

Case Study: Wildlife Community Forest Reserves, Pastoralism, and Water Rehabilitation

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KEY MESSAGES

- Support should be given to local communities to incentivize them to cooperate in enforcement of better environmental practices
 - Involve of all key stakeholders in process implementation to achieve greater synergy
 - Education and awareness campaigns are imperative when solving global problems
 - Understanding decision-making structures and the role culture plays in how and who manages nature especially with respect to the role of women is critical
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Background

The Okpazange Community of Cross River State, Nigeria is blessed with a beautiful forest patch called the Aeroplane Field Forest. With a land area of over 16 hectares, the forest is home to a vast number of species of land-based animals such as the endangered **Preuss's** monkey (*Allochrocebus preussi*), also known as Preuss's guenon and endemic birds and fauna. The forest also serves as a watershed to the last freshwater stream for 5 local communities on the Obudu Plateau. Lastly, the Aeroplane Field forest is a tourist attraction providing an alternative source of income to the local community through the artisanal products they sell. Despite the importance of the forest, regional demand for wood energy for cooking and heating is causing deforestation and forest degradation. Further, bush burning and cattle grazing are threatening the forest's integrity. As a result of these activities and the human encroachment, the water source is exposed and drying up. There is also an increase in waterborne diseases and infections in the community, such as typhoid.

After consulting community leaders, Obudu Conservation Centre (OCC) established a community Reserve which is known as the Women's Woodlot Reserve Program in an attempt to tackle the problem. The initiative is focused on protecting the community's forest patch while supporting their needs and is divided into 4 phases;

- Women's Woodlot Reserve
- Women's Woodlot Reforestation Program
- Water Rehabilitation Program
- Pastoralism

Underlying assumptions:

- Community leaders will be open to engaging in creating awareness and enforcing laws against activities that threaten biodiversity.
- There is participation among the youths of the community.
- Schools in the community are willing to educate students on environmental sustainability.
- Radio stations are willing to broadcast awareness raising campaign messages.
- Fulani male herders will be open to fences being erected around selected cattle grazing areas.

Key Stakeholders: Community Leaders, Youths, Schools, Fulani herders, Empretec Nigeria Foundation

Primary Beneficiaries

- Community: economic growth and alternative source of income through skills acquisition programs and reforestation.
- Tourism: Community members, tour guides and rangers, crafts and local produce

1 Key outcomes or Impacts Women's Woodlot Reserve

- With the combined help of community volunteers and OCC staff, fire traces were prepared around sensitive sections of the reserve to prevent fire encroachment during the dry seasons.
- A demarcation and fence was erected along the forest edge to stop cattle encroachment in the Reserve.

Women's Woodlot Reforestation Program

- Tree seedlings were collected to raise fast growing indigenous trees (*Kola parivapa*, *Carapa procera*, *Madagascar spp* and *Isobelina doka*) to plant along the edge of the forest reserve. These species were selected because of their economic benefits to the community. The leaves and fruits are used and traded as vegetables and medicine respectively, and the wood is harvested for timber.
- The reforestation Program provided an alternative source of firewood and economic derivatives for the local community.

Water Rehabilitation Program (improved outcome)

- Existing water pipelines from the stream to 5 communities (Opazanga, Kejiuku, Okwamu, Kegal, and Apah-keji) on the Obudu Plateau were rehabilitated and restored to increase access to safe water.
- The Project increased the understanding of the 5 surrounding communities' on sanitation, hygiene, and waste management in the Obudu Plateau region of Cross River State while working to empower women and youth in the region.

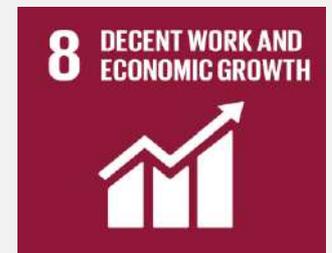
Natural asset



Direct benefits



Indirect benefits



- OCC worked with civil society groups, women and youth to excavate and replace damaged pipelines, and installed larger pipe to enable larger volumes of water to flow more readily to taps. The project increased access to fresh water to 2,691 community dwellers. These communities now receive approximately 60,000 litres of water daily for drinking, cooking, bathing, and washing thereby reducing the labour of women who previously collected water from the forest streams.
- Furthermore, OCC partnered with Empretec Nigeria Foundation (ENF) to develop and conduct a 3-month training on Entrepreneurship (Skills Acquisition), Waste and Agriculture Management for 70 community members, 10 from each of the 7 villages on the Plateau.

Pastoralism

- Obudu Conservation Centre worked closely with the Fulani herdsmen community leaders to outline and create fencing to reduce cattle encroachment into the forest reserve. Such an arrangement ensures sustainable pastoralism in the region while reducing the damage to the forest reserve caused by the cattle and the risk of a transfer zoonotic diseases from cattle and humans.

1. Challenges faced and Actions taken

Challenge

- Continuous human use and pollution of the streams.
- Lack of community awareness on the negative effects of deforestation and bush burning on ecosystem integrity.
- Getting women involved in decision-making despite the constraints posed by culture

Actions

- OCC established a Community Water Management Board to manage and track water usage as well as safeguarding stream water quality.
- Enforcement of community laws is the responsibility of The Community Water Management Board (CWMB) comprising of 1 member from each community and an OCC program manager.
- To empower the women in the community, OCC ensured that 60% of the Water Management Board was female.
- OCC visited schools in the community to create awareness on biodiversity and sustainability.
- With one of OCC's staff members being the youth president of the Okpazange community, OCC leveraged this and used it as a medium to create awareness and encourage participation among the youths.

- OCC raised awareness of the community on the benefits of sustainable use of natural resources and how the successful execution of the Women's Woodlot Program can aid the Okpazange community...The community members felt supported and empowered and as a result, OCC was able to receive 12 volunteers to fence the Women's Woodlot Reserve.

2. Lessons

Lessons learnt:

Recognizing and engaging key stakeholders in the design and implementation of a project is essential. The successful implementation of the Women's Woodlot Program was possible due to involvement of community leaders, youths and schools.

- Understanding local culture and traditions goes a long way in ensuring broader participation of women.
- The local community plays a vital role in the project development. If they feel empowered and supported, they'll be motivated to act to support the development cause.
- It is vital to communicate openly and often with key stakeholders regarding new issues and opportunities for improvement.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are valuable in understanding how different users are interconnected. The Women's Woodlot initiative enabled OCC to understand the SDG model which addresses all stakeholders interests under the condition they don't harm any Sustainable development goal.

3. Insights for the post-2020 framework

- To develop a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, it is imperative that any process undertaken includes all key stakeholders and these stakeholders are properly informed of the implementation processes and strategies to enable them to act accordingly. OCC was able to achieve this by visiting the community leaders and bringing to their attention the underlying problems and the potential solutions offered by the Reserve Program.
- To support skills acquisition programs for communities and indigenous people is critical given their role in protecting biodiversity.
- To facilitate regular monitoring and evaluation of program implementation by community representatives can improve chances of program success.
- To have strong local institutions that place people at the centre managing natural resources is important. The OCC's CWMB is empowering women and strengthening gender equality and ensuring that community economic growth, and better health conditions were attained.