

Project Updates May 2025

Title of the Project: *Ecology, anthropogenic threats, people's perception and Conservation status of Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*) in Lutembe Bay Wetland, Wakiso district.*

Activity 1: Sensitization Workshops and Training (May 2025): Conducting workshops with adjacent communities to educate them on sustainable wetland resource utilization and conservation practices for future generations.

As part of our commitment to preserving the Lutembe wetland and its wildlife, particularly the Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*), the project team conducted a Conducted workshops with adjacent communities to educate them on sustainable wetland resource utilization and conservation practices for future generations in May 2025.

This initiative focused on equipping local communities with knowledge and practical skills to ensure the sustainable use of Lutembe Bay wetland while protecting its biodiversity, particularly the Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*). The workshops aimed to raise awareness of the ecological and socio-economic importance of wetlands, highlight the threats facing Lutembe Bay, and promote best conservation practices that balance livelihoods with environmental protection.

Key areas covered during the sensitization workshops included:

1. Importance of Wetlands. Educating participants on the ecological functions of wetlands, such as water filtration, flood control, carbon sequestration, and their role as breeding and feeding grounds for birds, including the Grey Crowned Crane.
2. Threats to Lutembe Bay Wetland. Discussing human-induced threats such as encroachment, pollution, unregulated harvesting of wetland resources, and climate change impacts that endanger the wetland ecosystem and its wildlife.
3. Sustainable Resource Utilization. Training participants on responsible wetland use, including sustainable fishing, controlled harvesting of papyrus and other plants, and eco-friendly agricultural practices that prevent wetland degradation.
4. Community-led Conservation Initiatives. Encouraging the formation of community wetland conservation groups, promoting alternative livelihood options such as beekeeping, ecotourism, and handicraft-making to reduce pressure on wetland resources.
5. Grey Crowned Crane Conservation. Highlighting the significance of the Grey Crowned Crane as a flagship species for wetland conservation, educating communities on its habitat needs, threats such as habitat loss and poaching, and actions they can take to protect it, such as reporting illegal activities and restoring degraded wetland areas.

6. Policy Awareness and Compliance. Informing participants about existing environmental laws and policies related to wetland protection, emphasizing the importance of compliance and community involvement in enforcement.

Through interactive discussions, visual presentations, and hands-on demonstrations, the workshops empowered community members with the knowledge and skills necessary to actively participate in the conservation of Lutembe Bay wetland and safeguard the future of the Grey Crowned Crane.

The activity spanned for one day, on 02nd May, 2025, encompassing participants from Lutembe, Bulonde and Nganjo village, totaling **25 individuals (16 Males:9 Females)** from the local community, specifically members of adjacent to the wetland, workers from the flower factory and local leaders and the invited Local government representative. The event commenced with an opening prayer, followed by introductions within respective village leaders. The village chairpersons formally welcomed everyone on behalf of the organizers, emphasizing the importance of community engagement in wildlife conservation efforts, particularly highlighting the conservation of the Grey Crowned Cranes project.

Participants were encouraged to actively engage in discussions, share experiences, and interact with facilitators. The meeting's objectives and agenda were outlined by the project coordinator and social representative, who also facilitated a session on various aspects of understanding wetland and grey crane conservation.



Photo 1: Community awareness meeting on sustainable wetland resource utilization and conservation practices for future generations. © Byron Ssemambo.

Table 1: showing how community members level of understanding was before the training

PRE-EVALUATION		Skills and Knowledge					
Participant	Why are wetlands important for the environment and local communities, and how do they support the Grey Crowned Crane?	What are the main threats to wetlands and the Grey Crowned Crane in your area, and what can be done to address them?	How can communities sustainably use wetland resources without degrading the habitat of the Grey Crowned Crane?	What traditional or local conservation practices exist that help protect wetlands and the species that depend on them?	What actions can you and your community take to contribute to the conservation of wetlands and the Grey Crowned Crane?	Total score	Average score
1	1	2	2	2	0	7	1.4
2	2	3	2	2	2	11	2.2
3	1	2	2	2	1	8	1.6
4	2	3	3	2	2	12	2.4
5	3	3	3	3	3	15	3
6	3	3	2	2	0	10	2
7	3	3	3	3	3	15	3
8	2	3	2	2	2	11	2.2
9	1	3	3	2	0	9	1.8
10	1	3	2	3	1	10	2
TOTAL						108	21.6
Overall average score							10.8

Table 3: showing how community members level of understanding was After the training

POST-EVALUATION		Skills and Knowledge					
Participant	Why are wetlands important for the environment and local communities, and how do they support the Grey Crowned Crane?	What are the main threats to wetlands and the Grey Crowned Crane in your area, and what can be done to address them?	How can communities sustainably use wetland resources without degrading the habitat of the Grey Crowned Crane?	What traditional or local conservation practices exist that help protect wetlands and the species that depend on them?	What actions can you and your community take to contribute to the conservation of wetlands and the Grey Crowned Crane?	Total score	Average score
1	2	3	2	3	3	13	2.6
2	3	3	3	3	3	15	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	15	3
4	3	3	3	3	3	15	3
5	3	3	3	3	1	12	2.4
6	3	3	3	3	3	15	3
7	2	2	2	2	2	10	2
8	3	3	3	3	3	15	3
9	3	3	3	3	2	14	2.8
10	2	2	3	3	3	13	2.6
Total						137	27.4
Overall average score							13.7

Overview of Pre and Post Evaluation

The pre and post evaluations were designed to measure the knowledge and skills of participants before and after the training session on the sustainable use of Lutembe Bay wetland while protecting its biodiversity, particularly the Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*). The evaluations helped to assess the effectiveness of the training and identify areas for improvement.

Pre-Training Evaluation: The pre-training evaluation measured the baseline knowledge and skills of the participants. Participants were asked to rank their knowledge on various aspects of wetland and grey crowned crane conservation using the following scale; Never=0, Not=1, Limited=2, and Very=3

Post-Training Evaluation: The post-training evaluation measured the knowledge and skills of the participants after the training. The same ranking scale was used to determine any changes in their understanding and capability to conserve wetlands and grey cranes.

Calculation Method

- Total Score: Sum of the numerical values assigned to each response for all participants.
- Average Score: Total Score divided by the number of questions.

Results Interpretation

Pre-Training Results

- The lower Total Scores and Average Scores indicated a limited initial knowledge and skills among participants regarding wetland and grey crowned cranes.
- The common Ranks indicated mostly 'Never' and 'Not', suggesting that participants had minimal or no prior exposure to the concepts and practices of wetland conservation.

Post-Training Results

- Higher Total Scores and Average Scores indicated an improvement in knowledge and skills among participants after the training.
- Common Ranks indicated a shift towards 'Limited' and 'Very', showing increased understanding and confidence in conserving wetlands and the grey crowned cranes.

The training was effective in enhancing the participants' knowledge and skills related to wetland and grey crowned cranes conservation. The increase in both Total Scores and Average Scores in the post-training evaluation demonstrated a positive impact of the training. Most participants moved from lower ranks ('Never' and 'Not') to higher ranks ('Limited' and 'Very'), indicating that they felt more knowledgeable and equipped to handle wetland conservation issues after the training. This analysis highlighted the importance of such educational initiatives in promoting awareness and practical skills for wetland conservation, ultimately contributing to better human-wildlife coexistence in the targeted villages.

Activity 2: Communication of Findings (May 2025): Sharing research findings with project stakeholders and local communities to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness about Grey Crowned Crane conservation

Following the sensitization workshops conducted in Lutembe Bay wetland, the project team undertook a second activity to communicate key research findings to project stakeholders and local communities. This initiative aimed to further enhance awareness of the conservation status

of the Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*), highlight ongoing threats, and reinforce the importance of community involvement in wetland protection.

The findings were shared through meetings and presentations, targeting local leaders, environmental organizations, local government representatives, sub-county representatives and community members. The project coordinator facilitated discussions, presenting data on the ecological significance of Lutembe Bay wetland, current anthropogenic threats, and community perceptions regarding conservation efforts.



Photo 2: Project Coordinator presenting research findings to key project stakeholders. © Byron Ssemambo.

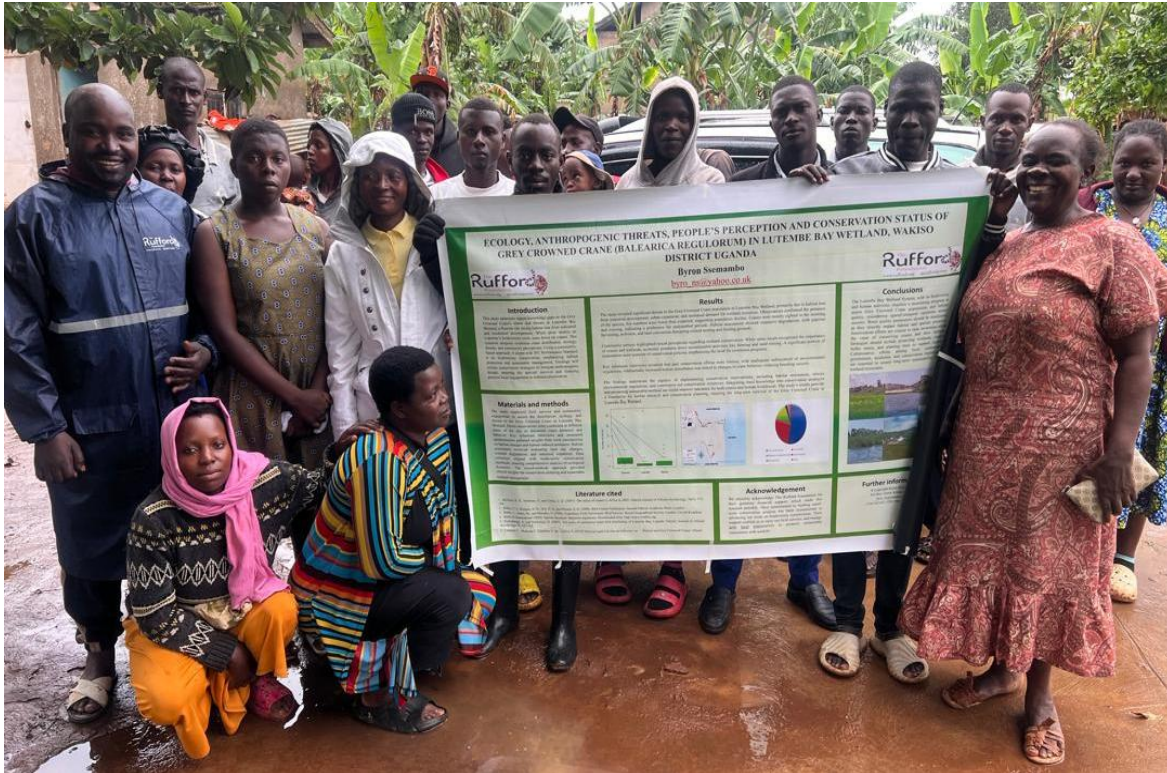


Photo 3: Key stakeholders being presented with research findings on Grey Crowned Crane conservation and sustainable wetland management in Lutembe Bay © Byron Ssemambo

Key outcomes

1. The sensitization workshops (Activity 1) led to a significant improvement in participants' understanding of wetland conservation and the Grey Crowned Crane's role in maintaining ecosystem health. Pre- and post-training evaluations showed a marked increase in knowledge and willingness to engage in conservation efforts.
2. Community members gained insights into sustainable resource utilization, including responsible fishing, regulated harvesting, and alternative livelihood strategies such as beekeeping and ecotourism.
3. Activity 2 facilitated meaningful dialogue between community representatives, conservationists, and policymakers. Stakeholders acknowledged the importance of integrating scientific research with traditional conservation practices.
4. The research findings provided a basis for evidence-based decision-making, guiding future conservation interventions in Lutembe Bay.
5. As a result of both activities, there was increased interest in forming local conservation groups to monitor and protect the wetland.
6. Stakeholders expressed commitment to advocating for wetland conservation policies and seeking partnerships to support sustainable development within the community.

7. The discussions reinforced the need for continued cooperation between conservation organizations, local communities, and government bodies.
8. The findings highlighted priority actions, including habitat restoration, awareness campaigns, providing livelihood alternatives for hunting and stricter enforcement of environmental policies.

Conclusion

The combined efforts of the sensitization workshops and research dissemination significantly contributed to raising awareness and fostering local engagement in wetland conservation. The project successfully educated community members on the importance of Lutembe Bay wetland and the threats facing the Grey Crowned Crane, empowering them to take an active role in conservation efforts.

Stakeholders acknowledged the importance of integrating conservation initiatives with sustainable development to ensure long-term protection of the wetland ecosystem. Moving forward, the project team will continue monitoring community involvement, supporting conservation groups, and advocating for policy measures that safeguard Lutembe Bay.

The findings from these activities will be instrumental in shaping future conservation strategies and ensuring that Lutembe Bay remains a vital habitat for the Grey Crowned Crane and other biodiversity. The next steps include compiling a final evaluation report form in June 2025 to assess the long-term impact of the initiatives and identify areas for further improvement.

Upcoming activities

1. *Completion and submission of the Final Evaluation Report Form June 2025*