

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Your name | Sam Muhumuza |
| Project title | Programme for Mobilisation of Community Wetland Defenders (CWD) in Kabarole District – Western Uganda |
| RSG reference | 7860-1 |
| Reporting period | August 2010 to August 2011 |
| Amount of grant | £5,954 |
| Your email address | muhumuzasam@gmail.com |
| Date of this report | 30 th March 2012 |

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

| Objective | Not achieved | Partially achieved | Fully achieved | Comments |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|---|
| To mobilise rural local communities in Kabarole District to conserve existing wetlands in their areas | | | ✓ | - Held meetings with leadership in 4 sub-counties in Kabarole district to rally their support towards wetland conservation |
| To reach out to the public through mass media with messages of usefulness of wetlands thus the need for their conservation | | | ✓ | - Utilised radio programmes and the national leading daily newspaper to advocate for wetland conservation as well as drama to reach out to the masses. |
| To establish a protective mechanism through wetland defenders | | | ✓ | - Mobilised and recruited 45 individuals to become local community wetland defenders |
| To draw attention of local and national leaders towards the protection of wetlands in their communities | | ✓ | | - Participated in sub-county and district council meetings to draw leaders' attention towards calling on their constituents to protect wetlands especially by popularising the National Wetland Policy. - The national leaders were not sufficiently involved, thus the partial achievement of this. |
| Mobilise communities utilising drama shows to sustainably utilise wetlands in their communities | | | ✓ | - Presented nine drama shows in the project area as an education and entertainment strategy to advise members on sustainable use of wetlands. |
| To organise coalitions and partnership of actors in the wetland conservation for purposes of synergising and realising greater impact | | | ✓ | - Through the Kabarole NGO/CBO network, worked with community self-help groups to spearhead a coalition of wetland conservation actors in Kabarole district. |
| To document and disseminate key lessons and best practices in regard to wetland protection by local communities | | | ✓ | - Presented key lessons and best practices in wetland conservation to the local leadership right from the parish, sub-county to the district level. |

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

- a. There was an increase in the cost of the project activities due to the inflation that was nationally experienced. This posed a challenge to the planned expenses though bulk purchasing of materials helped to ease on the problem.

- b. The political atmosphere during elections of leaders from the local up to the national level caused some interruption because of the associated excitement and this also required making additional mobilisation of new leaders who had just come into office. Though this was foreseen, it was still a disruption and challenging to the smooth operation of the project.
- c. Stiff resistance from wetland abusers and an attitude of indifference exhibited by some leaders led to challenges. Working with supportive leaders helped to improve on the acceptability of our project activities.
- d. Political Interference; whereas wetlands are held in trust by Central Government or Local Government for the common good of the people of Uganda, recent examples of wetland abuse have included cases where local authorities have been the very violators of this constitutional provision. Where this has happened, Central and Local Authorities have indicated that they converted wetlands for the sake of providing their communities with economic growth opportunities and for fighting poverty as per Government Policy (PEAP). It is therefore a dilemma that the very institutions entrusted with the protection of wetlands have in some cases did not assist the crusade for their conservation.

For example, in early 2011, His Excellency, the President while addressing investors opined that wetland protection is not a priority when it comes to development activities. This led to:

- Communities becoming more rebellious and uncooperative to the technical advice on wise use of wetlands that this project was promoting.
 - The agreed action plans for management and conservation of wetlands that had been drawn and agreed with the communities were disorganised when faced with wealthy community members who want to reclaim the wetlands.
 - More encroachment into other intact wetlands in the district and the region at large.
- e. There has been a tendency to commercialise self help initiatives where organisations pay allowances to participants of their programme activities. This led to some people requesting to be paid for participation in activities of this project. However, the project implementer clearly explained to the participants from the start and this openness helped to set the right expectations of everyone.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

The programme for mobilisation of community wetland defenders was conceived as an innovative mechanism to address the most critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in Kabarole District. The three key outcomes from the implementation of this project include:

- **Establishing a team of dedicated individuals in all the selected sub-counties to work towards conservation of wetlands in their area**

These have continued to carry out periodic community sensitisation and monitoring of wetlands to avoid abuse and thus respond to incidents concerning wetland activities in their area. During the project implementation, there were several incidents reported to the implementer who further worked with district and national bodies to restrain the abusers. This is probably due to increased awareness among the public about the wetland's laws and regulations. The major incidents recorded have involved drainage or reclamation of wetlands and their conversion into agricultural land.

Based on these experiences described above, the project has identified crucial issues in the field of compliance to the national wetland's policy:

- Further strengthening of these local community-based wetland defenders who need to work closely with the district by calling upon them to perform their roles as the decentralized managers of wetlands through training and provision of information;
- Further clarifying to the general public and local communities the procedures to follow in case of wetland abuses;
- Producing translated clear guidelines and widely distribute them for wetland system management, and resource management.

- **Documenting all the existing wetlands in Kabarole district**

Kabarole District is endowed with many wetland resources; most valleys are either waterlogged streams or swamps. The project identified and documented the following major wetlands; Muhoora, Saaka, Mujwankwanzi, Busanga, Kamutebe, Mugunu, Karamaga, Katokoma, Kyembogo, Mahoma, and Itara.

The project publicised and distributed this list to the community leaders, government officials and neighbouring communities advising them on each one's responsibility to protect these important natural resources. The documentation of these wetlands was based on a physical observation of all wetlands in the project area.

This involved making physical observations whereby sections of a wetland were observed, and its general characteristics recorded in a Wetland Observation Sheet and community wetland defenders would continue to look out these features in order to maintain them. The project implementer having established these wetlands called upon the district through meetings, radio talks and by direct petitioning to establish and implement a District Wetland Action Plan. This requires establishment of viable and feasible and sustainable management options.

In addition, Ntuuha theatre group (named after the crested crane which lives in wetlands) developed a play based upon the issues of natural resource use and conflict in Uganda. Nine performances of the drama and dance play were presented in the villages in Kabarole with an audience of over 1,500 people. These performances were followed by discussion groups in order to encourage awareness of wetland issues and their sustainable use.

- **Publicising wetland user rights and management acceptable to Uganda's National Wetland Policy**

It is worth noting that the Ugandan legislation, especially the Local Governments Act and the Land Act, devolved the powers for wetland management to the districts thus:

The Government or local government shall hold in trust for the people and protect natural lakes, rivers, ground water, natural ponds, natural streams, **wetlands**, forest reserves, national parks, and any other land reserved for ecological and touristic purposes for the common good of the citizens of Uganda.

This legislation gives ample possibilities for sustainable wetland management; however, from the project implementation process, a number of issues remained among the populace, notably:

- In order to be able to apply the law a legal definition for a wetland boundary has to be established. However, in the quest to establish these boundaries, we discovered that wetlands are not static ecosystems but expand and contract over the seasons and even over longer climatic cycles. In some cases, land-owners were even claiming that they have not encroached on a wetland but that the wetland has encroached on their land.
- Ownership of wetlands is a complex issue, which is variously interpreted by different stakeholders depending on their interest. Most of the permanent wetlands are situated on public land, and the clauses in the Constitution and the Land Act can be applied without delay.

However, many of the seasonal wetlands in the fringes of the permanent wetlands are under either communal customary or individual customary ownership. In addition, in some areas, wetlands are legally leased or owned by individuals, with deeds as proof. In those cases where a recognised form of ownership exists, it was not clear how the clauses in the Constitution and the Land Act should be interpreted. In addition, the question was how some of the principles of the National Wetlands Policy, for instance equitable distribution of resources, can be enforced in cases of individual ownership without infringing on other fundamental human rights.

These issues came up in most local level sensitisation workshops and trainings organised by the project. In order to clarify the ownership issues the project decided to widely distribute the National Wetland Policy and work with the National and District Environment bodies to clarify this. However, interpretation into numerous local dialects would further improve the situation and the project implementer foresees further working on this complicated matter in the coming time ahead.

- The issue of use and ownership is also important from the angle of developing management plans. Although the National Wetlands Policy gives some guidelines about sustainable wetland management, the existing legislation does not provide for a mechanism to grant specific user rights to communities or individuals who have developed acceptable management plans. As a result, wise users of wetlands are usually not protected from other unwise users who may disturb their management regime.

The project implementer during interface with the district explored means to address this issue by looking into the possibility of the district giving wetland custodianship to any group who has developed a sustainable wetland management plan. A model byelaw for this has commenced being developed in Kisomoro sub-county with inputs from the key wetland conservation stakeholders in the district.

Lessons have been learned from the experience of the past year of project activity implementation aimed at wetland management and conservation in Kabarole District.

- a. First and foremost, it must be recognised that this will have to be a long-term process of sustained and continued engagement with the public in order to realise lasting impact on wetland conservation in the project area and Uganda generally.
- b. The wetland conservation movement must rest on a solid knowledge base and a wide distribution of the results and success of this project has been envisaged and is already being done.
- c. Political and public interest must be engaged by using the right arguments: fact-based; logical; comprehensible and well presented.

- d. To some extent, wetland uses that involve some degree of modification of the original state of wetlands must be accepted as management options, subject to ensuring the maintenance of essential hydrological, ecological, or other system functions.
- e. Capacity for wetlands management and conservation must be built at all levels of society, and as many organisations as possible need to be co-opted for that purpose. Underpinning all initiatives must be a body of realistic policy and legislation which should be implemented by all stakeholders.

Therefore, from the aforementioned, the project achieved its ultimate goal of ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in Kabarole District by registering significant progress on the conservation and management of these important natural resources. But it is worth noting that these wetlands are by no means very secure. **Significant pressure on these and indeed all wetlands in Uganda continues unabated. The root causes of loss or degradation of wetlands remain very strong which calls for a sustained effort from all stakeholders to conserve them.**

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

This project set out to develop and extend methodologies for wetland resource management by local communities. This particularly involved the establishment, in collaboration with local communities, defense mechanisms against abuse as well as wetland wise use activities. The project also aimed at building up a knowledge base on local wetland management principles, which can be replicated on a wider scale throughout the country.

At the onset, the communities were involved through participating in planning, implementation, management as well as monitoring and evaluation of all the project activities. Local community sensitization meetings and training activities were particularly meant and organised for their benefit. It is worth noting that at the community level, many wetlands were common property areas, set aside for edge cultivation, fishing, grazing and harvesting of natural products for craft making. Community regulations for use of the permanent wetlands and the grazing areas stipulated free access and user rights for all community members.

Exclusivity only started to be exerted when the value of wetlands increased, due to new opportunities like upland rice cultivation, and dairy farming. In the process, the original 'owners' turned their valley bottoms into farms. People with no user rights lost their access to the wetland and its resources and this project used this discontent to rally these sections of the community who had taken a keen interest in the project's activities with a view to protecting the resources they still consider their own.

The development of specific wetland action plans was done by actively engaging communities in collaboration with the local leadership. This has strengthened the capacity of the communities to develop their own local knowledge and empowered them to contribute to the planning and management of natural resources in the area.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

During the project implementation the numerous assessments by the project implementer, showed knowledge and understanding of wetland issues was high among the trained community wetland defenders. However, continuous follow-up and support supervision of the management committees is needed in order not to lose the momentum created by the activities.

Consultations with stakeholders at district and local levels undertaken during implementation of the project activities evoked repeated confirmation of the importance of high levels of public awareness raising activities. Awareness provides the background against which policies and decisions affecting the state of wetlands can be made, presented, assessed - and accepted or rejected. Awareness empowers and enables people who live by and with wetlands to ensure that they use them more wisely, and to take responsibility for their own and their community's actions in relation to wetlands and their resources: awareness is a prerequisite for community-based regulation and administration of wetlands resource use.

In order to pursue the above goal of further building on the momentum of this project, the project implementer will:

Carry out targeted awareness campaigns, using messages and media appropriate to specific target audiences especially schools.

Specifically target the introduction and support of wetlands conservation activities in primary and secondary schools especially the formation of wetland clubs in all schools of Kabarole district.

The project implementer will continue the awareness campaigns, taking care to identify target audiences and to tailor approaches and methods appropriately. While some of the awareness-raising effort will be aimed at the public in general, much will be specifically targeted. Specific target audiences would include:

- Senior officers in relevant government agencies.
- Politicians at national and local levels.
- Chief executives and senior managers of parastatals and corporations whose activities are closely related with environmental and wetlands issues – such as Uganda Investment Authority, National Environment Management Authority to mention a few.
- Local government officials, chiefs, opinion leaders.
- Private investors and private sector operators.
- Radio and television, newspapers, and other media.

The campaigns will continue to use methods and approaches, which have been developed, tried and tested by the implementer in the past. These include:

- Production and display of posters.
- Dissemination of the National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetland Resources and this will now be translated into Rutoro; the main local dialect.
- Public debates.
- Sensitisation workshops.
- Radio talk shows.
- Newspaper opinions.
- Participation in national and international days, especially World Wetlands Day.
- Coalescing and partnering with other actors in wetland conservation to synergise our efforts for greater impact of our activities.

The District Chairman of Kabarole, Mr. Richard Rwabuhinga a passionate and active promoter and supporter of this project has committed himself and the line district staff to continue especially with following up the structures the project has established such as community wetland defenders, action plans for conservation and management of wetlands to mention a few.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

There are a number of strategies that have been devised to disseminate the results and best practices arising from the implementation of this innovative project. Key among the strategies include:

- a. Using electronic media including sending emails to national, district, local and community leaders in order to send out the results and best practices of the project.
- b. The project implementers have now registered a not-for-profit community-based organisation, Rwenzori Community Development Foundation (RCDF) that is aimed at furthering the work of this project. A website will be developed in the coming few weeks where the results will be shared. It will be enabled for interactivity where individuals can ask questions, make suggestion and subscribe for updates in the wetland conservation sector.
- c. An abridged report highlighting the results and recommendation has also been printed and sent to leaders within the project area as well as the local government leaders of Kabarole district.
- d. Immediately after completion of implementation of the project, Sam Muhumuza was honoured with a selection for participation in the Community Solutions Program; a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the United States Department of State and implemented by IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board). Based in Washington DC, he was able to share experiences at the DC Greenworks in the United States. The Community Solutions Program has also offered a crucial forum of sharing important experiences in the environmental conservation field.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The RSG was used from the commencement of the project in August 2010 to its conclusion at the end of July 2011,

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

| Item | Budgeted Amount | Actual Amount | Difference | Comments |
|---|-----------------|---------------|------------|---|
| Activity 1: Community mobilisation meetings with local leaders | | | | |
| (a) Stationery | | | | |
| (i) Notebooks | 41.38 | 42.40 | (1.02) | |
| (ii) Pens | 6.90 | 7.68 | (0.78) | |
| (iii) Flip chart papers | 20.69 | 21.20 | (0.51) | |
| (iv) Markers | 15.17 | 15.55 | (0.37) | |
| (b) Radio Announcements | 6.21 | 10.75 | (4.55) | |
| (c) Lunch for facilitator | 62.07 | 55.30 | 6.77 | Increased food prices were experienced nationally |
| (d) Transport for facilitator | 82.76 | 73.73 | 9.03 | Fuel prices were hiked during the project |

| | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--|
| Subtotal | 235.17 | 226.61 | 8.57 | |
| Activity 2: Meetings to review, develop and translate Wetland Conservation messages | | | | |
| (a) Stationery | 86.21 | 86.02 | 0.19 | |
| (b) Lunch for technical persons | 217.24 | 222.43 | (5.19) | |
| (c) Transport for technical persons | 289.66 | 288.79 | 0.87 | Fuel prices were hiked during the project |
| Subtotal | 593.10 | 597.24 | (4.13) | |
| Activity 3: Pre-testing and Printing of Short messages on Wetland Conservation | | | | |
| (a) Printing pre-test copies | 15.52 | 16.90 | (1.38) | |
| (b) Printing cost (Final copy of Flier) | 206.90 | 199.69 | 7.20 | High printing costs due inflation |
| (b) Printing cost (Final copy of Calendar - 2011) | 206.90 | 199.69 | 7.20 | High printing costs due inflation |
| (b) Printing cost (T-Shirts) | 689.66 | 706.61 | (16.95) | |
| (c) Facilitators lunch | 31.03 | 27.65 | 3.38 | Increased food prices was experienced nationally |
| (d) Stationery (Pens, notebooks etc) | 17.24 | 16.90 | 0.34 | Marginal price increase |
| (e) Transport for facilitators | 20.69 | 18.43 | 2.26 | High fuel costs experienced |
| Subtotal | 1187.93 | 1,185.87 | 2.06 | |
| Activity 4: Community awareness activities on wetland conservation | | | | |
| (a) Stationery | | | | |
| (i) Notebooks | 134.48 | 135.18 | (0.69) | |
| (ii) Pens | 20.69 | 19.97 | 0.72 | Inflation affected prices |
| (iii) Flip chart papers | 82.76 | 70.66 | 12.10 | Inflation affected prices |
| (iv) Markers | 33.10 | 33.79 | (0.69) | |
| (v) Demonstration Materials | 86.21 | 72.20 | 14.01 | Inflation affected prices |
| (b) Communication | | | | |
| (i) Radio Announcements | 41.38 | 41.47 | (0.10) | |
| (ii) Telephone Airtime | 27.59 | 24.58 | 3.01 | Inflation affected prices |
| (c) Refreshments for Participants (Soft drink) | 179.31 | 178.19 | 1.12 | Inflation affected prices |
| (c) Facilitators lunch | 62.07 | 55.30 | 6.77 | Inflation affected prices |
| (d) Transport for facilitators | 82.76 | 73.73 | 9.03 | Fuel prices increased |
| Subtotal | 750.34 | 705.07 | 45.28 | |
| Activity 5: Training Community Wetland Defenders (CWDs) | | | | |
| (a) Stationery | | | | |
| (i) Notebooks | 20.69 | 21.20 | (0.51) | |
| (ii) Pens | 3.45 | 3.99 | (0.55) | |
| (iii) Flip chart papers | 5.17 | 5.53 | (0.36) | |
| (iv) Markers | 4.14 | 4.30 | (0.16) | |
| (v) Hard cover books | 248.28 | 245.78 | 2.50 | Inflation affected prices |
| (b) T-Shirts for CWD | 331.03 | 353.30 | (22.27) | |
| (c) Handbag for CWD | 413.79 | 414.75 | (0.95) | |
| (d) Communication (Telephone Airtime) | 6.90 | 6.14 | 0.75 | Inflation affected prices |

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| (d) Refreshments for participants | 68.97 | 119.82 | (50.85) | |
| (e) Facilitators lunch | 103.45 | 92.17 | 11.28 | Inflation affected prices |
| (f) Facilitators transport | 137.93 | 122.89 | 15.04 | Fuel prices increased |
| Subtotal | 1,344 | 1,389.86 | (46.07) | |
| Activity 6: Conduct radio programs to reach the wider masses | | | | |
| (a) Airtime on Radio | 397.24 | 353.92 | 43.32 | Inflation led to increase in prices |
| (b) Communication (Telephone Airtime) | 10.34 | 15.36 | (5.02) | |
| (b) Transport for program panelist | 248.28 | 221.20 | 27.08 | Fuel prices increased |
| Subtotal | 655.86 | 590.48 | 65.39 | |
| Activity 7: Develop drama messages and hold drama shows | | | | |
| (a) Refreshments for drama actors | 206.90 | 211.98 | (5.09) | |
| (b) T-shirts with catch words for publicity and motivation | 77.59 | 110.60 | (33.01) | |
| (c) Transport to the venues | 248.28 | 273.43 | (25.15) | |
| (d) Airtime for communication | 30.34 | 27.04 | 3.31 | Inflation led to increase in prices |
| Subtotal | 563.10 | 623.04 | (59.94) | |
| Activity 8: Field support supervision, monitoring and evaluation | | | | |
| (a) Stationery | 34.48 | 41.47 | (6.99) | |
| (b) Transport | 206.90 | 211.98 | (5.09) | |
| (c) Lunch | 155.17 | 158.99 | (3.81) | |
| (d) Communication (Telephone Airtime) | 8.97 | 12.29 | (3.32) | |
| Subtotal | 405.52 | 424.73 | (19.21) | |
| Activity 9: Compile reports | | | | |
| (a) Stationery | 218.90 | 182.80 | 36.10 | General inflation affected prices |
| Subtotal | 218.90 | 182.80 | 36.10 | |
| | | | | |
| Grand Total | 5,953.72 | 5,925.68 | 28.04 | |

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The project implementation has generated a lot of enthusiasm among the highly motivated local community members, local leaders, wetland conservation actors to mention a few. There is need to maintain this momentum among all the stakeholders through:

- a. Following up on the inventoried wetlands in the whole district to ensure compliance with National wetland policy by all the users and collaborating with the national wetland conservation bodies to demarcate boundaries for effective conservation and management of these important natural resources.
- b. Assist local communities and district to follow up on wetlands action plans by the community wetland defenders.
- c. Further improve methodologies for community operations and management of wetlands.

- d. Further investigate wetland uses and management systems, including strengths and weaknesses.
- e. Develop with stakeholder's measures for improvements in resource use and associated sustainable management systems.
- f. Widely distribute guidelines to all the relevant authorities/stakeholders.
- g. Organise appropriate training for authorities/stakeholders in wetland resource use and management for those who missed on the current project's training activities.
- h. Further production and distribution of awareness materials (including popular versions of national wetlands policy in local language).
- i. Incorporating more NGOs in awareness programme especially those involved with livelihood promotion programs which have a big impact on wetlands.
- j. Expansion of the youth and school programme for awareness raising and environmental monitoring activities due to the possibility for long-term change and behaviour change for the next generation.
- k. Build capacity of Rwenzori Community Development Foundation to implement wetland conservation programs reaching a wider audience.

The implementer will therefore apply for the 2nd Rufford Small Grant in order to continue working toward the realisation of the above.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The RSGF logo was used on all the project documents and materials that were developed and distributed including calendars, t-shirts, posters and leaflets. The RSGF logo was also printed on all letters and communication that involved the project work with the beneficiaries including invitation letters to events, brief on project results and final report.

RSGF also received publicity through special mentioning and expression of gratitude during talk shows. RSGF was also mentioned whenever the implementer wrote opinion articles in newspapers a sample that was carried in Uganda's leading daily: <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/459/740335>

11. Any other comments?

Suggestion

Need to strengthen a network of RSG grantees within the country for purposes of collaboration on related activities, experience sharing and collective mentoring of new grantees. There is an existing willingness amongst all grantees which needs to be further pursued.

Acknowledgement:

The implementation of this project has been through concerted effort with Kabarole District Environment Department, various local administrations and individuals at district and community levels, the Rufford Small Grants for Nature Conservation and Sam Muhumuza, the grantee. As the key project implementer, Sam Muhumuza would like to express his utmost appreciation and gratitude to all institutions and individuals who have contributed to the achievements of all the successes. And to Rufford Small Grants for Nature Conservation, thank you so much for enabling this project to register all the successes it did.