

Project Update: May 2021

In March 2021, we recruited one community coordinator and 12 community-based monitors into our resident sustainability team. This team has since been resourced to support our data collection for the project.

We also created the social media platforms for reporting the data including a WhatsApp platform to share information among the team and local information sharing, Twitter platform for frequent updates with local and international stakeholders and a YouTube platform for video story telling. All of these platforms are currently in use. The Twitter handle is @LbcFocus. The twitter page has 28 followers so far. Please see link: <https://twitter.com/LbcFocus?s=08>.

From our engagements with local communities, we have produced two video documentaries about Lake Bosomtwi. The first one has been uploaded on the YouTube channel. Please see our first video documentary here: Lake Bosomtwi video. The second one is yet to be finalised and uploaded. This video captures a report from one of our community monitors on the destruction of 500 trees planted along the bank of Lake Bosomtwi in March 2021. This story was later captured by several news outlets (destroyers of trees around Lake Bosomtwe won't go unpunished). FIDEP Foundation is producing a video report on this story. This story was also shared on our twitter page: @LbcFocus.

We also produced a project brief to give visibility to the project stakeholders including the donor, Rufford Foundation and to give local stakeholders a summary of the project. Please see the project brief below.

LAKE BOSOMTWE
is the only natural lake in Ghana. It is situated within an ancient impact crater that is about 10.3 kilometres (6.5 mi) in diameter. It is about 30 km (19 mi) south-east of Kumasi the capital of Ashanti and is a popular recreational area. There are about 30 villages near crater lake Lake Bosomtwe, with a combined population of about 70,000.

PILOT TESTING
A COMMUNITY-BASED INDEPENDENT REPORTING PLATFORM WITH A MOBILE APP LINK AT LAKE BOSOMTWE BIOSPHERE RESERVE, GHANA.

Lake Bosomtwe
In Ghana's Ashanti Region is one of the world's six major meteoric lakes and believed to be around 1.2 million years old. The area is rich in biodiversity including several species endemic to the lake. There is also a major forest reserve and several sacred groves, the latter being still protected by local traditions based on traditional spiritual beliefs or historical events that have impacted on the forest of local people.
These traditional management systems protected the sacred groves for centuries and prevented encroachment into these areas.

FIDEP Foundation
is implementing the Community-based Independent Reporting Project which seeks to pilot test a community-based independent reporting platform using a mobile app-link as a means of connecting 2 buffer communities within the Biosphere Reserve to monitor and report, learn and share, and co-develop adaptive actions for Integrated Biodiversity Conservation.

The Premise of This Project
In watershed management, local communities are the primary stakeholders provisioned by their constant interaction with the environment, valuable knowledge and experience that makes them the best managers of the watershed. In this regard, studies have recommended the involvement of all stakeholders (ie. professionals, scientific experts, the public at large, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local action groups) in dealing with issues concerning water management.

KEY EXPECTATIONS OF THE PROJECT:

- A. This project seeks to support on-going conservation efforts at Lake Bosomtwe landscape with community generated, timely and verifiable data to inform local planning and action.
- B. To foster knowledge co-generation, knowledge sharing and the development of socially-relevant tools, methods and approaches that catalyse local action in protecting critical ecosystems in Ghana.
- C. To train community members as data collectors and local monitors using mobile technology to collect and share information on illegal logging, fishing with harmful chemicals, indiscriminate dumping of refuse, illegal mining, farming activities, charcoal production, etc.

PROJECT APPROACH:
The project adopts an Integrated Biodiversity Management (IBM) approach. The project intends to promote the use of IBM as a holistic approach to management of critical biodiversity areas in Ghana.

KEY OUTPUTS:

- 1. Publication of 3 policy papers including: Local Capacity gap analysis for community-based independent reporting on the Lake Bosomtwe and Biosphere Reserve
Local Capacity gap analysis for mainstreaming IBM outcomes, lessons and knowledge into national policies
Scale institutional gap analysis for the implementation of the buffer zone policy in Ghana.
- 2. An Online platform created to serve as a community-based tool for direct communication, awareness building, and reliable information source for the riparian communities within the Lake Bosomtwe Biosphere reserve and also provide an inclusive and safe space for local communities to voice out their grievances with management authorities.

In April 2021, we carried out our first training workshop on the following topics:

1. Community-based independent reporting and the conservation of the Lake Bosomtwi Biosphere Reserve.
2. Impacts of illegal mining on the Lake Bosomtwi Biosphere Reserve.
3. Impacts of fishing with harmful chemicals on the Lake Bosomtwi Biosphere Reserve.
4. Impacts of illegal logging on the Lake Bosomtwi Biosphere Reserve.







In April 2021, we planned for a training workshop on the Use of TIMBY mobile application for community-based independent reporting and the conservation of the Lake Bosomtwi Biosphere Reserve. However, this workshop had to be postponed to June 2021 because we were not getting feedback from the TIMBY platform. However, we have since had further discussions with them on the technical requirements and are now in the process of securing access to the platform.

In spite of this challenge, in May 2021, we still recruited an additional seven community-based monitors into our resident sustainability team adding up to 19 community-based monitors. These monitors have been reporting on on-going activities around the lake.