

Project Update: March 2015

“Center for disseminating the best practices for sustainable livelihoods and grass-roots conservation of forests in Gisagara District” is an 18 month project of RSG at Booster Grant Phase. Therefore, this progress report is to provide updates, on the current achievements of the project within 1 year period of implementation, as well as plan for the next 6 months. The final report will be submitted after 6 months upon the completion of the project.

Objectives:

A self-sustained resource centre, with the capacity for community hands-on training, demonstration plots and production of numerous best practices, will be established and sustainably operated in a heart of Gisagara District - **Fully achieved** - Instead of spending RSG funds on just renting the space for resource centre, the project team wisely decided to use that budget in upgrading and expansion (of the land and building) of the Improved Cook Stoves Production Unity (the facilities of previous ICOSCAD Project). Therefore, a permanent resource centre has been established with enough inner space and 25 m x 25 m outer space for hosting the community training and demonstration plots.

A range of both indigenous and innovative best practices that are locally realistic and suitable will be selected and developed within the centre and continuously demonstrated to thousands of people, entrepreneurs and stakeholders - **Fully achieved** - So far, the 10 most successful green enterprises and concerned institutions around Rwanda and Uganda have been visited. Through community outreach, project team discussed with the target groups, local government and communities a list of the best practices to be adopted. As preferred by the community and stakeholders, mushroom farming, improved cooking stoves, agro-forestry initiatives, improved bee-keeping and briquettes making were developed and are being demonstrated at the centre.

A range of both indigenous and innovative best practices that are locally realistic and suitable will be selected and developed within the centre and continuously demonstrated to thousands of people, entrepreneurs and stakeholders - **Fully achieved**.

Ten local experts (young indigenous people) will be trained for 16 days to run the centre and train other peer educators on all best practices within the centre - **Fully achieved** - Three experts from successful enterprises were employed to develop the best practices, preparing teaching manual and train 10 young indigenous peoples as local experts. Ten trained indigenous youths and operations schedule for the centre were presented to the community for increasing community ownership towards the centre.

Sixty grassroots peer educators and entrepreneurs from 13 Local Youth Conservation Clubs (four members from each youth and students' club that worked with the Rufford project phase 2) and two women cooperatives (partners showed interest) will be practically trained in 8 days on the best practices - **Fully achieved** - Ten motivated indigenous youths were used in successful training of 60 peer educators from 13 youth clubs and two women cooperatives. Training sessions were organised whereby two trainers occupied a group of 12 trainees from three clubs over 8 days. It was quite

easy for trainees to acquire new skills as many of them had some practical knowledge from previous ICOSCAD projects.

Fifteen sites for the learnt best practices will be established by trained youth clubs and women cooperatives within their communities and schools to educate thousands of peers – **Partially achieved** - Centre keeps providing technical and material support to thirteen trained clubs for enabling them to replicate some of learnt practices in their own plots. For many of trained women and youth clubs have constructed at least one of the learnt best practices. However there are still two youth clubs that haven't established any of the practices yet.

The participatory annual action plan for conservation of local forests and dissemination of the learnt best practices will be designed by each of 13 youth clubs in consultation of local people, stakeholders and leaders - **Fully achieved** - Two outreach sessions were conducted by trained youth clubs to meet with sector authorities, local community and different stakeholders to participatory identify the local conservation problems and suggest the action plan. Every meeting was led by an environmental university student volunteer. Each of 13 clubs has designed an annual action plan for conservation of forests and dissemination of best practices. Two weekly community outreaches of each youth club and one monthly community work were conducted for creating community awareness about the local annual action plan and demonstrating the learnt best practices as the solutions.

22 weekly teaching sessions will be conducted by trained youth clubs in order to disseminate the learnt best practices among the communities (as action plan implementation) – **Partially achieved** - On January 7th 2015, evaluation meeting with different youth clubs representatives/stakeholders took place at the resource centre to assess the community understanding and potentials to adopt those best practices, in order to improve project strategies. This meeting recommended slight changes in action plans of some youth clubs. Some clubs re-prioritised the practices to be disseminated according to the preference and adoption potentials of their respective communities. Improved cooking stoves were given most priority in every action plan. Project volunteers are working hand-in-hand with each youth club to conduct 20 weekly community outreaches to implement their action plan.

Six monthly community works for forests restoration and conservation activities (as action plan implementation) will be conducted by the local community in coordination of trained youth clubs and local leaders – **Partially achieved** - Youth clubs have started working with local leaders to coordinate the forest conservation and restoration activities in the most threatened forests through monthly community work.

The following are uncompleted activities to be conducted during the remaining 6 months of the project period;

1. Continue the implementation of the local action plan through enabling each youth club to conduct 20 weekly community outreaches for disseminating the best practices among vulnerable communities and six monthly community works for restoring the most threatened forests.

2. Monitoring and evaluation: one university student volunteer will return to the relevant sector every 2 weeks to check how the best practices are being adopted and complete a survey on the project impact.
3. Two days exhibition for all 15 trained clubs and cooperatives to recognise and widely share their achievements with many local communities, stakeholders and decision makers.
4. Writing the final report outlining the achievements and way forward.

