

Project Update: February 2014

A Report of the stakeholder's forum held at Eyasi wetland grounds on 3rd-7th, 18th-21st and 30th October 2013.

The community living around Eyasi wetland is composed of several economic livelihoods. These range from farmers to fishermen to papyrus harvesters and to even papyrus product weavers. This population directly or indirectly utilises the wetland resources. The interaction of the people with the wetland is the same impacts positively or negatively to the same wetland. The workshop herein targeted the same wetland user-groups who apparently were the hosts of the solution to the survival of Eyasi basin. The main objective of the workshop was to meet in a forum to share with the groups on the alternatives of wetland utilisation, which include organic farming, value addition on the papyrus products and agroforestry as a livelihood source.

The workshop proceedings

Through cooperative efforts the community members would have implemented the lessons from the workshop. Sustainable utilisation of the wetland was to benefit both the current and future generations. The animals in the wetland were useful to the people and so was their conservation. Activities related to the utilisation of the wetland were identified, positive and negative, and some included papyrus harvesting, fishing and farming. Introduction to some threats was also done and the following were short listed:

- Overharvesting of papyrus.
- Fishing of young immature fish.
- Farming in the wetland as a result of clearing of papyrus strands.

Some attitudes from the people noted were as follows:

When it rains people think fish!

ACTIVITY: Agri-ecological activities through household pilot programmes:

Value Addition

Value addition was also introduced as a strategy that if adapted would do well with the conservation of the wetland resources. The strategy was given as follows:

- Use little resource, papyrus or hyacinth.
- Make valuable products.
- High skill involved in making and finishing of the crafts.
- Innovative designs beyond the normal ones in the market.
- Incorporate arts.
- Painting, patchwork, mosaic etc.

Some of the value added papyrus products were enlisted as follows:

- Improved mats-high demand in the Far East.
- Wall hangings.
- Lamp shades.
- Flower baskets.
- Furniture.
- Door mats.

For the benefit of the craft persons the understanding of the marketing strategy was done through pointing out on factors to be taken into account such as understanding of one's market-local and international, e.g. tourists. Demand driven products were to be identified by the crafts person and given priority and aggressive marketing was also encouraged. Branding products and including of the patent designs in the crafts was also mentioned about the same.

Recommendations on the way forward were put down as:

1. Reaching out for the other craftsmen and teaching them on the value addition strategy.
2. Looking for experts to train a few then disseminating the information to the others.
3. Looking for proper markets.
4. Adapting the value addition strategy.

All the above also led to innovation and invention as well as value addition on papyrus products. This however had a major drawback, which was mainly the inability of the crafts men to down cut, the brokers who apparently buy goods very cheaply from them and sell them to the markets.

Agroforestry was a major tool to be implemented so as to achieve the goal of conserving the wetland and sustainably utilising the wetland.