

Project Updates August 2022

During this period, we conducted two main activities, as follows.

- Conducted awareness meetings and training with local communities adjacent to the wetland to enable them to conserve and access wetland resources in a manner that is sustainable for the future generation.
- Communicated the findings with all the key stakeholders involved in the project and local leaders.

Awareness meeting and training

The team successfully conducted an awareness meeting and training to the local community members adjacent to the wetland which involved sharing of the project results. The objective of this activity was 1) to share the impact of community dependence on wetland resources with low involvement in their management of the wetland, the direct exploitation of wetland resources causes hindrance in conservation of the wetland. 2) to brief the project findings to local communities and brainstorm the mitigation measures to the challenges affecting the wetland as a habitat.

For conservation of Lutembe Wetland as a habitat for Shoe bills, community members were encouraged on any activities exerting a negative impact on the wetland should be prohibited such as dumping wastes, encroachment for agriculture and settlement. For sustainable utilization of wetland resources, alternative activities from discussion session such as bee keeping, and eco-tourism activities (birding) were mentioned and encouraged in the meeting to reduce the pressure on wetland.



Photo 1: Chairperson, Lutembe Wetland User's Association (LWUA) giving remarks to participants during the awareness meeting.

More than 20 participants took part in the training, and it was based on building capacity for restoration and management of Lutembe Wetland as a habitat for Shoe bills. From the observations, all participants were satisfied with the content of the training and the selected topic (wetland restoration and management) was relevant to their knowledge and needs. The participants (both local members and other stakeholders) all agreed the need to work together on closer cooperation in restoring

and management of the wetland and solving other environmental issues. It was recommended to organize more trainings in wetland management and for more days.

Key stakeholders meeting

During the stakeholders meeting the results of the project were shared with all the stake holders, it observed that the rate of increase in built-up areas such as settlements and bare soils such as farmland is encroaching on the wetland vegetation that serves as Shoebill habitat. Wetland vegetation (*Cyperus papyrus*) in particular, is known for creating a typical habitat for shoebills. However, the observed loss of wetland vegetation may affect the Shoebill's breeding patterns, causing them to migrate to other wetland locations. Also, it was mentioned in the meeting that local users are the sole owner as well as the protector of their wetland resources, therefore involvement of the local community to participate in the program before its implementation to achieve the objectives of effective and efficient management of wetland resources should be considered. Local communities adjacent to wetlands as a habitat should be motivated and mobilized to work together, utilize their indigenous knowledge so that they can improve the wetland ecosystem as a habitat and improve on their livelihood.

It was observed that through engaging local communities adjacent to the wetland in different sustainable activities and policies formulated on local participation, it's expected that once the people are made aware, educated and trained, they will be able to understand the importance, threats and possible solutions for protection and management of wetlands as habitats for wildlife especially Shoe bills.



Photo 2: Key stakeholders participating in meeting to discuss the results of the project

Recommendations

- Conservation actions should be undertaken to protect the wetland as a habitat with its natural properties. The value of wetland for wildlife and human depends upon maintenance of these properties. Therefore, mitigation measures should restrict some of the activities carried out by local communities.

- Sensitization and public awareness program should be adopted along with review of traditional technique of sustainable wetland use adopted by local communities adjacent to the wetlands.