

Project Update: January 2008

Lessons from Integrated Conservation and Community Empowerment for sustainable management of Mabamba Bay Wetland system (ICCE) and Poverty Alleviation and Health Care Promotion through conservation (PHPC) projects: - implemented by Nature Palace Foundation with support from Rufford Small Grants for Nature Conservation and BGCI/Investing in Nature Programme respectively.

About the Projects:

The Integrated Conservation & community Empowerment for sustainable management of Mabamba bay wetland System (ICCE) project aims at Promoting community participation and support in conservation and wise use of Mabamba Bay Wetland of International Importance Project, through community organizing; sustainable resource-based and alternative income generating activities; and, an effective information system. This to lead to protection of the globally-threatened Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*), approximately 38% of the global population of the Blue Swallow (*Hirundo atrocaerulea*), and the globally-threatened Papyrus Yellow Warbler plus other birds of global conservation concern. The project also targets the protection of rare plant species like *Scadoxus* species and to lay a foundation for future conservation programs for Mabamba Ramsar site.

The ICCE project is implemented in Mabamba/Zziba along Mabamba Bay Wetland system. Project Components include a Community Environmental education Program and an Eco-tourism Centre which has an Eco-tourism Information Centre, Nature school/Campsite and Souvenir shop

The Poverty Alleviation and Health care Promotion through Conservation (PHPC) project aims at strengthening community collaboration through joint strategic planning with a focus of cultivating essential medicinal plants for income and health promotion at household level. This project involves Training in various aspects of Medicinal plants, their propagation and multiplication as well as awareness creation. The PHPC is implemented in Sokolo Parish where the targeted beneficiaries are basically subsistence farmers.

Philosophy: The guiding Principle is building on existing knowledge and guiding participants to understand the problem and come out with solutions

Key Concepts reciprocated into approaches employed in project implementation. Please find details text:

- Indigenous knowledge documentation and sharing as key to sustainable conservation programs
- Frequent and on-going Data collection to monitor change and facilitate self-assessment
- Fact sheets for school children and community members to promote Environment Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
- Popular participation through Community Organizing and involvement to promote sustainability and ownership.

- Pro-poor Sustainable tourism for Biodiversity Conservation and upholding community Benefit
- Alternative environmentally friendly income generating projects to reduce pressure on sensitive resources
- Nature school approach to inculcate love for nature.
- Value addition to improve Income and fight poverty – a major enemy of the environment.

1. Approaches:

1.1 Popular participation through Community organizing and involvement to promote sustainability and ownership Community organising into development/conservation groups helps effective implementation of activities through:

1. Easier and effective flow of information;
2. Easier and better mobilisation;
3. Developing a sense of belonging and visioning a common cause;
4. Better recognition and developing a common voice.

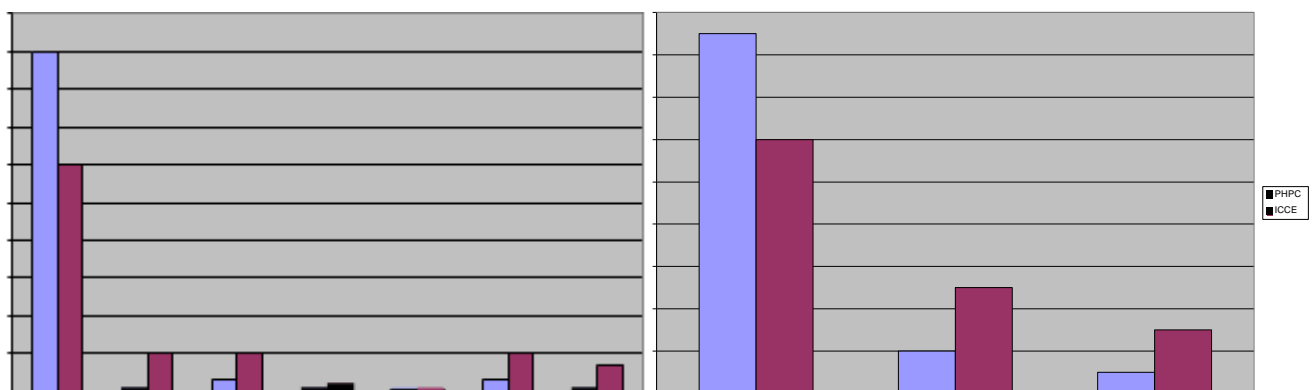
Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism Association – MWETA, constituted by three smaller associations: Zziba Wetland management Association (ZIWEMA), Mabamba Bird Guides Association and Mabamba Wetland Conservation Association (MAWECA); and, Tweekembe Herbal Medicine promoters Association are two umbrella associations the projects are working with.

1.2 Community Meetings and Group Education Sessions

For Awareness and Sensitization Community Meetings are effective because a message is passed over a wider layer of the Community at a single time. However, for more detailed education programs, smaller groups are more effective.

1.3 Participant Composition:

The projects used the prodigy that in natural resources management, it is better to target all categories of people since they all have an important part to play in both the destruction as well as restoration of Natural resources. Practically, however, participation varies as shown below:



- Women are primarily targeted because they suffer most from the consequences of Natural Resources degradation
- Men are targeted because in most cases they effect mass destruction of Natural Resources through their economic activities
- Young children are targeted because of the need to inculcate a sense of biodiversity conservation and love for nature when they are still young

2.0 Indigenous knowledge documentation and sharing as key to sustainable conservation programs

Information sharing is very important both for local and International stakeholders. For local people in neighbouring communities, their indigenous knowledge is documented and shared within the communities as well as with other national and International stakeholders. This will help the community realise and appreciate themselves as important stakeholders in the conservation of important Natural Resources like Mabamba Ramsar site.

For visitors the information centre acts as a receiving centre on top of providing useful information about the resource. Internet connectivity, which we hope to get in the near future, will help in facilitating quicker information sharing.

Documentation is carried out using two major ways: volunteers at the Information centre and through documentation workshops organised for interaction and sharing between scholars and the indigenous people.

3.0 Frequent and on-going Data collection to monitor change and facilitate self-assessment

The volunteers at Mabamba Information Centre help in frequent and on-going data collection. This is done at the centre as well as in outreaches to communities and important resource niches e.g. Tourist spots, breeding areas etc.

4.0 Fact sheets for school children and community members to promote Environment Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Fact sheets provide information to a broad spectrum of people. Young people can learn about importance of different species of plants and other life. For example medicinal values of plants. Other community members can also learn many things from fact sheets for example what the meaning of a Ramsar site is, how environment protection can bring about sustainable development etc... Fact sheets on well documented indigenous knowledge are also very useful for Environment education.

5.0 Pro-poor Sustainable tourism for Biodiversity Conservation and uphold community Benefit:

Pro-poor sustainable tourism ensures that part of the income earned through tourism is targeted at poverty reduction within the community. This acts as a motivation factor to community members to embrace conservation programs and favour the tourism activity, which in turn results into better resource conservation hence better sustainability.

Tourists need many things: a place to stay, things to do and see, food, services and souvenirs etc. the project therefore used these as entry points for community involvement and benefit promotion. The project used an approach of focusing on existing flows of tourism and community involvement that is to team up with the private sector (tour operators) to achieve pro-poor and sustainable tourism.

6.0 Alternative environmentally friendly income generating projects to reduce pressure on sensitive resources:

In order to achieve community support in conservation of any protected area, there is need for alternative benefits to compensate for what the community may view as lost opportunities due to the designation of a resource as a protected area. Skills in alternative Income generating opportunities are one way which needs to be complemented by other social amenities. These are, however, integrated with wise-use messages and skills.

7.0 Value addition to improve Income and fight poverty – a major enemy of the environment

As one way of raising household incomes, value addition helps the participants to raise more income from their products. For example one of the groups Twekembe Herbal medicine promoters Association is involved in the processing of the medicinal products they harvest from their gardens to add value as well as preserving them. They have opened up a distribution centre where they sell their herbal products mainly to local population. They however have not reached the required standards because of lack of basic equipment.

8.0 Nature school approach to inculcate love for nature

A Nature School is a 'school' without 'walls' but natural surroundings mainly in form of floral species (mini-botanic garden). Community members and school children learn to appreciate natural resources when they visit, sit, relax or have an education session in a well organised and tended natural environment. The project is developing a Nature school which will be used for community meetings, education sessions and may also be used for camping for eco-tourists. The floral species will be labelled with name tags and/or uses e.g. medicinal values.

9.0 Part of the Nature School being developed

Lessons Learnt:

1. The community's recognition of the importance of a protected area is key to the success of conservation programs of protected areas like Mabamba Ramsar site. Participation of community members in conservation programs is equally important, and ensures sustainability of interventions put in place since community members can takeover and sustain these interventions even after the end of the project life.

However, the community's willingness and participation depends on how the community appreciates the status of a protected area by way of alternative benefits.

2. Community organising into development group's help them access support and recognition as compared to when they remain as individuals.
3. Physical Models Nature Conservation e.g. Nature school/mini-botanic garden are effective in changing people's attitudes towards conservation. People appreciate more the messages on conservation when they are sitting in a natural environment.

Major Challenges:

1. Lack of Hydro-electric power:
2. Insufficient equipment: So far the project has only one computer. The centre requires at least three more computers, a heavy duty printer, and photocopier in order to be in position to carry out complete documentation.
3. Limited funds to implement project activities. . Essential requirements:
4. Further Training of volunteers
5. Internet Connectivity.
6. Resource mobilization for proper implementation of all project activities.