



**KIBALE ASSOCIATION
FOR RURAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
DEVELOPMENT (KAFRED)**

Uganda



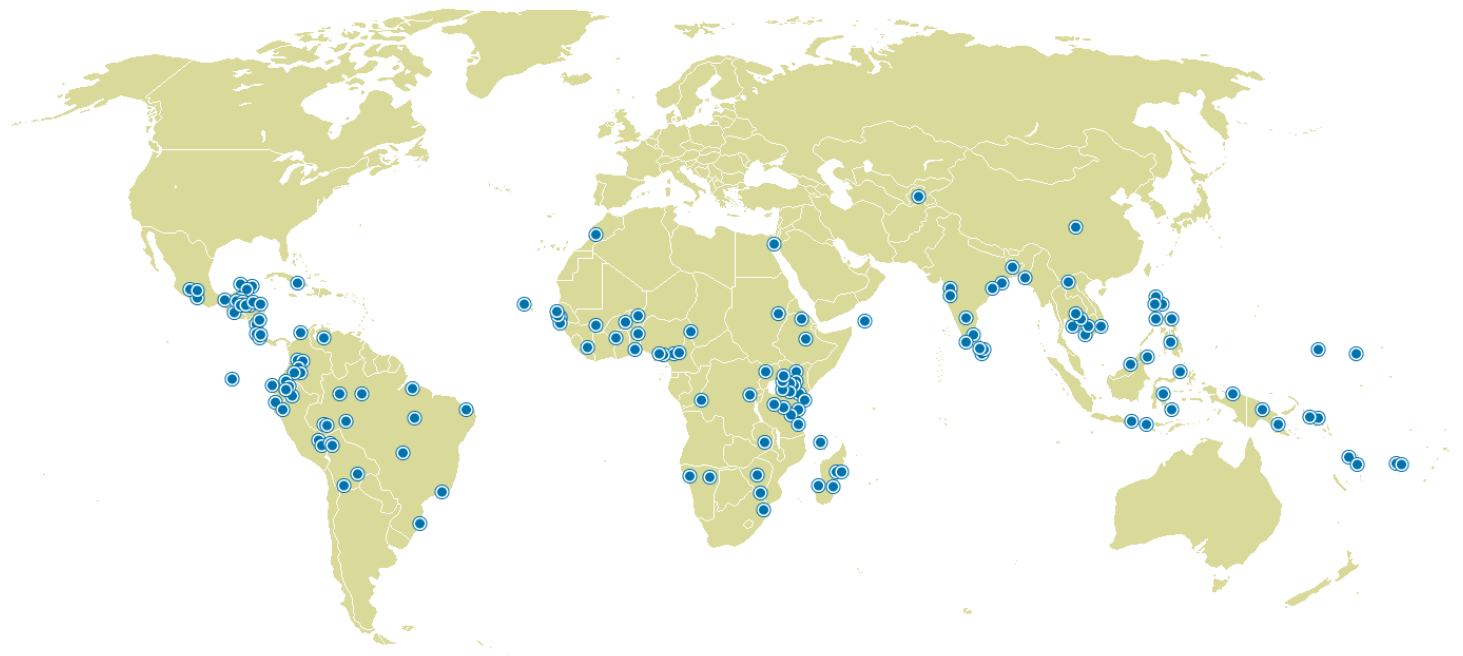
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Local and indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative.

To mark its 10-year anniversary, the Equator Initiative aims to fill this gap. The following case study is one in a growing series that details the work of Equator Prize winners – vetted and peer-reviewed best practices in community-based environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods. These cases are intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to take local success to scale, to improve the global knowledge base on local environment and development solutions, and to serve as models for replication. Case studies are best viewed and understood with reference to [‘The Power of Local Action: Lessons from 10 Years of the Equator Prize’](#), a compendium of lessons learned and policy guidance that draws from the case material.



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Uganda

PROJECT SUMMARY

The village community of Bigodi, near Fort Portal, western Uganda, straddles an eight kilometre stretch of papyrus wetland that is home to an abundance of wildlife. Eight primate species and more than 200 bird species draw tourists from neighbouring Kibale Forest National Park, for which the Bigodi swamp forms an important wildlife corridor. Through the work of Kibale Association for Rural and Environmental Development (KAFRED), the community benefitted substantially from this ecotourism trade by establishing guided tours along a boardwalk through the wetlands, supplemented by the sale of handicrafts by the village women's group.

Sustainable management of the area was backed by the enactment of bylaws in 1995, developed in a participatory fashion with local government authorities. This process provided the legal foundation for the group's work in wildlife conservation and income generation that has benefitted the national park and local stakeholders in equal measure.

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KEY FACTS

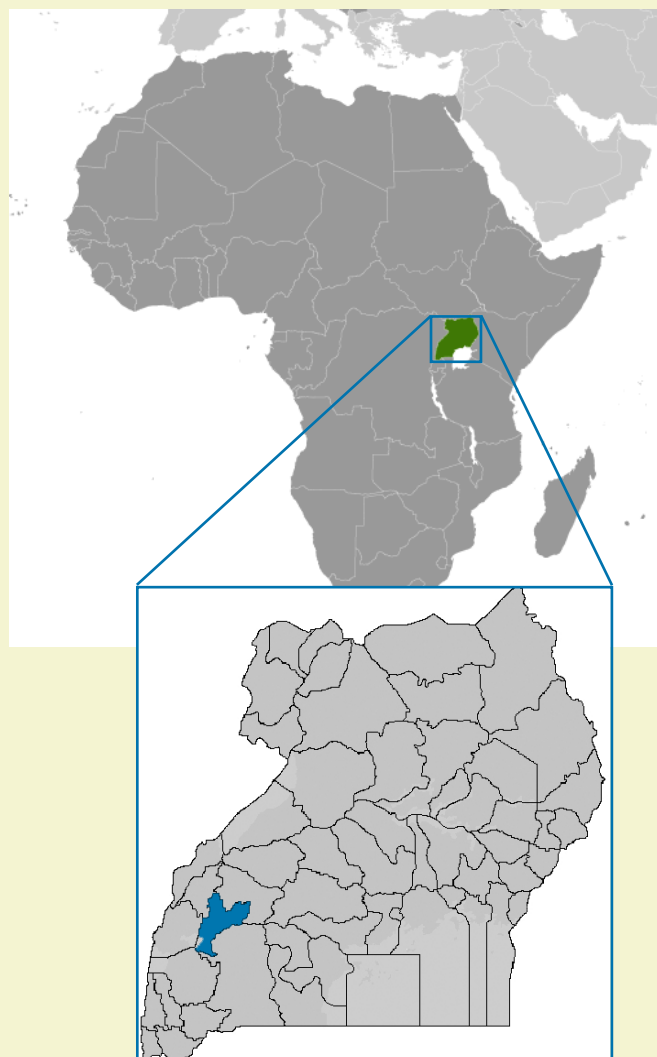
EQUATOR PRIZE WINNER: 2004, 2010

FOUNDED: 1992

LOCATION: Kamwenge District, western Uganda

BENEFICIARIES: Approximately 300 households

BIODIVERSITY: Bigodi Wetlands Sanctuary



Background and Context



Kibale Association for Rural and Environmental Development (KAFRED) is a community-based organization working in Kamwenge District, western Uganda. The group was founded in 1992, and uses ecotourism and other environmentally sustainable enterprises to promote biodiversity conservation and community development in the Bigodi Wetlands Sanctuary. The wetlands form an important wildlife corridor and are home to rich biological diversity: the swamp, dominated by papyrus grasses, measures just eight kilometres in length, yet supports over 200 species of birds and eight species of primates. With participation from the local farming community, the original members of KAFRED were able to halt encroachment on the wetlands area and create guided wildlife trails for tourists. The revenues from tourism have been used in building a secondary school and promoting environmental education in the area, instituting a loan scheme for farming families, and supporting a local women's group producing artisanal handicrafts.

An important wildlife corridor

The Bigodi Wetlands corridor ecosystem connects two areas of Kibale Forest National Park, eventually draining into Lake George, an important Ramsar site, through the River Dura. In the latter half of the twentieth century, papyrus cover within the wetlands was substantially reduced, reflecting the loss of forest cover surrounding the wetlands as a result of increasing pressures from a growing local population. Despite this loss of habitat, the wetlands are still frequented by Grey Crowned Cranes, while chimpanzees occasionally pass through the forest corridor. Among the many local primate species are baboons and colobus monkeys; Kibale Forest National Park is home to the only viable population of an endangered subspecies of Ugandan Red Colobus (*Procolobus rufomitratu tephrosceles*) worldwide. The swamp is also home to the rare Great Blue Turaco.

Prior to the 1990s, there was no tourism in the Kibale Forest region. The national park itself was used primarily for research with chimpanzees.



After chimps were successfully habituated, however, tourists began to visit, leading to the opening of a tourist site at nearby Kanyanchu in 1991. Volunteers from the US and UK worked with this project, and one of these individuals was instrumental in encouraging the local residents of Bigodi to initiate their own tourist activities. The catalyst was a tourist's comments on the number of primate and bird species he had seen while walking around the village: ecotourism in Bigodi was therefore demand-driven. KAFRED's initial objectives were to use ecotourism as a tool for promoting conservation. This evolved into using the revenues from tourism for community development projects. The wetlands area was demarcated for tourism purposes, and village by-laws governing its conservation were drawn up in 1995 in a highly participatory process.

Origins of collective action for conservation

This took place against a history of community-based projects having failed in Bigodi, however. A secondary school project had closed after being constructed on land owned by a church, leading to religious and tribal tensions. A credit and savings scheme had collapsed, meanwhile, after inequitable distribution of the loan funds, and a lack of transparency in how they were disbursed. KAFRED therefore avoided building on land that was associated with certain tribes or religious groups, instead using communal land donated by local authorities. They also ensured that different sectors of the local community were adequately represented in its membership. Originally there were six founder members, although many more had been involved in meetings leading to its formation. By 1996 there were over 30 members of the group; in 2012 there were more than 120. These are genuinely representative of the different groups within the village, although KAFRED initially faced problems with women's membership. This led to the founding of Bigodi Women's

Group, supported by KAFRED; this constituency represents one of several KAFRED "affiliate" groups, including the Enyange Dance and Drama Group, Kiyoma Women's Group, Bigodi Peanut Butter Group, and the Bigodi Credit and Savings Group. Annual general meetings are conducted in the local language of Rutooro: this level of community participation has been fundamental to the success of KAFRED's initiatives. KAFRED was also a founder member of UCOTA, the Ugandan Community Tourism Association, which has played a role in informing government policy on the role of communities in tourist initiatives.

In 2010, KAFRED became the first initiative to be awarded the UNDP Equator Prize for a second time, following their success in 2004. The initiative has consistently demonstrated the benefits and potentials of community-based innovation for ecotourism, conservation and development, and serves as a role model both within Uganda and internationally.



“Policy-makers must understand the importance of communities and community participation in conservation. They must create the necessary policy environment to allow this.”

Tinka John Amooti, Director, KAFRED

Key Activities and Innovations



Ecotourism activities in Bigodi consist mainly of guided walks through both the swamp and the village. The swamp walks are operated by trained guides, and take place via boardwalks constructed through the wetlands. They allow tourists to see wildlife at close-hand, including the 200 species of bird and eight primate varieties. The village walks, meanwhile, were initiated to allow tourists to see the traditional means of living within the village. The activities include visiting the primary school, the church, and a traditional healer, and hearing about the role of women in the village, traditional ceremonies, and the story of the “Village of Two Tribes”. This refers to the history of Bigodi, in which the indigenous Batooro were joined by the migrating Bakiga from south-western Uganda in the 1950s. A tourist home-stay program is also being pioneered by a founding member of KAFRED, to gauge whether there is sufficient demand for this service on a larger scale.

Investing in education

Reinvesting revenues from ecotourism in education has been a driving concern for KAFRED since its inception. While the area was already home to five government-run primary schools, children would have to travel to Fort Portal, a town some 35 kilometres away, to attend secondary school. Attempts to establish a school in the community initially faced the challenge of religious tensions. Following participatory planning meetings in 1992, however, it was decided that KAFRED’s non-partisan status would enable them to overcome these obstacles. They began secondary school education in 1993, based in a community building borrowed from a farmers’ co-operative. The first additional building was constructed in 1994, and the school now accommodates students until Senior Four level (typically age 16.) Currently it has over 200 students. Until recently, KAFRED would subsidize all school fees and wages. Since the Ugandan government abolished tuition fees in public secondary schools in 2007, however, the majority of all school fees are paid by the state. KAFRED pays the remainder, meaning that families do not have to contribute. It also pays the wages of the teachers at the school.



This has been supplemented by KAFRED’s environmental education programs. One such program has been initiated in conjunction with the Kibale Fuel Wood Project, which has supported the running of a Science Centre on KAFRED’s premises, while the women’s group uses dance and drama to convey conservation messages. Often these are performed in local churches and schools. Films are also shown in public settings for environmental education, based on a similar Tanzanian project initiated by a Dutch NGO, Nature for Kids. Meanwhile, KAFRED has supported teacher training through its international partnership with UNITE (Uganda and North Carolina International Teaching for the Environment). Originally this was a schools exchange program, initiated by the North Carolina Zoo, through UCOTA. UNITE now supports a teacher training program through an environmental expert based in Uganda. In 2010, training given to local teachers focused on the theme of biodiversity.

Improving community wellbeing and gender equality

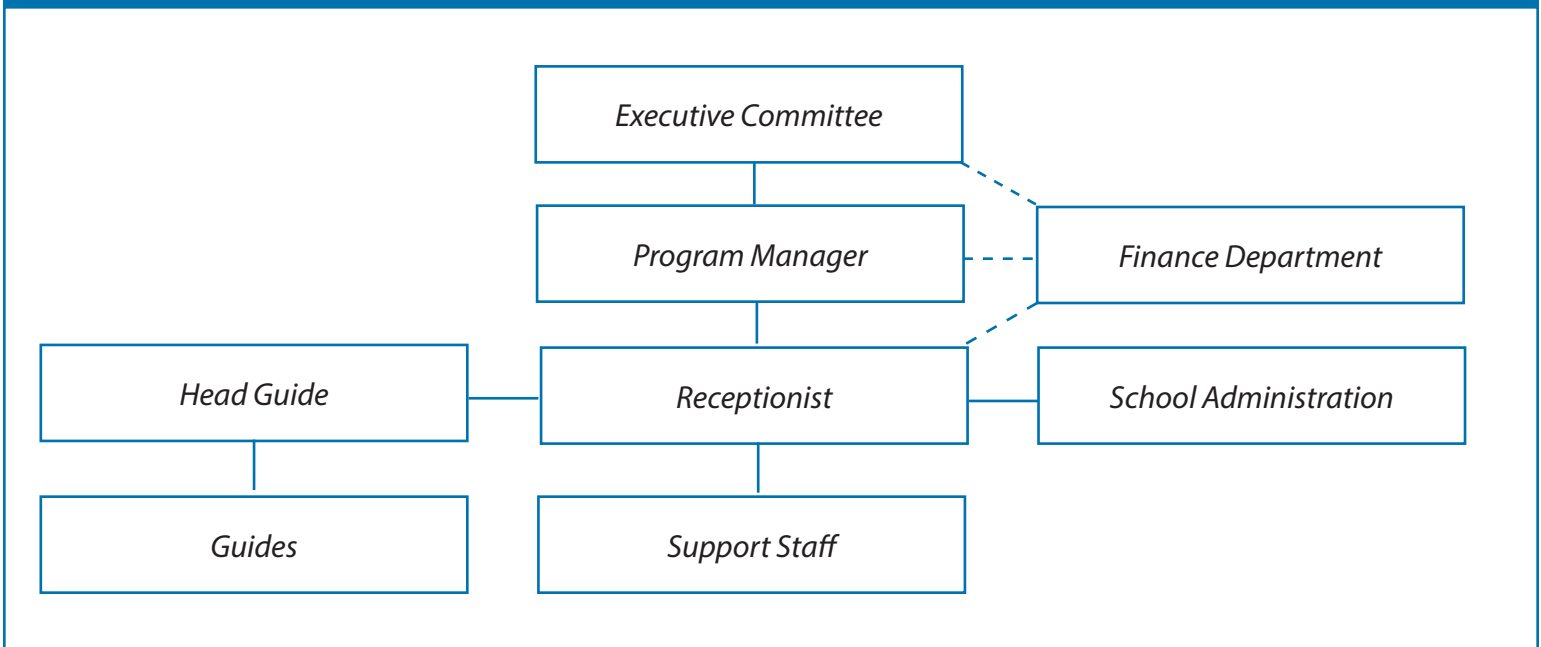
KAFRED is planning to invest further tourist revenues in health initiatives for Bigodi, which will be enabled once the government pays secondary school fees in full. So far, the group has constructed a house for midwives at the local health unit, increasing maternal health access for the community.

Bigodi Women's Group formed as an association to support local women in developing fine handicrafts and artisanal goods for sale to tourists. The group is affiliated with KAFRED, and has received support from them in the form of expert training in product development and marketing. They have also been given space in which to exhibit their handicrafts. 90% of the revenues raised from tourist sales goes to the individual woman artisan, while 10% goes to a communal fund. This fund is used for community development projects by the group, currently comprising 40 women: so far they have used the profits to found a pre-primary school in Bigodi.

Finally, KAFRED has helped to begin a loan scheme for the families living on the edge of the wetlands. These are the farming households who bear the brunt of human-wildlife conflicts from the conserved area in the form of primate crop-raiding. The farmers also monitor and protect the area, ensuring that there are no human encroachments on the forest or wetlands. A fund of USD 2,000 was offered to representatives from the 120 families in 2005, with the rules for its lending established by the families themselves. They elected a committee to manage it, including a representative from KAFRED, and established an interest-free revolving loan scheme for the families.



Figure 1: KAFRED organizational structure



Source: KAFRED

Impacts



BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS

The most important biodiversity impact achieved by KAFRED has been the reduction in the rate of encroachment on the wetlands by the villagers. A first step was being given a mandate to sustainably manage the Bigodi wetlands on behalf of the wider community by the local government authorities.

Conserving the wetlands' borders

Wetlands conservation was initiated by a participatory planning workshop held in Bigodi in 1995. The meeting involved KAFRED members, heads of households bordering the wetlands, women leaders, local council representatives, and district officials. Facilitators from the National Wetlands Program (NWP) and the Kibale and Semliki Conservation and Development Project (KSCDP) helped to establish village by-laws governing the use of Bigodi Wetlands. These concerned matters such as the distance of human activities

from the swamp's edge, restricting it to the level it had already reached. They also regulated firewood collection, grazing practices, and fruit gathering, while banning the digging of trenches to drain the wetlands and burning within the conserved area. These by-laws were accepted by the community, and have played a crucial role in preserving the remaining wetlands area. Without them, the wetlands area would not exist today.

Further voluntary efforts have targeted the planting of eucalyptus trees around the wetlands area. While fast-growing, and therefore good for timber, the tree species has a destructive effect in draining water from the land, and leaves the soil too acidic for other species to grow. Activities have been undertaken since 2008 in cutting back eucalyptus trees, and encouraging villagers not to plant more. In one case this involved the district environment officer, who was brought in to convince an individual to uproot his eucalyptus trees; he was compensated with money to purchase indigenous tree seedlings.

Table 1: Rare and endangered species found within Bigodi wetlands

Species	IUCN Red List category
Crowned Hawk-eagle (<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>)	Least Concern
Grey Crowned Crane (<i>Balearica regulorum</i>)	Vulnerable
African Grey Parrot (<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>)	Near Threatened
Papyrus Gonolek (<i>Laniarius mufumbiri</i>)	Near Threatened
White-winged Swamp Warbler (<i>Bradypterus carpalis</i>)	Least Concern
Chimpanzees (<i>Pan troglodytes</i>)	Endangered
Ugandan Red Colobus (<i>Procolobus rufomitratus tephrosceles</i>)	Endangered
L'Hoest's monkey (<i>Cercopithecus lhoesti</i>)	Vulnerable

Source: KAFRED

KAFRED's tree seedlings scheme has encouraged the planting of indigenous tree species such as *cordia* and *prunus Africanus* for agroforestry, with at least 5,000 tree seedlings raised in 2010. These seedlings are given to community members for free. In partnership with the Kibale Fuel Wood Project, KAFRED is also developing a scheme for promoting *Sesbania sesban*, a fast-growing indigenous tree species. The tree is prized for its fuel uses and nitrogen fixing properties, and can reach a height of fifteen feet one year after planting. The project also sells materials for making fuel-efficient stoves, requiring less wood and so reducing pressures on the forest.

Targeted species monitoring

Monitoring of biodiversity within the wetlands area has been sporadic and led by various individuals. Primate researchers from the local Makerere University Biological Field Station have educated KAFRED guides on specific primate species, and occasionally conduct research on the various primate species. These include Black and White Colobus, Red Colobus, Baboon, Grey Cheeked Mangabey, Red Tailed Monkey, Blue and Vervet Monkeys, and the L'Hoest's Monkey. KAFRED is currently overseeing counting of these species within the tourist trail area and a plot where a second boardwalk is planned, to assess the possible impacts of human activity on primate numbers. The bird species number over 200, and include the rare Great Blue Turaco, which has been adopted by KAFRED as their logo. Species of warbler, kingfisher, crane, and flycatcher also inhabit Bigodi swamp, and attract significant numbers of bird watchers.

Mitigating human-wildlife conflict

Human-wildlife conflicts have posed a significant social problem for the residents of Bigodi, especially for those living on the edge of the conserved area. Crop-raiding has been the main challenge, although research has shown that domestic animals do more

harm to crops than the wild animals. Kibale Forest National Park has employed ditches and fences to stop elephants from crossing into human settlement areas, although these efforts have often not been maintained, or have themselves encroached on farmers' land. Conversely, KAFRED has encouraged villagers to use traditional methods such as planting thorn hedges and monitoring to prevent primates from raiding their crops.

The group is currently working with UNITE and the Kibale Forest National Park authorities to raise awareness among the local community on how to mitigate human-wildlife conflict. Using a USD 3,000 grant from Cleveland Zoo, KAFRED is helping to conduct four Human-Wildlife Conflict trainings for the 200 members of the Parent-Teacher Associations and School Management Committees of schools within a radius of five kilometers from the park. Subsequently, human-wildlife conflict mitigation efforts will be put in place in nine school communities. Strategies include increasing the use of "buffer crops" on farms to deter problem animals; establishing and maintaining trenches to stop elephant incursions; using chilli peppers as an animal deterrent; decreasing the use of poisons to kill animals; greater collaboration between Bigodi communities and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA); and calling for great accountability in how local government officials deal with these issues.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

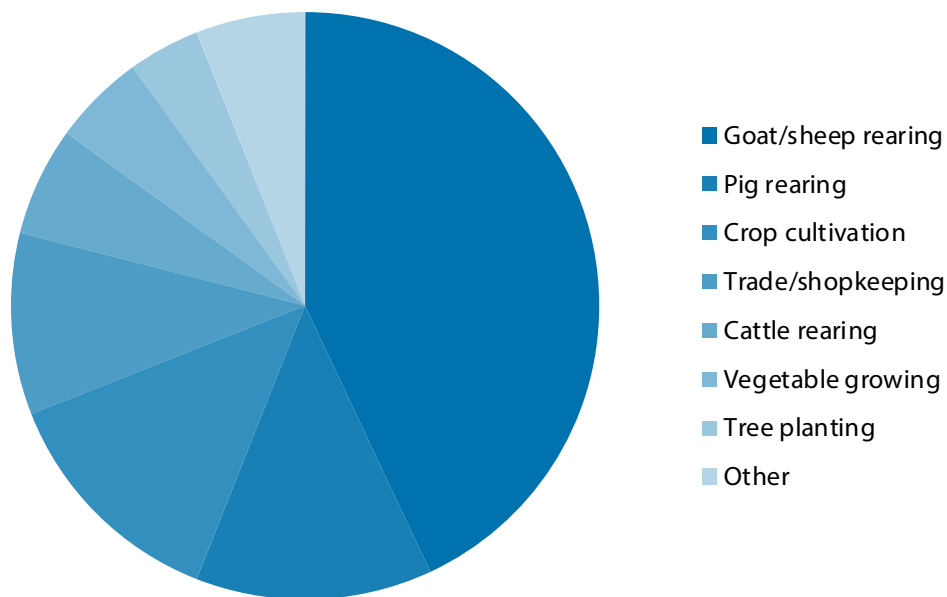
KAFRED's socioeconomic impacts within Bigodi trading centre have been felt primarily through its investment in secondary school education. This has entailed the construction of the school buildings and supporting the fees and wages of students and teachers. Health projects have also been initiated, while indirect economic benefits have accrued to the local community through the support of the Bigodi Women's Group and the loan scheme for farming families.

Table 2: KAFRED beneficiaries, 2011

Type	Number
Voting members of KAFRED	117
Non-voting members of KAFRED	37
Employees (guides, managers, teachers, and other support staff)	33
Secondary school children and parents	500
Members of the women's groups	110
Wetland resource users	About 300 households estimated at an average of 8 people each, making a total of 2,400
Tourists	An average of 4,000 per year
Local tour operators	Over 20 tour companies with their directors, staff and families estimated at 250 people
Local service providers (lodging, food and catering)	At least 15 providers and their staff estimated at 225 people
Mothers helped by midwives/year	About 100

Source: KAFRED

Figure 2: How revolving funds have been spent (2011)



Source: KAFRED

Direct and indirect beneficiaries

KAFRED directly employs 11 villagers in its offices and as tour guides. Twenty teachers and staff are employed by KAFRED at the secondary school, as well as two cooks. The Science Centre also employs a further staff member. At various times, KAFRED's construction projects have also generated income for local workers, such as at the school, library, the midwives' house at the health unit, and in the maintenance of the tourist trails. Indirect benefits of KAFRED's work have been felt among a wide audience, including those providing tourism-related services and those using wetlands resources.

Another social benefit for the Bigodi community has been a clean water project begun by KAFRED to reduce reliance on the unclean water sources within the wetlands. This has also decreased draining of the wetlands area. KAFRED has used tourist donations and funding from partners to pump clean water from a protected water source nearby. Meanwhile, the boardwalks through the wetlands are used by community members to cross from one area of the village to the other. KAFRED's partnership with Kibale Fuel Wood Project has also led to the building of fuel-efficient stoves for Bigodi families, decreasing the pressures on the forest for firewood and improving health conditions for participants.

The group has encouraged alternative livelihood activities that have helped to increase household incomes and encourage Bigodi farmers to refrain from encroaching on the wetlands. These "eco-businesses" include pig-rearing, goat-rearing, and growing vegetables for sale, and have been funded by the revolving loan fund. To date, at least 90 of the 120 homesteads bordering the wetlands have received the revolving loan. These families have an average size of eight members, yielding over 700 indirect beneficiaries from KAFRED's alternative livelihoods programme.

POLICY IMPACTS

Many of KAFRED's activities have involved close relationships with local government authorities at different levels. These include the local councils at village, parish, sub-county, and district levels. Local government authorities were especially important in the forming of village by-laws governing land use around the wetlands, and in encouraging community participation in KAFRED's projects.

At the national level, KAFRED helped to found the Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) with the purpose of advocating on behalf of community projects at the national level. KAFRED was one of around thirty groups involved in its creation, which was encouraged by a USAID conservation initiative. The idea evolved in 1995 during training workshops on tourism management for community groups situated around Ugandan national park areas. Many of these groups stayed in close contact, and both KAFRED and Bigodi Women's Group were instrumental in the association's inception in 1998. Tinka John Amooti, a founder member of KAFRED, served as its first National Secretary, and the close relationship that developed has meant that KAFRED has had significant input into this national body. UCOTA has managed to successfully influence Ugandan tourism policy, promoting greater emphasis on community projects. They have sat on planning committees for drafting national tourist legislation, and played a role in drawing up Uganda's Tourism Policy in 2003.

In February 2012, the Ugandan parliament hosted the country's first "tourism week". Tinka John Amooti presented directly to parliament on the successes of KAFRED as one of only two representatives of community-based tourism initiatives. The historical event, intended as a forum for discussing Uganda's ecotourism potential, included the speaker of the parliament, ministers of tourism, wildlife and heritage, members of parliament, and representatives of the tourism private sector.

Sustainability and Replication



SUSTAINABILITY

Both KAFRED's organizational and financial sustainability have been ensured by their approach to conservation, ecotourism, and development activities. Fundamental to the success of their community development initiatives has been community participation. This was important in 1992, when KAFRED's founding members were able to draw on the lessons learned from the failure of previous community-based organizations, and in 1995, when KAFRED facilitated the drawing up of village by-laws to govern land use around the wetlands area. It also played a role in the founding of Bigodi Women's Group as a separate entity, avoiding tensions that would have resulted from women's participation in KAFRED itself. Community participatory processes helped to establish the revolving loan scheme for farming families, while all elements of Bigodi village are represented within KAFRED's voting membership. The group is led by an elected committee of seven members, who are re-elected every two years. Many members of the group are from the Bigodi youth community.

In terms of its financial sustainability, KAFRED budgets its revenue, 90% of which comes from boardwalk tourism, to cover the wages of its employees. Community development projects that are not sustainable, or that are reliant on repeated external donor funding are avoided; instead KAFRED has been able to cover the costs of



Table 3: Funding sources for 2010/11

Source of Funding	Percentage of total revenue
Guided (swamp and village) walks (around USD 50,000)	90.5%
Donations and small grants	8%
Guide training fees	0.9%
Sale of souvenirs	0.6%

Source: KAFRED



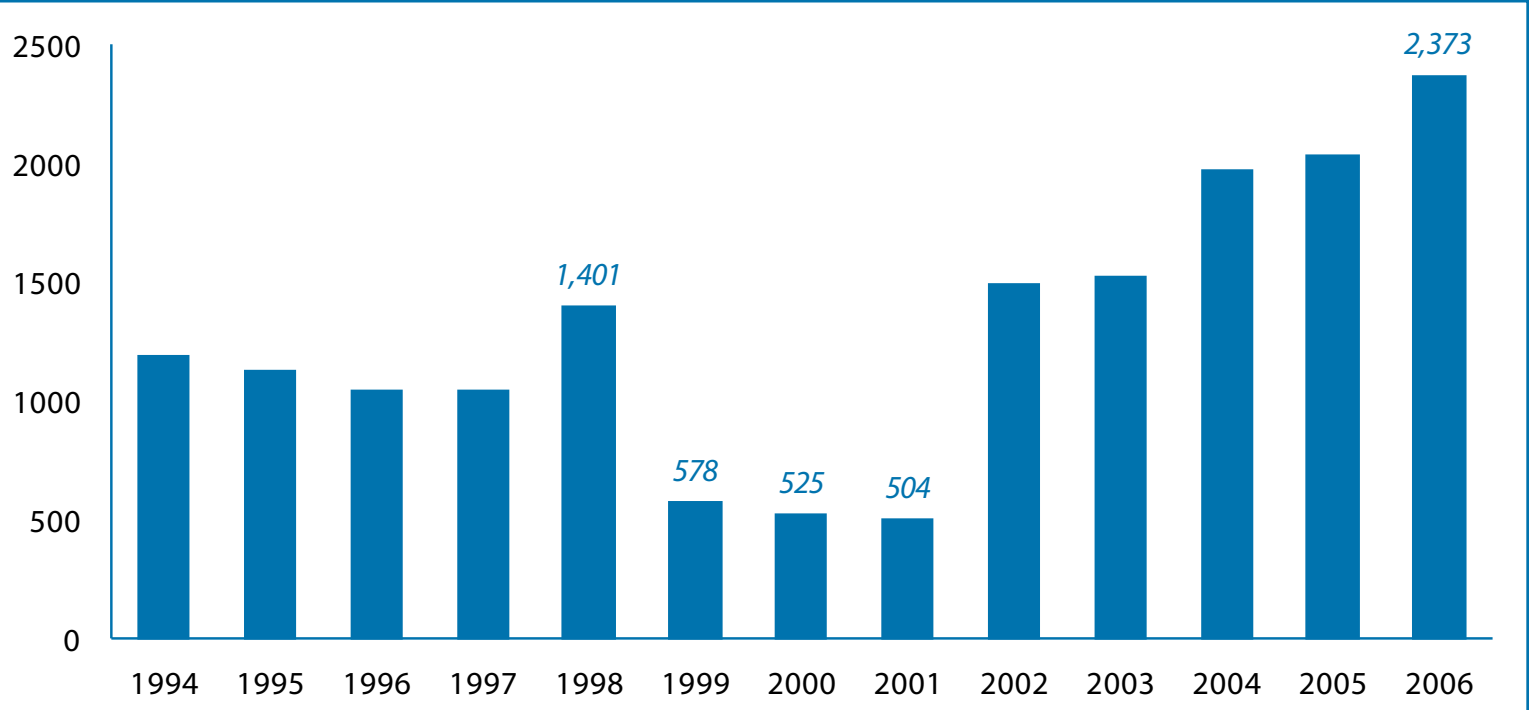
these activities with ecotourism revenues and one-off grants, such as that received from the UNDP Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme in 2004.

Avoiding over-reliance on ecotourism

KAFRED's partnership with the UWA through Kibale Forest National Park has ensured that KAFRED has remained visibly marketed to visitors, and continues to be a thriving tourist attraction within the region. The organization recognizes that over-reliance on ecotourism would undermine the financial sustainability of the initiative, however. This was evident in 1999-2001, when tourism numbers in western Uganda fell after eight tourists were killed in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park in February 1999. The effect was felt in Bigodi, reducing tourism numbers – and therefore revenue – by around 60% for three years.

To address this, KAFRED's current strategic plan includes the goal of collecting at least 20% of total revenue from a non-tourism dependent eco-friendly activity by 2016, while maintaining an average increase in total revenue of 10%. The strategic plan also outlines the need to increase environmental awareness among communities bordering the wetlands by at least 60%; to further reduce encroachment and eucalyptus planting on the wetlands; to maintain a high proportion of KAFRED funds contributing to health, education, and community infrastructure needs in Bigodi; to further diversify income-generating activities for households bordering the wetlands; and to invest 20% of annual revenues in constructing sufficient infrastructure for KAFRED's management activities. This forward planning stands the initiative in good stead for adapting to the challenges it faces.

Figure 3: KAFRED visitor numbers, 1994-2006



Source: KAFRED



REPLICATION

KAFRED has hosted visits from other groups involved in developing community tourism, conservation, or development projects; their model of community participation and 18 years of experience have made the initiative a model for these processes. NGOs also approach KAFRED for training and advice, while replication work has been undertaken in the Rwenzori Mountains and Bwindi Forest areas. This has included developing village walks in nascent ecotourism sites, for instance.

In 2003, KAFRED's work was featured as an example of community-based tourism contributing to poverty reduction and conservation in a UN World Tourism Organization publication. An international panel of experts selected KAFRED as one of two Ugandan initiatives featured, after the Uganda Tourist Board was invited to submit successful ecotourism case studies. In turn, UCOTA requested that KAFRED provide a best practices study concerning their finance and funding, sustainability, and regulation of ecotourism activities. KAFRED's model was published in 'Sustainable Development of Ecotourism – A Compilation of Good Practices in SMEs' (WTO, 2003).

It should be acknowledged, however, that one barrier to knowledge exchange within Uganda has been the many different tribal languages spoken. Community or group dynamics can be vastly different in other areas of the country, and this has occasionally made "transplanting" the KAFRED model difficult. Nonetheless, KAFRED has served as a model at both the national and international levels.

PARTNERS

Various partners have been critical to KAFRED's work. The following are some, although not all, of the groups that have contributed to their success:

- Nature Uganda
- Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) has assisted in offering quality training in areas such as guiding, tourism management, marketing, handicrafts product development, and market access for women's handicrafts.
- Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) has provided guide training and funds through sharing park revenues.
- IUCN has given capacity building trainings in wetlands management and has provided office equipment.
- North Carolina Zoo supplied funding for the secondary school, and has partnered with KAFRED through UNITE; Cleveland Zoo has also funded this initiative.
- Makerere University's field station in Kibale provides researchers to help in conducting monitoring in the wetlands.
- Kibale Fuel Wood Project co-manages the Bigodi Science Centre and helps educate the local community on how to conserve fuelwood.
- Rwenzori Development Foundation has provided funding and field equipment for ecotourism.
- UNDP-implemented Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme has given financial support to document lessons and to share them with other communities locally and globally.
- Uganda Tourist Association.
- UNDP Equator Initiative has raised KAFRED's national and international profile, as well as providing opportunities for networking and media exposure.

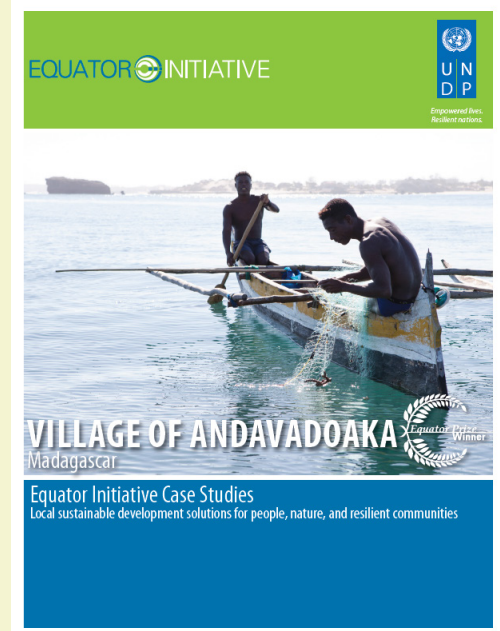
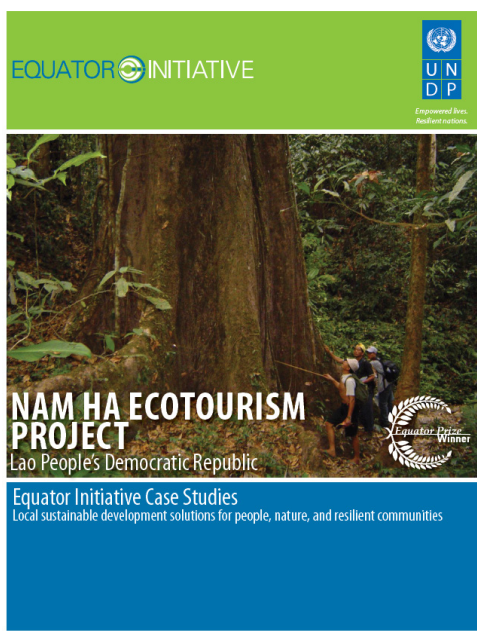
“Conservation cannot be successful without the active participation of local communities. They need to be engaged in the process. Working with schools is an important means for environmental education. In Rutooro, the local language, there is no word for ‘conservation.’ Education is vital for community understanding and participation.”

Tinka John Amooti, Director, KAFRED

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