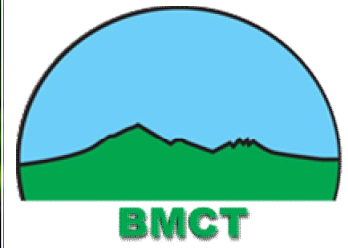


THE NEWS LETTER



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BMCT recognized at WWD

For the last 23 years, BMCT has strongly held its mandate to “foster conservation of biodiversity in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) through investment in community development projects, grants for research and ecological monitoring, funding park management and protection and programs that create greater conservation awareness”.

In celebration of the World Wildlife Day (WWD), 3rd March 2017, BMCT was awarded for its positive contribution towards conservation of BINP and MGNP through its activities among the communities neighboring these parks.

BMCT outstanding contribution among others is Batwa housing projects, Batwa Education, Batwa cultural dances and income generating activities for both the Batwa and non-Batwa like crafts making.

These projects have provided good shelter and food security to the different households. The various projects have provided improved income which they have used to provide education to their children, buy household items like beddings and utensils thus improving community conservation.



Partners and members of



Awareness creation : Is it work undertaking?

In trying to make communities aware of and responsive to its activities and projects, BMCT has effectively carried out awareness creation outreaches to promote conservation of the forests by improving community—parks relationship among neighboring communities. These meetings have enabled the local men, women and even children to appreciate the benefits realized from the two parks.

BMCT interacted with the communities helping farmers understand the relationship between planned community projects and park conservation. This has increased community participation and involvement which has greatly improved their lifestyle and lessened motivation to go cut trees in the forest for fuel.

Butengo, Kisoro District

BMCT staff led by the POCD and the Monitoring and evaluation officer met the **Butengo youth development group** in **Murubindi** and improved them to learn and get skills for making energy saving stoves. These stoves



Sensitization in Butengo, Rubanda district

use less firewood and charcoal. This means that fewer trees will be cut down to serve the purpose thus preserving trees. The stoves also create a smoke free environment. The young men were encouraged to take on the lead since they can use the skills to get income.

Mgahinga, Kisoro District

So far, 6 men and 23 women from Mgahinga are being trained in the construction of energy saving stoves whereas over 30 households in Butengo, Rubanda district have already embarked on the activity. By the end of the training, they had completed 59.



Women in Mgahinga molding energy saving stoves during the training

Retrieval of Batwa land from crafty business men

BMCT primary responsibility is to protect and defend the rights of the minority vulnerable Batwa in South Western Uganda.

The Batwa have constantly battled inter and external upheavals and violent conflicts which have greatly endangered their lifestyle and culture.

They have been vulnerable to disease, famine, social discrimination, displacement as well as poverty. The selfish and cunning “rich” businessmen exploit Batwa vulnerability to become richer.

In Rwabataaha, Rubuguri Parish, Kisoro district, Batwa land which was given to them by BMCT has been cultivated by tea growers by disguised themselves as Government officials. They convinced the Batwa with only 20,000Ugx plus sweet nothings in exchange for their land.

On realizing that, BMCT staff organized a meeting with the Batwa, LC1 chairman and the Manager of the tea growing project.

The Batwa resolved that tea growers to vacate the land with immediate effect. Whereas the Batwa were re-

mindful of the land agreement made between them and BMCT, emphasis was made concerning their land usage.

“we were told that it is a government policy and they gave us 20,000Ugx in exchange of our land.”
-Masaka Egrace

On recovering their land, the Batwa have vigorously cultivated of beans and potatoes supported by BMCT.

Each farmer was given five kilograms of climbing beans. The farmers are proving labor and stakes.

They were also given irish potatoes to supplement the beans.



Murejuru Molly in her garden

This initiative has been taken by BMCT to ensure that families can have food security and thus curbing famine and improving

health and nutrition among the Batwa families. The food crops take a shorter time to mature and yield. They can be also used as a source of income.



Masaka Egrace planting potatoes in her garden

The Batwa expect to live happily thereafter, with enough food for their families and improved health.

"I am glad that my beans are growing. They will give yields from which I will get other seeds to plant the next season. I thank BMCT for giving us land and seeds to plant. My family will have what to eat and we shall not go hungry again"

- Murejuru Molly

VSLA Training

BMCT organized a two days fresher workshop based on re-training VSLA leaders to refresh their knowledge in the concept, principles and leadership of VSLAs, the roles and responsibilities of the leaders, records keeping and conflict resolution. This aimed at increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the scheme to serve the majority poor local communities who lack access to formal financial institutions and services.

The trainees expressed their appreciation towards the workshop. On

assessing the impact of the workshop, Mr. Sylivestri Tugume of Nyabaremura Bakiga Batwa group in Kirundo Kisoro expressed his gratitude for being part of the training.



VSLA training

"I was not well conversant with guiding group members on constitution making but now i am good to go. I would suggest that BMCT continues to assist and train VSLAs on the importance of saving as a group and not only as an individual given our kind of environment and needs. Since January 2013 when we started, I have seen our group members' saving culture improve which has increased their livelihoods and are living as one in harmony"

-Mr. Sylivestri Tugume

We work in the hilly areas adjacent to the BINP and MGNP in western Uganda where the Batwa are poor and have no facilities to send their children to school. Therefore, BMCT developed a scholarship scheme to support Batwa children.

BMCT has been supporting Batwa Children's education with scholastic materials in form of exercise books, pens, pencils and school uniforms.

However, over the past years we have had high drop out cases mostly due to lack of food and having long hours of study on an empty stomach. Therefore children had to beg among their "rich"

neighbors for food.

This year, BMCT has given lunch to the Batwa pupils in schools. These has reduced absenteeism, improved their health and are now very active in class, reduced child labor and improved punctuality. We have had a number of meetings with teachers and head teachers who help in protecting the Batwa children. Batwa children now want to come to school. They focus on their education without being distracted by hunger.

104 beneficiaries have been enrolled at primary, secondary and University levels.



Batwa pupils enjoy lunch at school

“ Absenteeism has been greatly reduced. The Batwa Pupils now attend remedial lessons and can concentrate. Am very sure that their performance will improve”

*-Mrs. Gaudensia Tindikahwa
H/M Rubuguri Primary School*

Brick Houses for Batwa minorities

Previously, BMCT has been constructing mud and wattle houses because of limited funds and poor involvement of the beneficiaries. However, this year, BMCT has engaged Batwa in building brick houses.

Five recipient families were chosen to pilot the project. They were to work hand in hand with BMCT especially in making bricks to use and they are doing

well.

Jane Kanyangamba of Kengoma village in Kanungu District has been very cooperative in this activity. Together with her family, they made 4000 bricks to use in construction of their house.

We have embarked on its construction. The foundation was laid and now is at the windows stage.



Jane Kinyangamba and her grandchiden



Workers laying the foundation



The Trust Administrator monitoring the progress of the house

Who are we?

Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT) is the first biodiversity conservation trust fund of its kind and one of the most powerful biodiversity trusts in Africa.

This trust is unique in the world because of its ownership and management structure that comprises of a strong foundation of local communities around the park, Government of Uganda, international NGOs and private tourism sector.

True to our vision, we believe that people are an important part of any ecosystem.

Vision

To conserve the biodiversity and ecosystem health of Mgahinga and Bwindi protected areas in harmony with the development needs of the surrounding communities.

Mission

To foster conservation of biodiversity in Bwindi and Mgahinga national parks through investment in community development projects, research and ecological monitoring, park management protection and programs that create greater biodiversity conservation awareness.

Important Dates

19th-23rd June: Trust Management Board

12th-16th June: Finance Committee

How we work

While the mission of BMCT focuses on biodiversity, we see people and communities and part of the landscape. Thus we have adopted the unique approach of integrating community development and conservation to strive for both healthy and secure human populations and the protected areas. Our strategic objectives give guidance to program implementation. These are;

- Enhance communities awareness of the value of conservation in general and ecological services of BMCA in particular
- Enhance the knowledge of the long term changes in the status of biodiversity and ecosystem health of BMCA
- Consolidate and expand activities to improve the livelihoods of the communities (Batwa)
- Increase the financial base of BCT to achieve long term financial sustainability

This balanced approach has enabled BMCT to achieve important conservation gains for this unique ecosystem and at the same time is improving the livelihoods of the people in the surrounding communities.

We are community based and participatory. BMCT works with local communities to ensure their direct participation in decision making for effective conservation. Projects are implemented based on the needs the communities themselves have identified.

BMCT initiated a unique mechanism for community involvement through the establishment of local community steering committee. These are people elected by their communities and who take responsibility for project selection and monitoring. These people are trained in leadership skills by BMCT and they act as a link between BMCT and the communities.

We collaborate with many partners including local and international NGOs, community organizations and government agencies to pool resources and capture the strengths of individual partners in achieving common conservation and development goals.