

Progress Report

Project title: Garnering more support for Conservation of Sangobay Forest Reserve through cultural values approach towards on-farm biodiversity conservation

Country and project Region: Uganda, Southern region, Rakai district, Kyebe Subcounty

Project no: 16871-2

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Overview of project progress
<p>Summary of activities carried out and progress of the project</p> <p>This report gives the project update since inception in May 2015. From the time of inception, the following activities have been conducted for the 2 quarters of the project. A recap of the progress is given below;</p> <p>Progress summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 awareness meeting have been done. These emphasised the purpose and objectives of the project, importance of on farm biodiversity conservation, planting of trees, ecosystems services valuation of the planted trees, threats analysis on the forests as well as the planted trees, convention approaches to conservation as well as culture and conservation. 2 meetings were also conducted in the new villages where project activities have been initiated and similar communications done. • Restoration of one sacred site has been done (with planting of new trees on site) and two left to regenerate on their own after awareness creation and meetings with the land owners. These sacred sites act as buffers in the sites. • Tree planting on the farms has also been done though the intensity was low due to the June-October draught. An estimated 10,000 Ficus spp trees have been planted and another estimated 2,000 <i>Mesopsis eminii</i> trees planted on people's farms. These have been planted using the project resources as well as personal resources. There was change of strategy by the community to promote household based tree planting (every household to have at least a minimum of 10 trees). Tree nurseries have been set up and the selected community members are actively engaged in monitoring of progress and quality of the planted trees. • Institutional capacity assessments were done for community based organisations (CBOs) which are engaged with the project. These assessments informed the training needs and the tutorial is being designed on management of CBOs. A meeting was held with other Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and a suggestion was made to consolidate community conservation and development efforts with the sub county of Kyebe to have more impact. <p>Achievements so far</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness has seen a transformation of the people's attitude and there are indicators of sustainability of the project activities. The communities are taking lead on the project through the promotion of house to house planting of trees campaign, initiated and conducted by the communities themselves. • The engagement of the land owners to retain portions on their land as cultural sites at the same time acting as buffers for birds and other biodiversity was an achievement. In the last project, there was a challenge of convincing them to participate in the project. • Communities actively participate in the advocacy for the conservation of the Sangobay forests against the encroachers and also hold the leaders and the custodian institution (National Forestry Authority) accountable on conservation of the Sangobay forests.

List of planned Results in proposal	Progress towards that Result has been achieved (activities carried out; any notable achievements)
Awareness creation	<p><u>Awareness meetings with Community members</u></p> <p>Four awareness meetings have been held in the two parishes (Gwanda and Kanabulemu) where the project operates. One of the meetings in Gwanda (inception meeting) was attended by the LCIII (sub county) chairman, district forestry officer (DFO) and natural resources officer. This was intended of awareness creation among the district technocrats and politicians to incorporate community based activities in their plans and budgets as well as creating better advocacy linkages by the community. A number of issues were discussed during the meeting among which included; biodiversity conservation, community's empowerment to advocate better, details of the new project and agreeing on the way it will operate, threats analysis of the forests as well as ecosystem services evaluation from both planted trees and the Sangobay forest reserves and associated swamps.</p> <p>Also the community showed concern on the licensing done by the national forestry authority to lumberers who cut the forest indiscriminately. The DFO noted that they have informed the ministry about it and they are in the process of passing bye-laws to check out such practices as well as engaging National Forestry authority (NFA) on the issue.</p> <p>Also issues of women not culturally being involved in the barkcloth making process were raised. From the cultural perspective, it was further noted that women are not culturally allowed in the barkcloth making process but were encouraged participate in processes like repairing barkcloth during processing as well as focusing in making standard products out barkcloth.</p>

Also awareness messages have been done by the communities themselves in the public forums like churches and informally. Such arrangements contribute to domestication and leadership on the project initiatives by the communities.

Two meetings were also conducted in the new villages which project activities are extended. Similar messages were communicated and they have showed interest exhibited by planting trees on their gardens. A total of 4 villages in Gwanda parish and another 5 villages in Kanabulemu were mobilised as part of the new project area. A total of 204 members attended the meetings with 153 men and 51 women.



Community awareness meeting in Kanabulemu



Community awareness meeting in Gwanda parish

To strengthen the conservation agenda in the landscape, there are processes set in place by likeminded CBOs to establish a network to complement each other's work. By the time of reporting Kagera, tourism and conservation organisation (KATOCO), BACECOP and MIKESATAK are learning from one another on farm practices, fish farming, and village savings and loan association schemes.



Project inception and awareness meeting in



Community group planning in Kanabulemu parish

Training communities in advocacy and CBO management

Prior to the training in advocacy and CBO management, a needs assessment was conducted with the CBOs. It was established that although the CBOs were established and some in existence for a longer time, they never had the skills and structures needed to run a CBO at required levels. A criterion of assessment was adopted from birdlife international for assessment of site support organisations¹.

It was established that the CBOs needed urgent attention and improvement. Almost all required structures to run an organisation were found to be nonexistent. However, an interaction with one of the CBOs, Twezimbe Sangobay farmers group (which was interested in the project activities) showed that they already had structures and was identified as a lead to support the others in the mean time before the training is conducted.

On a positive note, after realising some of the gaps, the project focal CBOs have now increased their membership after a few tips they have acquired Twezimbe farmers group.

On-farm biodiversity and Cultural values Conservation

Tree planting

Tree planting has continued in the two sub counties of Gwanda and Kanabulemu. In this phase, mobilisation has been done and 9 more villages are also engaged in tree planting on their farms. The ficus spp cuttings (especially *entakire* variety) has been mobilised from the first project engagement communities to the new villages. Also the communities which participated in the first project have continued with the planting trees. They have changed the mobilisation strategy from just planting trees to at least every household to have at least a minimum of 10 trees on their farms.

By the time of this reporting an estimated 10,000 ficus trees and 2,000 *Mesopsis eminii* are estimated to have been planted in both parishes (Gwanda and Kanabulemu). However the momentum of planting was low during the first four months of the project due to the draught but the community focal personnel (mobilisers) note a spontaneous increase during the current wet season.

¹ http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/BirdLife_Africa_SSG_Capacity_Assessemen_%20Tool_v4_1.pdf



Newly planted Ficus spp trees within the landscape (Blue dots depict the young ficus trees planted)

A few selected community members were used to train new farmers on ficus tree planting and management techniques and on farm biodiversity conservation techniques which they acquired from the community. A mentorship and monitoring strategy was adopted for continuous visiting of the farms within the community to ensure that the trees grow to produce the right barkcloth variety.



Extent of growth of trees planted in the first

Tree nurseries established within the communities.

Tree nurseries have been set up within the communities and arrangements are underway to enable the communities collect seed from the forest for propagation in the nurseries. However the first trees to be potted have already been transplanted on people's farms. One CBO have purchased over 1000 *mesopsis eminii* potted trees to start a commercial plantation within the landscape. The communities were trained in the setting up of nurseries of trees which they plan to complement also as coffee growing nurseries to enhance their incomes.



Tree nursery established in the community



Community members with one of the transplanted trees

Training in barkcloth making

Project community focal persons mobilised the youths for barkcloth training, although many showed interest, only 14 are committed with the training at the moment. The training needs commitment from the time of the debarking the tree, treating it up to the processing time. The low commitment has been attributed mainly to the competing financial needs of the youths and the negative attitude towards the activity. However those engaged in the training have a good skills level and we hope by the end of the project, they will have the capacity to operate the processes on their own.

Tools were purchased to facilitate the youth during the barkcloth training.



Project manager and some of the youths participating in the barkcloth making training



Some of the materials purchased for the youths, used during the trainings

8 barkcloth making points “schools” (locally called *ekomagiro*) were rehabilitated with support from the project. Each group of youths were attached to one school under the mentorship of experienced barkcloth makers.



Some of the Rehabilitated barkcloth making schools

Restoration of sacred sites

Sacred sites were identified in the community. However, these were mainly on people's land. The project team together with selected community members engaged with the land owners on conserving such areas which as buffers for conserving on farm biodiversity species. By the time of project reporting, 2 sites are under natural regeneration and one has been planted with *Mesopsis eminii*, *Markhamia spp* and other varieties identified by the community. These are complimented with natural regeneration. Also the project focal persons or mobilisers have been encouraged to document the norms and cultural values of such places.



Cultural site under natural regeneration, rehabilitated site with planted trees Below; some of the newly planted trees



Improved livelihoods of the community members

Although the project cannot claim authoritatively on the improvement of livelihoods in the community, a number of activities have complimented the livelihoods of the community members;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All planting materials are purchased from the community hence a source of income for communities which had fairly preferred mature trees of the ficus spp (<i>entakire</i>-because it is the preferred type which makes better barkcloth compared to others). The monies were given to the respective farmers who had fairly mature trees. But these were bought at a subsidised price to ensure more numbers. But with increase in numbers of trees grown, we hope that, the problem of availability of the cuttings will be solved. • Although we had anticipated that the first debarking would happen when trees have one year, this was not the case and the communities attributed this to the extensive draughts hence the failure of the trees to attain the required sizes. However, given the price of one unprocessed bark at (approximately 3 pounds) then with the estimated number of trees planted in the first year, the contribution of that enterprise within the landscape is expected to be over (3*20000 trees=60,000 pounds) as the direct benefits for trees planted in the first year. If coupled with the processing fees then each bark at 1 pound, an extra 10,000 pounds arising from the tree bark processing will contribute to the improvement of livelihoods especially the youths. • Other costs attached to the enterprise during the community valuation of the ecosystem services provided by the planted trees included; Carbon fixing benefits in soil from rotting leaves (20 pounds), animal fodders (5 pounds), biodiversity benefits, cleaner air, shade, avoidance of evapo transpiration (20 pounds) among other benefits per tree. (They expect the prices to increase expect as the trees increase in girth.) • Some noted that the <i>Mesopsis eminii</i> offer equally similar benefits and they hope they can be harvested after 15 years. They called upon the team if possible to engage with other organisations which sell carbon to engage with their tree projects by paying for such services like carbon storage.
<p>Publicity of project concept</p>	<p>The project sponsored two community members for the exhibition at the Buganda Tourism Expo, 2015. Buganda Kingdom is the custodian of the cultural values related to the Baganda people, where the project is located. The displayed the processes through which barkcloth is made and the potential products which can be made from barkcloth. The team was part of the 8 man delegation from the Buddu county where part of Rakai district and the project is located. They emerged as the best exhibitors.</p>  <p><i>Some of the members from the community after winning as the best exhibitor with the barkcloth products in the background</i></p>

Changed circumstances and Challenges so far encountered

- No major challenges have been experienced in the project at the moment.

Looking ahead

- Training communities in biodiversity monitoring
- Training in advocacy and CBO management
- Continue with the tree planting
- Engagement with the NFA sector on the forest management and permitting irregularities as alleged by the community.
- Training in management of CBOs for better environmental advocacy as well as well as institutional management