 | Marketing challenge to find market for the increasing number of produce. | We plan to set a selling cooperative and sign contract with the buyers then establish one supply point. |
| 3 | Weather/ climate change threats have led to some of the gardens giving poor yields and low motivation | We are tapping the opportunity of irrigation and watering very seriously as much as possible. |
| 4 | Husband wife relations and other household chores in the homes. Some times it is not easy for the women to put all their time on the project activities due to the roles in their homes. | We have encouraged self learning and exchange of information between the mebers themselves. The members sit to discuss their problems and observations on the saving days. |
| 5 | Change in prices of items and other administration costs. | Over spent and used some of the interest on exchange rate to cover the over expenditure on other budget lines. |

