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# Empowering Women for Sustainable Conservation of Akanyaru IBA Project

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**Exchange and Field Visits Report**



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**NATURE RWANDA**

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## **Combined Exchange and Field Visit for Project Participants, KOSUMU Members**

Nature Rwanda is implementing a project entitled “Empowering women for sustainable conservation of Akanyaru wetlands” since August 2017. The one-year long project was financially supported by The Rufford Foundation and it is being implemented in Musenyi Sector, Bugesera District, Western Province of Rwanda. As part of that project, Nature Rwanda organized a combined field and exchange visit for 25 active members of KOSUMU cooperative. This was organized in the framework of empowering project beneficiaries while enabling them to improve the quality and quantity of their handcraft products. Thus, Nature Rwanda believes that knowledge and skills should be acquired through exchange and learning from other experienced practitioners as far as handcrafting and manure production from water hyacinth are concerned.

Field and exchange visit were combined to be more relevant and meaningful to the project participants. After the knowledge assessment and training conducted as part of this project, Nature Rwanda realized that the exchange and field visit organized at the cooperatives that are working on similarly products and facing similarly challenges will be more benefit to them. Thus, instead of conducting the exchange and field visit in Kigali as initially proposed, we opted to go in Gashora for approximate, replicability and domestication of knowledge and skills that they will develop during the combined visit.

Therefore, the combined visits were conducted in Gashora Sector, Bugesera district on Friday August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The active members of KOSUMU cooperative visited KOVAGA Cooperative. KOVAGA cooperative is composed by 42 active members with only one man among the whole group. This is one among success cooperatives operating in Rwanda producing and selling handcraft products.

The main objective of the combined visit was to create comfortable and conducive learning environment for KOSUMU members so that they can learn from other women cooperative in order to increase their production and marketing skills while meeting the new market needs – quality and quantity. This one-day learning and sharing experience engaged 42 members’ active members of KOVAGA cooperative and 25 active members of KOSUMU cooperative.

During this combined exchange and field visits, KOSUMU members were engaged in interactive discussion and hands on experience with their peers from KOVAGA members took father steps in demonstrating how they make various kinds of handcrafts, market them and effective production of manure from water hyacinth, and handcraft production from other materials. The open discussion led by Nature Rwanda staff shaded lights on missing pieces on handcrafting and manure production and encourage remotely collaboration and skills sharing between both cooperatives.

Through this combined exchange visit, participants learned about Effective water hyacinth harvesting and processing, Handcrafts production from water hyacinth, manure production, handcrafts products demonstration, and entrepreneurial and market access to list a few. The combined exchange and field visit leave KOSUMU members with knowledge in producing high quality handcrafts and manure, and developing alternatives sources of incomes for sustainable conservation of Akanyaru wetlands and its restoring Akanyaru wetlands' ecological conditions.

This was a platform to engage the project beneficiaries in producing high quality handcrafts and manure and ensure the improvement in what they are going to do towards socio-economic development and conservation of Akanyaru wetlands. KOSUMU cooperative members were interested in observing and exercising the skills they gained and acknowledged the information they acquired and ready to put into practice what they have learned in order to ensure their sustainable economic development and the conservation of Akanyaru wetlands.

**ANNEX PHOTO: Field visit and exchange visit**





