

**Reporting Period: June 2008-April 2009**

**Project title: Grass root mobilization to Conservation of endemic species in Yala swamp**

**Name of NGO/CBO: Friends of Yala Swamp**

**Introduction**

This report synthesizes the rich results of interdisciplinary programme on conservation of endemic species through sustainable utilization of natural resource by the locals of Kanyaboli Yala, Kenya.

The major theme of the report and its individual chapters aims to show the;

- ✓ Progress made so far by Friends of Yala swamp through ABC
- ✓ Demonstration that, the animals birds and vegetation are as much as a medium of ideas and imagination of the people who live there as they are physical realities. The species pervades almost every aspect of daily lives and its pervasive quality derives not only from natural lay of land and water but from the multiple ways farmers, fishermen and other have continued to destroy the habitat through unsustainable utilization and poor management.

✓

By integrating the goal of the project of involving the community in the conservation of the endemic bird species; various measures have been undertaken such as capacity building, Monitoring and enforcements and community outreaches.

Up to now the project has involved the improvement of knowledge capacity by throwing in the light to the local people to identify profitable lines of activities, farm and live side by side by the birds and other species, to raise and invest funds through alternative sustainable livelihoods and obtain valuable information for effecting the improvement of the conservation of the natural resource.

It has also proposed livelihoods ideas for the local people, converted them into sets of activities which become livelihood for the poor. Such activities are; Bee-keeping and poultry keeping

Established the necessary organizations/institutions, linkages processes and factor flow, it has involved experts to show the locals a better understanding of conservation management policies on natural resources, aspect of enterprising with respect to their farming activities.

### Activities done so far

- Held TWO project staff and FYS members meeting to project planning meeting.
- Conducted FOUR mobilization meetings for preparation on awareness/training and with both schools and local communities.
- Held THREE consultation meeting with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) on the need of partnership and networking hence revitalization of the existing collaboration between FYS and KWS. The meeting also discussed the need for joint coordination/participation between FYS and KWS in monitoring and data collection of Endemic bird population, tree planting along the river banks and hills slopes
- Held TWO awareness/training session demonstrating for 20 target participants to enhanced their capacity in sustainable utilization of the natural resource.
- Signed a memorandum of understanding (**MOA**) with the local farmers, hunters to stop destroying habitats of birds especially the –Yellow warbler *Chloroptera gracilinostri* and Papyrus Gonolek- *Laniarius mufumbiri*.
- Conducted TWO school outreaches with the help of Drama theatre from the local theatre group.



**Members conducting monitoring and Research in Yala wetland to ascertain the Data of endemic bird species, vegetation and water quality**



**Figure 1 shows women group planting papyrus as a means of rehabilitation of the wetland.**

### **Networking activities during this period.**

- We sorted help in terms of literature from Bujon Forest station which is near the project area.
- Liase with the key informants/scouts of the villages.
- Held ONE meeting with the local administration to sort for permission/introduction to operate in the area without interference.
- Collaborated with the Kenya Wildlife Service during initial stages of the project.

### **Challenges**

- Unreliable rainy spell hindering the construction and/or planting of tree seedlings.
- There has been slow cooperation from local community due to the fact that the project is a new venture to them.
- Most people prefer exotic trees to indigenous one making the possibilities of existence of the indigenous trees since there are no seed banks in the area.
- Reluctance from the community to take up the culture of tree planting as some of them wondered if we have come to lay a claim of their "land"
- Persistent hunting

### **Achievements**

- Enhance awareness of the sustainable utilization of natural forest by riparian communities as a result of coordination and corporation from other partner organizations.
- Visitation from at least 5 individuals with FOUR showing interest in abandoning Hill-farming while ONE farmer has decided to leave part of his farm with sugarcane as for the

endemic bird species courtesy of the project activities and training got during workshops and demonstration sessions.

- Establishing tree nurseries in at least 5 surrounding schools for both fruit trees and indigenous trees.
- Planting papyrus with the community members in bare places as an integral part of rehabilitation and preventing the land degradation.
- Training 10 tour guides as means of promoting eco-tourism in the area.
- Continue the awareness creation programme especially in schools.
- Giving out trees to schools and other community members at a subsidized price.



**Members of VECs in one of the tree nurseries. Tree seedlings are ready for planting.**

**Pictures below shows some of the papyrus endemics; Swamp flycatcher and papyrus gonolek (*Linarius mfumburi*)**



- By becoming closely involved the community and FYS has developed relationship of trusts, friendship of and sense of common purpose which I believe would act an impetus for conservation of the .
- Drama and theater is powerful tool in conservation as its draws a larger audience due to its physical attributes.

- Local environmental knowledge and local capacity to conduct environmental monitoring and measurement of change ecosystems are essential for the future of the endemic bird species in Yala swamp.
- Also I did realize it is the weak economic position of the rural entrepreneurs that limits their knowledge obtained from training and technical assistance.
- School pupils are the best target groups during awareness creation for they readily their attitude to teachings and practice.



**Figure 5: School outreach programme through Drama theater sessions in a local school.**

The table below shows the benefits of these two groups of people i.e. those who own land and those who don't own land derive from the wetland.

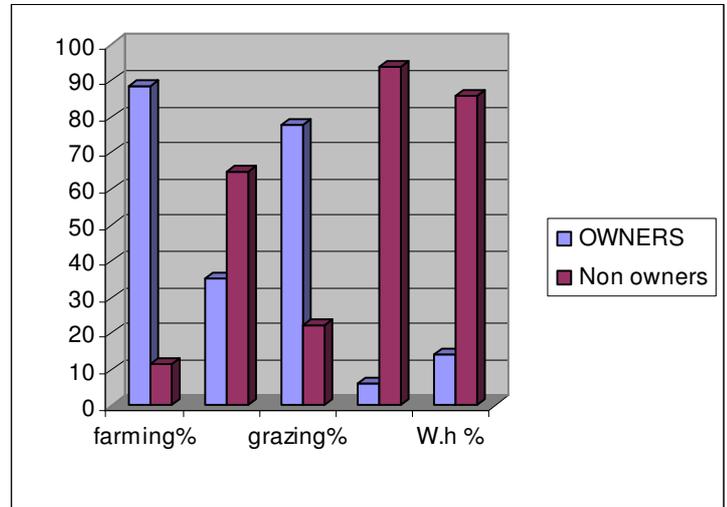
**Table 1.4**  
**Table showing benefits residents of Yala Wetlands derive from the wetland**  
**n = 179**

	USE										Total	%
	Farmin g	%	Papyru s H.	%	Grazin g	%	Fishin g	%	W. H.	%		
<b>OWNERS</b>	86	88.6	7	35	14	77.	1	6.2	4	14.	112	62.5

						8		5		3		
<b>Non owners</b>	11	11.3	13	65	4	22.2	15	93.8	24	85.7	67	37.4

Source: field data

**The graph besides shows what kind of activities are done at the swamp by various residents as regards their land ownership status at the swamp. Majority of the farmers and herders are land Owners while majority of the fishermen and papyrus harvesters are non land owners.**



From the above table and graph, it can be seen that 62.5% of the respondents exclusively depend on the swamp for a livelihood, while 37.4% of those who don't own land depend on the swamp exclusively.

It can also be observed that only 179 respondents depend on one of the activities in the swamp exclusively. However, there are other people who say for example depend on grazing and farming from the swamp. The table above shows only those who perform only one activity at the swamp, hence the 179 instead of 400.

It can be deduced that, 54.18% of the activities being carried out at the swamp is farming. Of this, those who own lands at the swamp perform 88.6% of the farming while 11.3% is done by those who do not own any piece of land at the swamp.

**This means that any agricultural development project to be implemented at the wetlands must target the land-owners and not everybody at the swamp/wetland.**

Papyrus harvesting comprises 11.17% of the activities at the wetlands. Of this, 65% of the papyrus harvesting is done by those who do not own land at the swamp, while land owners at the swamp only do 35% of the harvesting.

This means that, *those who do not own any piece of land are free to harvest the papyrus at the wetland.* This therefore means that **if any change is to be done to the harvesting of the papyrus, we need not to use land-ownership as a measure but we can target the**

**papyrus harvesters regardless of whether they own a piece of land or not.**

Grazing comprises of only 10% of the activities at the wetland. However this is majorly done by those who own land at the swamp. i.e. 77.8% while 22.2% are non-land owners. This implies that the problem of **overgrazing emanates majorly from the landowners.**

Interestingly, fishing activities at the swamp comprises 8.9% of activities while it is done majorly by people who do not own any piece of land at the wetland. Indeed, landowners at the swamp only comprise 6.25% of the fishermen while non land owners comprises of 93.75%.

This means that **people come from outside to do their fishing at the swamp, thus explaining why the use of crude fishing methods such as burning of papyrus and uprooting the papyrus.**

This can either impact negatively or positively on any project implemented in the wetland depending on their level of involvement. This means that, **in any project aiming at conserving the wetlands, the non-natives must be given more attention and should be involved more than the locals.** They comprise over 56% of land owners in Dunga wetland.



**The above picture shows a sitatunga (rare antelope grazing in the swamp and a nest of a papyrus endemic bird with eggs in it.)**Awareness need

**Destruction of the habitat and hunting of the animal creates a speedy extinction of endemic animals and birds.**

## **Plans for next month**

- 1. We intend to initiate and explore linkages between activities that establish strong links with the communities through holistic and integrated approaches, create economic and social conditions, including; empowerment and participation needed to allow and motivate local actors to take responsibility and care of their natural resources without interfering with the habitat of the endemic species.**
- 2. Carry out monitoring and evaluation of the project activities through an integrated programme of focusing through; group discussions, interviews, documentations, Radio talks and observations. Items to evaluated includes; wetland economic value ,human population index, species index**
- 3. Facilitate the Compilation of Yala bird checklist.**
- 4. Conduct a visit exchange between local groups of the wider lake region i.e.Dunga-Yala-Kusa and Koguta swamps**
- 5. Continuation of awareness creation throughout the remaining period that would lead to institutionalization of monitoring systems and adoption of reporting frameworks at various level.**
- 6. Need to develop better information and reporting system, especially for species conservation.**