

Case study 2 - The Use of Small Grants to Build Civil Society Capacity to Support Conservation : Lessons Learned from Rwanda

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Objectives of the IUCN Small Grants Program

The overall objective of the IUCN Small Grants Program funded by CARPE is to build the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to enable them to mobilize themselves more effectively and to support advocacy for rational management of natural resources in the Congo Basin.

Since CARPE began operating in Central Africa, several national NGOs have received small grants from this programme. Details of two recent projects (2007–2008) are described below, to illustrate the lessons learned from this programme. These are the “Domestic Production of Bamboo and Rattan” project, carried out in three sectors located close to the Nyungwe National Park in the Nyaruguru District in the South Province; and the “Support for the Makera gallery forest conservation efforts” project in the Kirehe

District in the West Province.

Domestic production of bamboo and rattan

The Nyungwe natural forest, recently designated the third National Park in the country, has suffered widespread destruction caused mainly by the harvesting of bamboo and rattan by the local population from the surrounding areas. The products derived from these two species are commonly used in the local construction and craft industries. Trade in these products has increased since the war and the genocide that took place in the country. This has been to the detriment of sustainable conservation of the Nyungwe forest.

The overall objective of this project was to reduce the negative impacts on the environment resulting from the wanton exploitation of bamboo and rattan in the Nyungwe natural forest. It was implemented by the local NGO “Seruka” (the Association for Promoting the Active Contribution of

Rwandan Women to Development).

Support for the Makera gallery forest conservation efforts

The overall objective of this project was to put in place an appropriate platform for the sustainable conservation of this forest by involving the local population, local government services and environmental experts. It was implemented by the local NGO “AREDI” (*Association Rwandaise pour l’Environnement et le Développement Intégré*).

This small forest (74 ha) is one of the gallery forests in the eastern part of the country that up until now has managed to maintain its integrity almost intact in spite of the multiple threats that it faces. It is surrounded by very poor communities, including those repatriated or chased away from neighbouring Tanzania, who have no adequate means of subsistence and not enough arable farmland.

There are a number of problems threatening the integrity of the Makera gallery forest. One is the destruction of crops by the wild animals that it harbours. This arouses the anger of the local populations who complain that the local authority favours and protects wild animals at the expense of human beings. Another threat is the shortage of wood (for energy, construction, crafts, etc.) in the area surrounding the forest. Local people are sometimes tempted to exploit the forest in order to satisfy their need for timber and non-timber forest products, even though there is a protection regime (game wardens) in place.

Implementation strategy and results achieved

Domestic production of bamboo and rattan

The following four expected outputs were selected for this project :

- o Twenty officials and opinion leaders, 40 major bamboo and rattan users (young house builders, makers of household uten-

sils, etc.) and 600 conservation activists living in the three sectors surrounding the Nyungwe forest are made aware of the magnitude of the negative impacts on the environment caused by the wanton exploitation of bamboo and rattan in this natural forest.

- o The 600 conservation activists of Nyaruguru are trained in small-scale growing and exploitation of bamboo and rattans;
- o These activists commit themselves to growing bamboo and rattan and to ensuring that 60 hectares of bamboo and rattan farms will be developed on 12 target sites before the end of the project.
- o Monitoring and coordination of activities are carried out thanks to a strong organizational structure with sound bodies responsible for decision making, implementation and financial auditing.

The following achievements are worth mentioning :

- U Awareness raising: Using individual visits and group meetings, the Forestry unit of the Ministry in charge of forestry (MINITERE), local authority and technical personnel at all levels, the bamboo research unit at the Institute of Agronomic Sciences of Rwanda (ISAR) as well as opinion leaders within the populations of the three sectors, were all made aware of the rationale of the project, its objectives and their need to collaborate;
- U Training: Twelve agricultural instructors (four per sector) were recruited and trained for six days on the growing of bamboo and rattan (in nurseries and then plantations), and on the laws governing environmental conservation and management.
- U Establishment of nurseries: A nursery for the production of deep-rooted bamboo cuttings was developed in each of the three sectors of the project (see Table 1).
- U Engagement of local communities : There has been a massive demand for the bamboo and rattan shoots produced in the nurseries, but due to a lack of availability, only 564 people from the three sectors have so far been declared eligible to receive a certain number of these shoots for planting.

Table 1. The number of cuttings planted and available for cultivation, as of October 2008

Sector (site)	Number of beds developed	Number of cuttings planted	Number of shoots that sprouted	Number of shoots that didn't survive	Number of shoots available for planting
Nyabimata	36	16,854	6,989	6,367	622
Muganza	37	16,008	4,043	2,683	1,360
Ruheru	33	16,757	2,153	1,773	380
TOTAL	106	49,619	13,185	10,823	2,362



Mihanda nursery in the Samiyonga Cell, Muganza Sector (left); Gatare nursery in Nyabimata Cell, Nyabimata (right)

Support for the Makera gallery forest conservation efforts

The following three expected outputs were selected for this project :

- o A workshop is organized to validate the action plan drawn up by the project, bringing together representatives of the Mpamga

sector, of the Kirehe District, of the Pupils' Environment Club of the Nyawera School, local NGOs, ISAR researchers and the CARPE Focal Point, amongst others.

- o A nursery of forest plants is developed and placed under the responsibility of the Nyawera/Nasho Primary School.

- o Equipment and materials (microphones and loudspeakers, etc.) are put at the disposal of the Pupils' Environment Club and teachers of the local primary school.

The following achievements are worth mentioning :

- U Establishment of a nursery: An agroforestry nursery was developed near the Nyawera Primary School and the day-to-day management (watering) was entrusted to the pupils under the supervision of a technical staff member recruited by the project. Various agroforestry species were sown as seedlings (*Grevillea robusta*, *Calliandra calothyrsus*, *Markhamia* sp., etc.). 18,000 seedlings produced in the nursery were specifically planted in the primary school farm over a surface area of about 4 hectares and each pupil has planted 20 trees that he/she has to care for.



The nursery while under development. The seedlings inside are still at an early stage of cultivation

Table 2. Seedlings produced in the nursery

Species	Number of seedlings
<i>Grevillea robusta</i>	18,000
<i>Cedrella serrata</i>	2,500
<i>Jacaranda mimosaeifolia</i>	5,500
<i>Sena siamea</i>	1,500
<i>Sena spectabilis</i>	4,500
TOTAL	32,000

- U Establishment of a school club : A Friends of the Environment Club was formed, made up of 40 pupils of the school supervised by their teachers, and it is raising awareness of the conservation of the Makera gallery forest especially through songs, poems, dances and games.



Pupils of the Club are in white T-shirts, singing and dancing

- U Distribution of equipment and materials: Seeds, watering cans, shovels, hoes, plastic bags for the nurseries, T-shirts, etc.) were distributed to members of the Friends of the Environment Club.
- U Development of an action plan: An action plan for the conservation of the Makera gallery forest was drawn up for the period 2009–2013.



Lessons learned

Rwanda is a densely populated country with around 9.7 million inhabitants over an area of about 27,000 km² (close to 360 inhabitants/km²) in 2008¹. Potential forestland is estimated at a total of 190,000 ha of which 140,000 ha could be used for agroforestry and 50,000 ha for traditional reforestation. Meanwhile, the existing forested area, including dense montane natural forests, eastern natural formations, plantations and potential reforestation and forestation zones, is 888,660 ha.

In spite of their apparently small contribution to the country's economy, the important role played by forests in the country is unquestionable. Wood is the household fuel of the great majority of the population. Also, forests contribute in terms of incomes derived from job creation for rural people.

After the 1994 war, the appearance of the forested land has changed somewhat given that it is estimated that 15,000 ha of plantation forest were destroyed while 35,000 ha were seriously damaged.

The result is an acute need for reforestation and afforestation. Thanks to the Small Grants Program, the two projects described above have contributed to this need by helping local communities to reforest 60 ha of bamboo, and encouraging 40 primary school pupils to plant 18,000 seedlings of five different tree species on four hectares of land. If guided well by their teachers, these pupils represent an important long-term potential in the field of forest conservation.

Conclusion

The potential for the Small Grants Program to help mobilize CSOs, build capacity and raise awareness of issues of sustainable management of natural resources is obvious. In the case of Rwanda, the crucial problem of management of natural resources is the loss of forest cover through deforestation and soil degradation. Sustained activities such those of the above-mentioned two environmental NGOs can slow down or

reverse the trend of forest cover destruction, the main objective of CARPE in Central Africa. Therefore, the IUCN Small Grants Program should be reinforced and the size of grant per project increased to overcome constraints such as the massive and increasing demand for bamboo and rattan shoots in the Nyaruguru District in Rwanda.

¹ World Bank. (2008). *World Development Indicators*. Washington DC: World Bank.