

Wildlife Conservation Society- Rwanda Program

Program description

Title: Community Enterprise Development

Funded by: PIC, Ruttenger, USAID, GEF / PAB

Partner institutions: RDB, Districts, RCA, REDO

Overall term: 2008 to 2014

Contact: Vincent Hakizimana - Beekeeping Officer; Médiatrice Bana- Sustainable Conservation Financing Officer

Context: Nyungwe National Park protects an area that contains a wealth of natural resources that are important to the livelihoods of surrounding communities, including honey, bamboo and trees for timber, firewood, wildlife and minerals. Nyungwe Forest also acts as the water catchment for about 70% of Rwanda. Owing to the immense pressure from the densely populated surrounding area, Nyungwe faces many major threats. Forest fires from unsustainable beekeeping, poaching, and bamboo and tree cutting are the most damaging and immediate threats.

Effective conservation of Nyungwe National Park is dependent on meeting the needs of surrounding communities, their ability to benefit from the park, and sustainable use of natural resources inside and outside the park. The Community Enterprise Development Initiative aims to improve and increase livelihood opportunities for local communities by ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources that are vital to local livelihood improvement and thus effective conservation of the Nyungwe landscape.

Objectives of the program:

Reduce the pressure of surrounding populations on Nyungwe National Park while simultaneously improving local livelihoods, specifically by achieving the following objectives:

- Develop viable enterprises that link conservation and community livelihood improvement, and contribute to sustainable conservation of Nyungwe National Park.
- Introduce sustainable alternatives to natural resource use in the area surrounding Nyungwe National Park.

Approach:

The Community Enterprise Development Initiative uses a threats-based approach in identifying enterprises that are conservation related and strive for improved livelihoods. Beneficiaries are identified and educated on biodiversity threats and impacts. Beneficiaries then collaborate to strategize ways of addressing the threats while meeting their needs. A

major strategy throughout this process is to focus on the capacity building of mobilized beneficiaries in:

- Technical and business skills
- Provision of equipment and infrastructure
- Development of institutional capacity

Achieved Results:

Beekeeping Cooperatives, Sales and Marketing

To more efficiently collect, process, package, label, and market bee products, the Ubwiza bwa Nyungwe Honey Processing and Sales Center was built and handed over to Nyungwe's beekeeping cooperatives. Furthermore, Ubwiza bwa Nyungwe Beekeeper Union, a union of 13 legally registered beekeeper's cooperatives around Nyungwe National Park was formed to:

- Coordinate and manage production and marketing,
- Run and manage the honey processing and sales center,
- Provide beekeeping equipment and build the capacity of new and existing beekeeping cooperatives, and
- Facilitate collaboration between beekeepers and NNP conservation efforts.

The following results highlight efforts to improve the capacity of beekeepers:

- Production of beekeeping training manual
- Training of beekeeping manual educators
- Training of the Union's committee members in project planning, management, monitoring and evaluation, proposal development, business planning and marketing
- Training of beekeeper cooperatives in cooperative management and technical and financial skills
- Provision of beekeeping equipment to participating cooperatives
- Diversification and expansion of bee products
- Development of beekeeping business plan and marketing strategy

The project has also increased the quantity and improved the quality of honey produced while increasing marketing opportunities:

- Ubuzima Honey and Ubuzima candles certified by Rwanda Bureau of Standards and marketed nationally through various sales outlets including tourist lodges such as Nyungwe Forest Lodge
- Production of advertising materials and literature for awareness raising and marketing detailing health, production and processing information, including a list of native flowers pollinated by the bees
- Participation in local and international trade fairs in Rwanda and Zambia to market Ubuzima Honey and bee products

- Ubuzima Honey won national awards for quality in 2011

Banda Women Handcraft Association

WCS supported the building of a small village building for women making baskets, and improved their capacity to make quality products that are now sold locally and in the United States. Since this project began, wood collection from Nyungwe National Park by the basket makers has been reduced by 85%.

Energy Saving Cooking Stoves Project

A baseline survey assessed the current use of fuel in two sectors surrounding Nyungwe National Park, including the type, quantity, origin and cost of fuel used by surrounding communities. This baseline information will help measure the success of this project reducing resource use in Nyungwe National Park. Additionally, the project provided energy saving cooking stoves, constructed by beneficiaries, to 200 pilot households with onsite demonstration of installation and use. A follow-up assessment of stove efficiency was conducted in 4 pilot households per sector.

Banda PICO Hydro and Rangiro Micro Hydro Project

WCS has built experimental pico-hydro power facilities in the village of Banda, and participated in the operation of a micro-hydro power facility in Rangiro. Since only a few of the many villages around Nyungwe are connected to the national power grid, hydroelectric power serves as an important resource for providing electricity essential for improving living standards and alleviating poverty. As a result of these projects:

- Banda's electricity demand is now being met;
- Battery systems are being used to provide lighting and power cell phones, radios, and televisions, services valuable both for consumers and providing an additional source of local revenue;
- The feasibility of building a low-cost, pico-hydro battery charging station with 100% Rwandan-sourced parts has been demonstrated, thereby reducing the cost for installation and repairs. The locally manufactured turbine and generator also use all locally sourced components;
- Batteries and lights are now supplied to the people of Banda through a well-established process;
- The battery charging business has grown, and in September 2009 reached profitability;
- Rangiro was successful in developing the Micro Hydro, mini-grid system and expanding its reach to now serve a host of institutions and several households;
- The local school acquired larger alternators, spare parts and the services of a professional installer ensuring that the owners and operators do not suffer from an inability to access resources beyond Rangiro's borders.

Ex-Poachers Associations

WCS contributed to the formation and organization of several ex-poachers associations. These associations enable ex-poachers to conduct awareness raising projects with existing poachers. This project has also led to the distribution of 212 goats and 86 pigs to 7 ex-poachers associations as alternative meat sources.

Project Photos



Ubuzima bwa Processing & Sales Centre's inauguration



Group works on business plan and project proposal for SME



Beeswax candles



Energy saving cooking stove



Ex-poacher's livestock



Battery charging station