

## **Project Update: October 2015**

### **Introduction**

This project is currently being implemented in Kajulu escarpment, an area in the upstream of Dunga papyrus swamp, one of Kenya's important biodiversity areas. Kajulu is endowed with important springs that contribute immensely to the status of downstream wetland ecosystems. Anthropogenic activities upstream pose a threat to both upstream and downstream ecosystems and this project was designed to intervene against these. In the ninth month of this project, we report on various implemented activities and impacts so far realized from the initially stated objectives. The initial stated objectives were as follows;

- i. To improve local intervention and sustainable management of upstream and downstream ecosystems through a sustained climate change education on importance of these ecosystems in impact mitigation.
- ii. To increase local households participation in curbing main causes of deforestation in the upstream forest ecosystems through promoting poverty alleviation initiatives for improved quality of life.
- iii. To strengthen local participation in sustainable agriculture through improving knowledge on best alternatives.
- iv. To improve target groups' participation in micro- finance projects through enabling accessibility to cheap loans by establishing a revolving fund.

This update reports on progress for the second and third quarter of the project implementation. The first quarter of this project ended in February 2015. The second quarter sought to build on the activities in the first phase while also starting to implement new activities and seeking strategic partnerships for future engagements to meet the above objectives.

The following new activities were implemented:

#### **Trainings for school club leaders**

Three schools are currently involved in active conservation of Kajulu escarpment through reforestation. These are Oriang, Nyabondo primary and Okok secondary schools. Involvement of the schools was enabled through training of five pupils and one teacher from each school on leadership for environmental and wildlife clubs. The training targeted to establish the schools as learning centres for proper sustainable community based management of Kajulu environment as a catchment area. The three schools have currently established tree nurseries, organic vegetable gardens and have also planted trees in the schools and partly on surrounding communal spaces. One of the schools already has a water harvesting pan and tank as a demonstration on water conservation.

#### **Climate Change Advocacy**

Through the trained community and school leaders, we have set up a mechanism for enhancing awareness and action on climate change locally. Through the school clubs, the students are creating awareness and advocating for responsibility for the local environment and actions that inhibit effects of climate change. This has realised planting of more than 5000 tree seedlings in the three schools. The community leaders are also currently creating awareness on roles of every community member in being responsible for environmental natural resources through reforestation and upholding practices that contribute to natural resources conservation. A programme has been informally established by these

trainers who pay visits to individual farms to inspect actions towards inhibiting climate change and advising accordingly. Approaches employed by trained community leaders include talks to local groups and community gatherings at local chief meetings (“barazas”). Through these school and community

### **Extension Education**

To enhance education and awareness on sustainable living, 20 various leaders trained as trainers within this project have been encouraged and supported to work with various community groups in the energy and farming sectors locally. These with guidance from local government extension agricultural officers have been visiting farms to provide practical knowledge to local land users to promote vegetation cover conservation through sharing knowledge on conservation farming and other skills that enhance ecosystems preservation thus ecosystem sustenance and climate change adoption.

### **Community Enterprise Products Marketing**

Many individuals and groups influenced by this project are already involved in various enterprises like artisans in sustainable energy, Agroforestry and agribusiness. To help in facilitating trade that benefits these community, we started a marketing venture for their initiatives. We have helped them set up two social media pages on Facebook and Twitter, linked them up to strategic partners for product access, helped them participate in three exhibitions to showcase products and are in the process of developing a poster to enhance marketing.

### **Revolving Fund Establishment**

To promote nature based micro enterprises within Kajulu as had initially been anticipated, we shared knowledge on how the fund was to work with various trained enterprise groups. The initial plan sought to support individuals and groups that exhibited strong interest and ability to start one or more of the enterprises proposed by this project in the fields of sustainable energy, agroforestry and beekeeping. Six meetings have been held to agree on how the fund will support beneficiaries and a committee to disburse this fund has been established. Terms of reference for the operation of the fund has been set. Kshs 50,000 has been set aside as seed money. So far, only two groups and one individual have benefited from initial disbursement and repayment has not started yet. First repayment begins at end of September before new borrowers are accepted.

### **Reforestation program**

Through the established six tree nurseries (three within Nyabondo, Okok and Kadero sublocations and three in the mentioned schools), we have planted more than 30,000 tree seedlings on private land and close to 7,000 on communal land within Kajulu. We have also aside from the six nurseries belonging to groups helped establish four more nurseries for individual practitioners within the community as enterprises and opportunities for rehabilitation of Kajulu escarpment.

### **Sustainable Agriculture**

We have worked with farmers to promote agriculture that enhances environmental protection. As a result of the trainings, 18 kitchen gardens have been established by local people thus saving wild vegetation and more are being established. More vegetables and indigenous crops are currently being produced through environmentally safe agriculture thus also helping to enhance food security and saving ecosystems.

### **School outreaches**

As a follow up to initial school visits to Orian'g Nyabondo and Okok local schools, we have made follow up activities to these schools to meet established environmental club members for environmental education outreaches. Talks and videos have been used to educate more than 200 young pupils with the assistance of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya mobile education unit.

### **Water Conservation**

We have rehabilitated two streams in the upstream Nyabondo. This is an attempt to improve water flow into downstream ecosystems which had been deprived of this important resource due to obstruction caused by upstream anthropogenic activities. Water in these streams wasn't flowing. Repair of these streams provided an opportunity for education to the user groups on importance of water conservation as an important resource for people, ecosystems and biodiversity.

### **Impacts**

New known cases of number of young men currently practicing agroforestry influenced by this project is six. This is just a lower estimate from those known to directly interact by the project while there are those that have not been surveyed. Other partners have also started new similar initiatives which has been influenced by this project e.g. WCK and ministries of environment, agriculture and Lake Victoria Environmental Management Program starting to work with our community partners. Three of the community trainers on sustainable energy trained by this project have been using the knowledge to build energy stoves around the Kajulu villages and have even started getting bigger contracts from other community groups outside of their area. They have thus concentrated their efforts into this enterprise as opposed to sand harvesting and unsustainable farm practices. Though not anticipated, some of our trainees have even gone further to gain more knowledge and are constructing community rocket stoves for homes. Knowledge on rocket stoves had not been included in as part of the trainings we organised. This ambition has opened a new challenge front for the project team and partners. Other partners like JIVEP, WCK and Impact Adventure travel agency have also been actively involved in enhancing capacity of local actors and providing business opportunities for those already involved in sustainable enterprises.

### **Challenges**

- The model projects in schools most times encountering destruction from free ranging domestic livestock. Most of these schools don't have good security fence lines and are prone to intrusion especially during school holidays. The school administrations have plans to buy a chain link to enhance restriction of intruders but we are also seeking help from partners to support the fencing initiative.
- Most community members interested to benefit from the revolving fund have not demonstrated clear understanding of the concept as a means to enterprise and hence conservation promotion. Some of the applying individuals don't have convincing ideas and when they are rejected feel bitter and politicize the whole thing making it hard to administer. We empathize with such and try to make individual visits to groups with such individuals to "re-explain" the idea behind the fund.
- The major co funding anticipated to compliment this grant from government agencies have been delayed despite acceptance of the idea. This has been blamed on government bureaucracy. We have not given up helping the applicant community groups from following up.

- The latest schools strike in Kenya has affected one of our school programmes which has kept the clubs out of schools. The club patrons however have been organising for club members occasional project visits through a duty roster.
- We have realised that we cannot implement all the proposed activities due to inadequate funding until all the partners can remit their pledges.
- One of the small setbacks I experienced amidst a too much to do was misplacing my main camera's cable. We have so many nice pictures which are yet to be downloaded onto my computer fortunately most project team members also utilized their phones to take photos which we have used for this report.

### **Future Plans**

Poster production; we finally have all the information and photos needed to market the various community enterprises established by this project. We plan to do this through a poster we have scheduled to produce. We also plan to have the revolving fund consolidated among various groups for conservation so that it can grow to promote awareness on the urge for conservation both in Kajulu and downstream ecosystems mainly Dunga wetland.

### **Conclusion**

Despite various challenges in implementation from community politics to partners delaying pledges, this project has grown significantly in terms of creating awareness on the need to the community in Kajulu being involved in activities that inhibit destruction of nature. So far a lot of awareness has increased on climate change and many homesteads have and continue to adopt sustainable living measures as they influence each other to adopt the measures. The revolving fund so far seems to have a chance to trigger urge for enterprise that will lead to serious conservation out come in the near future judging from the interest of not only the community groups involved but also from our conservation and development partners. The fund could be the wheel onto which sustainable enterprise that supports future biodiversity conservation within these linked ecosystems will thrive.

### **Photographs from the Project**



Left: A tree nursery by Oria'ng Primary School. Right: Establishment of tree nurseries





Top: Climate change Outreaches to schools and Community groups. Middle Left: Joint school discussions on Climate Change and possible actions. Middle Right: Group photo after a training organised by the WIGOT energy resources use trainers. Bottom Left: Homemade briquettes helping household to save money and trees. Bottom Right: Learning how to make gurney bags for maximum land utilization.





Top Left: Maximizing land use through kitchen gardens helping household to have sufficient food, save money and conserve soil. Top Right: One of the extension education sessions through farm visits. Middle Left: One of the successful cases. Middle Right: Practical training for local groups by the established group of trainers. Bottom Left: Ready fresh vegetables for harvest. Bottom Middle & Right: Reducing fertilizer deposits to downstream ecosystems.