

LUKENYA CONVENTION
Lukenya, Kenya 24-26 January 2014
Report of Conversations

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CONVENTION PARTICIPANTS

The Fifth Barbets Duet Convention was hosted by Sammy Muvelah at his site in Lukenya, about 60km outside Nairobi off the Mombasa Road. All but one Barbet site (Rose Lyimo from Himo, Tanzania) was represented and we also benefited from the presence of several younger people who had not attended a Barbet Convention before.

Barbet Sites, by Country	People Attending Convention
<i>England</i> <i>Woodland Valley Farm, near Truro, Cornwall</i>	<i>Chris Jones</i>
<i>Kenya</i> <i>Seme, near Kisumu, & Nkoroi, nr Nairobi</i>	<i>Oby Obyerodhyambo</i> <i>Hilda Adhiambo</i> <i>Sankara Yambo</i> <i>Rading Obyerodhyambo</i>
<i>Kenya</i> <i>Lukenya, between Athi River & Machakos</i>	<i>Sammy Muvelah, Host</i>
<i>Tanzania</i> <i>Msi Choke Seaweed Growers Cooperative,</i> <i>Mlingotini, south of Bagamoyo</i>	<i>Mama Gishindo</i> <i>Machano Ally Jingalao</i> <i>Mwajuma Mabewa</i>
<i>Tanzania</i> <i>Mwasama Pre & Primary School, Bagamoyo,</i>	<i>Mwajuma Masaiganah,</i> <i>Respect Chipungu Nkoma</i>
<i>Uganda</i> <i>Molo, between Tororo & Mbale</i>	<i>Magode Ikuya</i> <i>Sharon Magode</i>
<i>USA</i> <i>Hannacroix Creek, Hudson River, north of New York City</i>	<i>Barbara Heinzen</i>
	People unable to attend convention
<i>Tanzania</i> <i>Himo, near Moshi</i>	<i>Rose Lyimo and her son, Hans,</i> <i>unable to attend.</i>

LUKENYA CONVENTION SITE

Sammy Muvelah bought his place in Lukenya about eight years ago. Unlike Rose Lyimo's Himo site, where irrigation water from Mt Kilimanjaro flows through a local canal, water is extremely scarce in Lukenya. For that reason, Sammy's sixty acres include a large flat rock which Sammy uses for water harvesting, directing the rainfall into a nearby dam he and his neighbours constructed.

In many ways, Sammy's place was the first Barbet site. Because it is close to Nairobi, many of the partners have been able to visit Lukenya since 2006. They have watched it take shape and heard about the challenges Sammy has met and managed. They have also watched the construction of the dam and a large guest house using solar energy. Sammy's ambition has been to establish more trees in the area, both fruit trees and indigenous trees, while also creating a place for visitors. At a distance, the guesthouse looks out over the

plains towards Nairobi while near the guest house is an open area to be used as a small golf range. The golf range, in turn, is surrounded by a tree plantation. Nearby, are the terraced fields of local villagers who also graze their animals on the plains and at times on the wrong side of Sammy's fences. Higher up the hillside, above the flat rock, is a wild area with very different vegetation and stunning views across the landscape.

OPENING REMARKS

The Lukenya Convention felt auspicious for a number of reasons: it was the inaugural use of Sammy's guest house and the first time that Chris Jones, from England, had been able to attend a Barbet Convention. It was also the first time the founding partners had deliberately included a younger generation, hoping that they would find this experiment challenging and worth continuing. Finally, there was the simple fact that everyone was still meeting, some five years after the Invention Convention in 2009. As Mwajuma Masaiganah put it, *"It has been five years since we started without clear direction, but we were resilient to carry on. The last time we were at Sammy's site it was bare land. ... Sammy expressed a wish to start a dam. It sounded like a dream. Now we are back and that dream has been realized. ... We found a small house ..., but now there is a full house. It is a dream come true."*

Oby also looked back five years, noting that we have come from different parts of the world but share a common goal: *"We have realized the importance of conserving the environment and so improving our lives ... We work together, share our ideas and drink from one well."*

Magode Ikuya, from Uganda, also reviewed our collective progress: *"The good thing is that we have started various things and we are able to encourage each other. We cannot say that what we are doing is insignificant; anything that is big now started as a small initiative."*

SITE REPORTS

After a tour of Sammy's place, we convened on the porch for reports for all the other learning sites. These reports reflected three recurrent preoccupations:

1. What will generate an income or increase food security?
2. What is our relationship with our neighbours?
3. Where and how do we generate environmental benefits?

Incomes & Food Security

As each site reported, it was clear that collectively we were testing numerous ways to improve our incomes. Not only was it clear that collectively our sites are highly diverse in what they produce, but each site had been working to increase the diversity of its income and crops.

At **Lukenya**, Sammy is looking to the guesthouse and to trees to provide an income. His brother has also added a small herd of goats. Some trees are being grown largely for their food value (custard apples, pawpaw, mangos), while others offer better firewood or building materials (Grevalia and *Moringa*).

Oby, in **Seme**, is testing various vegetable crops, both African and European (sweet potatoes, *kunde*, spinach, chickpeas and kales), along with a new piggery valued for its meat and manure. Onions have proven to be especially useful: *"The advantage with onions is that*

they have a long shelf life and few pests.” Not even the goats like onions. Oby’s future plans at Seme include more fruit trees, such as mango and pawpaw. In addition to improving the household’s income, the diversity of crops also increases food security.

Magode Ikuya’s efforts in **Molo** are focused on fish farming, a high value crop which does not require extensive land. His ambition is to restore forest and swamp life around the fishponds, to restore the ecological losses of recent deforestation. His first attempt at building a fishpond, however, suffered serious damage in 2012 when the fish were stolen and the pond destroyed. His 2014 report celebrated the fact that he had replaced the destroyed pond with two new ponds, enclosing both in a high fence and placing a guardian’s hut nearby. *“Fish farming, for now, is very lucrative and can improve the economy,”* he said. This restoration of the ponds was even more remarkable as Magode had been in ill health for much of the previous year when he suffered a serious stroke.

Chris Jones’s income at **Woodland Valley Farm**, is currently coming principally from two sources: first, the conversion of several old stone farm buildings to a hostel & large meeting room that can host school parties and other guests and, second, from the sale of high value organic beef and pork through the newly established Pasture Fed Livestock Association and other outlets. Chris has also planted nut and fruit trees to increased the diversity of food production on the farm.

Msi Choke is a seaweed growers’ cooperative, but they have been looking for ways to diversify their activities and income. Now, in addition to selling their seaweed, they also produce seaweed soap and have started producing honey from hives placed among the mangroves. Over the previous year, they finished construction of a new office and increased the production of soap as a new source of earning. While their membership numbers dropped when the price of seaweed fell, they are hoping that the new income from seaweed soap will bring more people back to the cooperative.

Much of the income for the **Mwasama Pre and Primary School** in Bagamoyo, Mwajuma Masaiganah’s learning site, comes from school fees. The Mwasama report, therefore, focused on what the children were learning about the environment and how they were learning it.

Barbara Heinzen’s place on the **Hudson River** serves no obvious markets right now. *“It produces nothing,”* said Barbara, meaning nothing that has an immediate market value. However, she said it does have high environmental value as it is a relatively rare freshwater tidal area and should have high biodiversity in the young swamp forest that covers much of the land. Her ambition is to find a way to reflect the area’s high environmental value in an economic return of some kind. In 2013, she granted hunting rights to three men who, in exchange, agreed to help manage the land, creating several new footpaths in the woods. Under this arrangement, their first ‘crop’ was a single doe (female deer) shot during the autumn hunting season of 2013. Barbara also saw this agreement as testing the use of mosaic rights in the USA.

Neighbours

Another theme that came up frequently in the site reports was relationships with the neighbours. Some neighbours were imitating what was being done; others were taking advantage of improvements, but often undermining them at the same time. The theft of

Magode's fish was the worst example, but both **Sammy and Oby** at their Kenyan sites complained of neighbours misusing the dams and ponds they had dug. Both were looking for ways to respond to neighbours who allowed their animals to wade into the dams, undermining the banks and contaminating the water. Neighbours also allowed their animals to graze on newly planted trees, even where a fence has been put in place. *"We have three dams [in Seme],"* said Oby, *"and the main challenge is the community not respecting the dams. ... The most destructive thing is the grazing of animals that eat the crops and trees."* **Msi Choke** also reported trouble with neighbours, some of whom do not value the mangrove trees while others cut the ropes used to grow seaweed.

Despite these difficulties people at every Barbet site believed that relationships would improve as the knowledge and benefits of what we are doing is shared. **Chris Jones** said that they had set aside five acres of land where people without gardens could grow what they wanted. They began with 50 allotments, but after a year of bad weather in Cornwall, only 20 are currently in use. In **Molo, Uganda, Magode** hopes that predation will turn to imitation over time. He wants to *"use the site as a learning site. We hope that the people in the neighbourhood will emulate the pond/environmental protection initiatives."* **Msi Choke** described the training that they had received and then shared with women in the community. In **Seme**, Oby's brother, Cus, has a youth group and hopes in time to engage a few young people in planting diversified food crops as a way of improving food security in the neighbourhood. A field containing five different varieties of sweet potatoes in a notable experiment there. **Barbara's** agreement with the hunters along the Hudson River is another example of finding ways to share the benefits of the land as a way of improving its management and creating stronger neighbourly relations.

Restoration & protection of the environment

Another theme in the site reports concerned the protection or restoration of environmental wealth. In the case of the fishponds, there is an explicit commitment to increasing the forest cover in the area. That will slow the movement of water and restore the swamps that dried up with deforestation. Mwajuma described tree planting at the **Mwasama School** in terms of its environmental education. *"We try to teach young people the importance of trees and the need for conservation of the environment. We educate them on what the trees do to the environment ... [their] aesthetical value ... water conservation and the relation with trees."* The planting of fruit trees created an opportunity for lessons on malnutrition. The children are also responsible for looking after the trees and crops they plant as well as raising their own chicks. Often these are trees and chicks they bring from home after the holidays.

In their site report, **Msi Choke** reported that mangrove planting is now an important third activity of the group. Moreover, when they transfer their own learning to women in the community, they *'have learnt and embraced environmental conservation.'* Mangroves have also improved fish production and increased production of *cotoni* seaweed which in turn has increased income.

Chris Jones' environmental activity in Cornwall has taken a variety of forms, first in maintaining the woodlands which account for roughly 15% of the farm's land. He has also converted a number of annual pastures to permanent pastures growing a variety of plants with different root structures reaching different depths in the soil. This helps to bring up different nutrients that improve the quality of the soil. *"About 30% of the land has been converted and we are very pleased with the results,"* said Chris. *"The cattle are growing better*

and faster with the grass than with supplementing the feed.” Permanent pastures have also reduced the carbon footprint of the farm, so that it now absorbs more CO² than it emits in a year.

In addition to his efforts to regenerate the trees around his fishponds, **Magode** reported that *“We have a place earmarked as a shrine where we hope to do other things.”* Mama Gishindo, from Msi Choke, later endorsed this thinking. *“We used to be told that in such a place there were demons and it was a kind of environmental protection.”* At **Seme**, Oby and his brother, Henri, pointed to an undisturbed area outside the gates of the family compound. They called it ‘the sacred grove’ because it contained a variety of trees and wildlife which they intend to protect and maintain.

Conclusion of Site Reports

The site reports always take considerable time, but allow others to appreciate the variety of things being tried and to see where there is common ground or similar lessons to be learned. Barbara, whose report implied a certain despair that she could ever put things right, appreciated the advice given by Mama Gishindo, which could be applied to all the sites. *“I have two suggestions for Hudson,”* said Mama Gishindo. *“First, look for a partner who can invest in the place. Second, you are starting something very hard, but as Msi Choke continued we found our way. So think about the hunters. Ask them to become partners and members of the project so that they have a stronger voice. Give them a share of what you are doing. The problem is too complex for an individual.”*

ISSUES & DECISIONS

After the site report, Sammy Muvelah noted three areas to address in order to update the Barbets Duet experiment:

1. A Barbets website
2. Action research proposal
3. Interns

“Those are the three flagship resolutions of the year ...”

A presence on the web

There was wide agreement that we needed to have presence on the internet. Barbara has intermittently posted Convention reports and documents on a Barbets page on her own website, but she has failed to establish and create an independent Barbets Duet website, largely due to a lack of skill with websites and the lack of a budget to hire someone more knowledgeable.

“We need to make our presence felt, we need to make our work known --- and the website is one way of doing that,” said Magode Ikuya. Mama Gishindo, from Msi Choke, added two more reasons for establishing a website: *“First, climate change means that environmental issues are essential. Second, we need to inform and inspire a younger generation of people who will get to know us and value us. A website will give us a face and make our work known.”*

Mwajuma Masaiganah endorsed the need to be known:

“It is important that we have been around for a while and sustained ourselves. We are still here. That is important. ... Many people rubbish what we are doing, but a lot of progress has been made. ... As pioneers, how do we make our work known, its benefits and its contribution to the larger environmental agenda?”

She also saw internal value in having a website, for our own discussions and for attracting interns to work at our sites:

“As pioneers, it is also very important for our own growth that we have a place where we talk about who we are, what we do, the structures that exist in our various organisations.

“We also need to help interns get to know who we are. We need to make our structure known. A structure where interns would fit in, like teaching at Mwasama school or working in fish farming. Every site needs to have its own structure and story and what we are offering to interns.”

PURPOSES OF A BARBETS DUET WEBSITE

1. Make our presence felt, make our work better known.
2. With climate change, environment is a crucial issue.
3. Inform and inspire a younger generation.
4. Recruit interns and others who share our interests and want to work with us.
5. Offer a clear statement of our principles, our ideals and our values.
6. Demonstrate that it is possible to do things in a different way.

While the purposes of a website were obvious, Oby reminded us of our limits in exploiting this technology. *“Clearly we need an internet presence of some kind. Also, clearly, we do not have the financial or technical capability to develop a website and keep it up to date.”*

Start with a Facebook page

Given the need for a web presence while having only limited funds and technical prowess, it was agreed that we would begin with a Facebook page, with sub-tabs for each Barbet Learning Site. Sites would be responsible for updating their own tabs, while Respect Nkoma (from the Mwasama learning site) and Sankara Yambo (Seme & Nkoroi) agreed to take the lead on developing the Facebook page for the Barbet project as a whole.

The Barbets Duet Facebook page would include a statement of values, principles and ideals, possibly based on the “Useful Principles” identified at the Partners Meeting in 2009, held at the home of Oby and Hilda Obyerodhyambo, in Nkoroi, outside Nairobi.

Useful Principles

Barbets Duet Working Assumptions	Initial Governance Principles	Establishing a Barbet Site
Multiple experiments & diverse sites → rapid learning	Each site evolves in its own way to its own conditions.	“Just Begin” With something that bears fruit quickly
Equity & engagement across knowledge, power & culture	There is value in coming together.	Barbet activity is consistent with its site
Give & gain: Everyone has something to give & something to gain.	In coming together, all have a stake and all share responsibility.	Shape environmental ambitions around immediate needs.
Mosaic Rights → support environmental goals.		Learning by demonstration
		Thinking step by step; one thing follows on another
		Follow the path of least resistance; start with what is most possible.
		Utu Net Benefits are widely shared, w/ humans & wild

“Rather than asking how can Lukenya support a Friesian cow, I ask: what can Lukenya support?”
Sammy MuveLah, '10

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These principles were identified at the Nkoroi Partners Meeting, Kenya in August 2009

What are we? We are a *Jumuiya*

While discussing the website, people also agreed that we needed to define clearly who and what we are. This question was articulated by Oby: *“What are we and how do we relate to each other? What binds us together? I think we are kindred spirits, but that sounds weird. ...”*

After more discussion, testing various words and concepts, someone suggested we use a Swahili word: *jumuiya*. The Swahili speakers defined *jumuiya* as “a group of people with a shared vision, values and goals.”

This word, *jumuiya*, was immediately adopted into the language of the discussion. It established a break with English language assumptions behind words like ‘collective’, ‘network’ or ‘cooperative’. Above all, to everyone’s ears it was an accurate description of the way we work together. The group then struggled with a short phrase that would identify the Barbets Duet as a *jumuiya*, finally agreeing to work towards something along the following lines:

The Barbets Duet: A jumuiya (collective, or constellation) of learning sites experimenting with ways to support people who support the natural world.

What market? Who rewards environmental capital?

A more challenging aspect of the website discussion arose from advice Barbara Heinzen had been getting from several supporters around the world since mid-2012. These were all small clues about a possible new direction for the Barbets Duet.

The first advice came from a US-based computer ‘hactivist’, [Om Goeckermann](#), who been involved with [Ushashidi](#). This website was developed during the post-election violence in Kenya and used SMS messages to map the violence and peace efforts of that difficult period. Om was very impressed with the Barbets Duet, saying that many people had entrepreneurial ideas, but very few had real activities in place, let alone a history of five years. “You already have something on the ground and that gives you a huge advantage,” he said. He proposed developing a website where people at each learning site could use smart phones with GPS (Global Positioning Systems) to photograph, map and document the work being done at each Barbet Learning Site.

Some months later, Barbara was talking with Bill Forsythe, an old friend who had just had a major project financed by Silicon Valley money. He suggested that we should be seeking the backing of people who had made money in the IT revolution and were now looking for new projects, often with a strong element of social or environmental entrepreneurship. Barbara had responded by describing the Barbets Duet as a ‘small project with big ideas’ that might just appeal to people like that. Bill immediately corrected her: “What you are doing,” he said, “is not small. It is very big, so you need to describe it that way.” Bill offered to introduce Barbara to a possible backer.

The third person Barbara met was Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, former director of the Malaysian Institute of Micro-electronic Systems, MIMOS. Tengku Azzman was responsible for bringing the IT revolution into Malaysia’s development plans. He was also very supportive, but made the point, that we are small group with a limited reach. “I am not advising to do this, but you might want to think about using crowd-sourcing to help solve the problem you have set for yourselves.”

These three scraps of advice, point to a potentially valuable – and risky – experimental space. Could a Barbets Duet website be designed that would begin to experiment with crowd-sourcing in order to reward people who had improved the environmental quality of the land they manage? Could we create an online market place for our environmental achievements that would sell itself, in part, by inviting people to participate in our experiment?

This proposal gave rise to a long debate that continued into the night on Saturday. The Barbets Duet is based on the need to find new ways to include the value of environmental health in the economic system and to do so in a way that rural peoples’ own livelihoods are improved. As one person put it, *“We are trying to maintain the foundation of ecological balance – whatever we engage in or would like to do must be in the interest of a balanced ecology.”* But who will pay for that ecological health and balance?

Sammy Muvelah noted that everything we produce in our sites requires a healthy environment. *“So the seaweed requires a mangrove forest to be successful, or Seme requires sacred groves to pollinate the crops.”* Using this thinking, the price of seaweed should support both the production of seaweed and the preservation of the mangroves. The price of sweet potatoes and onions should support the maintenance of the sacred grove in Seme. That, however, is rarely the case in today’s markets. So what are the alternatives?

Oby observed the difference between mass-market tourism in Kenya and eco-tourism to visit gorillas in Rwanda, implying that the Rwandan model was more lucrative.

Barbara then listed the markets that currently exist to pay for environmental goods.

1. Hi end eco-tourism – e.g. gorillas of Rwanda
2. Organic produce – e.g. like Chris Jones’s livestock & Pasture-Fed Livestock Association
3. Formal carbon markets – where it can cost \$250,000 to qualify as a carbon offset
4. Voluntary carbon markets – lively, but hard to distinguish chicanery from innovation
5. Govt/philanthropic market – e.g. Nature Conservancy buys large tracts of land, or the Government runs a national park. This is a kind of ‘gift economy’.¹

In her view, even when added together, these markets offer insufficient income (especially to smallholders) to reverse the economic logic of environmental damage in our present system. So what can be done?

Oby noted that *“The first task we face, is changing people’s minds. We say biodiversity will address many other issues. Currently, we are taking a lot from the land. So how do we convince people that [what we do] is a viable option for getting out of poverty? We need to create an appreciation and understanding of the potential. ... The current thinking is that what works now is what works best, so we extract, extract, extract.”*

Chris Jones cited the power of demonstration and imitation in changing minds. *“Sammy’s dam is being tried by two others in the area,”* he noted.

Oby added the example of his younger brother. *“Cus was a student in community development. Occasionally ... we would do a few things together. When he finished his degree, he decided to go back to Seme and started doing things. His friends thought he was crazy, [but] he suddenly realized there is a gold mine ... there is something going on.”*

Magode defined the problem more broadly: *“There are those who are farming crocodiles, or tortoises and are also part of the new economy. Ours however is a more fundamental concept. ... The ultimate question is how did our environment reach this kind of crisis? It is [because of] the craze for doing things in a certain kind of way ... [which tends] to destroy the basic assumptions that support all of man. It seems to be endless.*

“So we are asking: how can we transform the situation? ... What are the economic factors that help shape that environment? As it stands, it will always shape a world that is a bit queer...”

“So that is what we are experimenting, fundamentally, on. Of course we must use current opportunities. I must have fish which I can sell in the market. Not everyone who goes to buy fish is interested in environmental markets ... so we use the weapons that exist. ... A new mindset does not come overnight, but when new conditions emerge, that will enable the mindset to change.

“I want to ask that we look more at creating conditions for the emergence of new ideas. That is why we are experimenting.”

¹ There are also emerging markets in biodiversity offsets whereby a wetlands might be destroyed in one place by a property developer who then pays to restore or maintain a similar wetland elsewhere.

Oby returned to the example of high value organic markets and their limitations. *"There is a barrier that we still need to cross. We don't want to just create an elite market for a high value good. We just end up creating another Rolls Royce type thing. We say, Chris's beef is what everybody should be eating. But they don't. Why? First, they don't appreciate it, and second, they are not willing to pay a larger price for it. But how do we transform it so that every person will be eating the Rolls Royce of beef?"*

Chris believes that change will follow deeper environmental crises. *"That transformation will happen because people will be forced to eat organically. I could make beef quicker, but it comes at an environmental cost."*

At this point, Sammy Muvelah, who works in Nairobi's financial markets, looked at the problem from a different perspective. *"Capital on its own must be rewarded. Just because it is financial capital it gets some reward. That reward is not exceptional. ... If you have a million pounds a banker will pay you for that. But if you have a million pounds of environmental value, you don't get anything. Because we haven't figured out who will pay you for it."*

Oby then challenged him, *"Why do they pay for it?"*

"Because they need it," replied Sammy. "So we need to find the bank that recognizes that need. ... That is what we are struggling with. We are struggling to find a buyer."

Oby again drew the analogy with Chris's organic beef sales in the UK. *"But we know the buyer. Chris Jones can sell his beef because he knows the buyer"* Sammy, however, insisted that we have not yet understood how to market what we do.

"The product," said Oby, 'is right under our noses so we should be spending our time and energy in selling, and education and promotion. ... How do we make what we are doing go viral? Because we do not have time – the earthy is heading in the wrong direction. We do not have 2000 years."

All agreed. *"We are saying that ecological health is wealth,"* concluded Chris, a sentiment that all could accept. In the absence of any monetary return, he added that *"one measure of our success is that people start imitating us."*

The discussion convinced everyone listening that capital is capital and must be paid for. We can get paid for providing financial capital, but who pays for ecological and social capital? What are the ways of paying for ecological and social capital that exist now or can be tested with live experiments?

This is a research question which can be tested with a new website or by direct commissioning of research from an interested institution or by our own discoveries.

Conclusions

- Barbara has permission to experiment with a new website idea, which will include the Facebook information as well as experiments testing different forms of payments & support for both ecological and social capital. The website will be just one way of discovering who might pay for ecological and social capital.

- We need to discover what might be the other sources of payments & support for ecological and social capital. The website will help us discover those individuals and institutions.
- What we have in common is the goal of maintaining an ecological balance. This balance is the foundation for all other activities. We will never do anything that is harmful just so that we make money.

POTENTIAL MARKETS	Products of “Thing” Culture:	Products of “Earth” Culture
Utility: creating things we need e.g. clean water, air, food, medicine, cosmetics, building materials; biofuels	Moveable products <i>Tangible, portable, Species-specific</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timber & grasses <i>(wild & domestic)</i> • Medicinal plants • Domestic biodiversity <i>(e.g. seed & semen banks)</i> • Edible – wild & domestic <i>(e.g. roots, bush meat)</i> 	Environmental products <i>Intangible, immovable, Site-specific habitats</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground water recharge • Water purification • Carbon sinks <i>(e.g. swamps, grasslands, uncut forests)</i> • Waste management <i>Decomposition services</i>
Insurance: reducing risks of climate change, flooding, loss of ground cover due to climate extremities; loss of food species to disease or bad weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodlots & grasses • Medicinal plants • Diverse food supply • Domestic biodiversity <i>(e.g. seed & semen banks)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood control • Micro-climate change • Wild biodiversity • Carbon sinks
Aesthetics Fashion, bragging rights, tourism, meditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edible wild: <i>(e.g. teas, roots, bush meat)</i> • Wild biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species habitats
Intellectual property Genetic reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicinal plants • Domestic biodiversity <i>(e.g. seed & semen banks)</i> • Wild biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species habitats to support genetic reserves
Learning & Advisory Services Practical land management & business, Integrating income & environ'tal restoration, Managing experiments & systemic invention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbets Game • local field guides • 'How-to' manuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centres (c.f. Eden Project) • Advice on environment/economics integration • Working stays at sites

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This table came out of various conversations in 2007 while testing the Barbets Duet Concept Note.

Action Research Proposal

On Sunday morning, the group took up the proposal to do action research. This came from one of Barbara’s colleagues, Jos Motmans. Jos lives in Belgium where he works with local governments and NGOs on strategic planning and scenario thinking. He has long taken an interest in the Barbets Duet as a self-organising experiment and proposed in 2013 that he and Barbara develop an Action Research proposal to take stock of what the different Barbet learning sites were doing and had achieved. Jos saw this exercise as resembling the first stage of a classic scenario building project in which key people would be interviewed and the results of the interviews would be analyzed and reported back to those who had been interviewed. Unlike a scenario project, however, the interviewing and reflection process would not lead to the drafting of scenario stories of the future, but to fresh thinking about what needs to be done next at each Barbet Learning Site and with the *jumuiya* as a whole.

Jos and his wife, Helga, are also involved with several projects in Belgium similar to the Barbets Duet learning sites. One of them had asked to be included in the Action Research plan and Jos thought that there would be other European sites interested in participating. Jos therefore proposed that these other projects be included for their own benefit and as a source of comparison, up to a total of twelve sites.

More explicitly, he imagined that two experienced interviewers (one East African, one European) would visit each Barbet or European site for up to five days. They would interview key people and get to know the site. Once all the interviews were done, the two interviewers and a small number of people from the sites would work together to analyse the interview results. These findings would then be reported back to everyone who had been interviewed.

In addition to learning about the work of the Barbets Duet, Jos saw the Action Research as a valuable way for Barbet participants to reflect on what has been done over the past five years in order to think about future plans. Barbara agreed and together they developed several different draft proposals, finally settling on the process described above. That process was agreed over the telephone the day before Barbara flew out to East Africa in January 2014, so she was only able to present a rough oral description of the Action Research plan.

Not surprisingly, with little in writing, no experience of working with Jos Motmans, and only a brief verbal description of his research plan, there was significant resistance to agreeing to be the 'guinea pigs' for a European action research proposal. How, for example, will the non-Barbet sites relate to the Barbet sites? asked Mama Gishindo from Msi Choke. Who decides what questions are asked during the interviews? How would the feedback of the interviews take place? Nearly everyone from East Africa had had experience working with researchers from abroad who then disappeared without sharing any of their research findings with people in East Africa. They did not want the same thing to happen here.

Eventually, the research idea was endorsed, with some important conditions. Magode put the dilemma very succinctly: *"We want to be open to people researching with us. But we want to protect ourselves from people who might want to change our agenda."*

Oby agreed. *"We don't want to be anybody's guinea pigs, just to satisfy their own new-fangled ideas. It is our initiative, and must be beneficial to us. We must negotiate that relationship so it benefits us."*

There was also wide agreement that there must be feedback. *"The research findings must be brought back to us. We don't want to hear about it being published elsewhere while we don't know anything about it,"* said Mama Gishindo.

Sammy added that the feedback needed to be done collectively. *"We are a collective, but we are also individual sites. So the feedback must be given to us as a community, not individually. Otherwise the research could destroy us."* The research needed, he said, to recognize that we are a jumuiya.

Conclusion: The group gave Barbara conditional approval to continue developing this idea, subject to consultation and review by Oby and (to a lesser extent) Mwajuma, both of whom

had experience of action research with Europeans. The group also insisted on shaping the approach to the research and reserved the right to opt-out.

Interns

The second issue discussed on Sunday morning was the question of interns. The previous day, people had been imagining a formal open invitation to Western interns who might want to work with Barbet sites in East Africa. With that model in mind, Chris Jones offered to find out whether the Barbets Duet could join WWOOF as a *jumuiya* rather than as 8 separate sites.² That led some to wonder about the questions we would need to be able to answer, e.g.: Who is in charge? What organization is hosting them? How is that organization structured? Etc.

In fact, the issue of interns was much simpler. There were two American students who wanted to come to East Africa to work with Oby. However, their parents did not want them to be in Kenya which they thought was too dangerous. So, asked Oby, would other Barbet sites be willing to host them? Could they spend time at the Mwasama School in Bagamoyo or with Msi Choke? They would be arriving in August 2014 for three months.

This, smaller proposal was accepted, with the possibility that the Americans might spend time at different Barbet sites. Hilda Adhiambo asked if we needed to develop Barbet guidelines on internship, turning to Mwajuma Masaiganah for her experience of interns.

"I think we need to be flexible," Mwajuma replied. "I have learned at times interns say 'enough is enough'. Being flexible will give leeway to them, while the jumuiya may then have something else at another learning site."

This conversation was all in the context of accepting interns from the USA or Europe. However, the group also agreed there should be similar exchanges between the East African sites. *"So our young people can visit other sites here in East Africa. That will not be expensive to do. That would also institutionalize the next generation, so we can pass on the baton and retire,"* said Oby, somewhat optimistically.

Mama Gishindo agreed. *"When I heard that Magode's daughter was coming here, I was very pleased. I wished that my daughter could also come. That way, we are going to leave an inheritance of ideas to the young ones. After all, how difficult is it to send my son to your place? Ugali is the same in both places."*

Hilda added that *"We also need to share interns south to north,"* sending East African young people to the USA or UK as well as welcoming Americans and Europeans in Africa.

Barbara agreed and promised to circulate the accounts of the Travel Fund once they were finished so that we could decide how best to use the remaining funds. Chris Jones put in a request that Barbara also find ways to add more money to the Travel Fund, which has been so useful in both 2012 and 2014.

² [WWOOF](#): World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, or Willing Workers on Organic Farms. This organization places volunteers on organic farms where they work in return for their room and board. Chris Jones says he pays, as a farm, to be a member and in return volunteers come to work at Woodland Valley Farm.

Conclusion: Two American interns will be welcomed by Oby, but will work in one or more of the Barbet sites outside of Kenya. Internships will also be encouraged within East Africa, by sending young people to other sites in the region. If all agree, the Barbet Travel Fund could be used to support East African interns at other Barbet sites including Woodland Valley Farm, in the UK, or Barbara's place on the Hudson River in the USA.

GENERATIONS & SUSTAINABILITY

As the meeting concluded, the group returned to the question of sustainability. Most of us, noted, Chris Jones, are involved in activities that give some financial return, but there is a larger generational dimension to consider if we are to be sustainable. *"Personally, with my site, I would like it to carry on as a site after my time, but that presents very difficult social problems for us because the normal way of succession would be to split the property amongst my children which would weaken the site. So we have to think of different ways of passing this message on through generations."*

Magode expanded on Chris's remarks. *"We should talk about sustainability in three different forms: First, we must look at how to integrate the young generation into our each and diverse programmes at different levels ... to introduce them to the skills of what is going on [as happens now with my daughters]. ... The eventual plan is to take management to the younger people, to ensure that the thing can carry on for a long time to come."*

However, Magode's project involves clan land that must be shared out. *"So I am creating a holding group that goes beyond me and beyond this generation that we are talking about. The holding group is my particular solution."*

Second, beyond one's own succeeding generations, Magode said that *"the site idea must also become social. Other people must be part of the solution [generating] ... many other projects ... at a much larger scale. So that the demise of one person does not mean the demise of the whole idea"*.

Finally, there was a third aspect, which is not often mentioned: the culture that supports these ideas and behaviours. *"One of the ideas we have in mind is the 'shrine' issue. To keep one place as a sacred place because our people react very strongly to sacred ideas. ... there is even a site we have in mind, where we will plant trees and things, but we will make it holy, with rituals so that out of the holiness of this place, it will not be destroyed. Among the Karamajong in our area, there used to be the burial of elders under trees, which served to protect trees for a very long time. So that is a form that can create many things."*

Mama Gishindo echoed these observations. *"Mr Magode knows that ... in the past, we would never destroy the environment. ... if we saw a young person playing, we would come and say there is a bogey man that might affect you and ... the young people would avoid that place. ... So using techniques that were a deterrent, the young people would not destroy this place."*

In the spirit of generations, Sammy asked the young people for their comments after listening to the discussion for two days. Oby and Hilda's elder son, Sankara, spoke first.

"First off, I just want to appreciate the efforts that everyone has made to be here. ... I really like the idea that we have people from different cultures meeting here because it is multi-dimensional. We ... learn from each other in a variety of ways. ... I think that what the group

is doing on each site is important because it adds value to the land. ... I have enjoyed being a participant in the group and would like to help in whatever way I can – in the internship programme or coordinating the Facebook page, or helping with the research programme.”

Sankara’s sister, Rading, spoke next, referring first to the opportunity to travel with Chris and Barbara to Seme and Magode’s place in Uganda. *“The travelling was fun and enjoyable. Seeing what we are doing in Seme and how it is progressing and seeing the challenges and the benefits, it gets you thinking, it takes your mind away from what you are used to – facebooking and texting ... So mine as a so-called new generation is to encourage people to undertake these activities ... to encourage everyone to do what you are doing.”*

Magode’s daughter, Sharon, had travelled to Nairobi from Mbale by coach and *matatu*. *“I actually enjoyed my journey here, I like the wildlife, but when I got to see the dry patches around here, I realized what it means to lose our trees around Mbale. So I think we really to need to save our trees and our environment. And I also now realize that there are so many opportunities for making money while saving the environment. And I hope I will get more opportunities to participate in this.”*

Respect Chipungu Nkoma, who teaches at Mwasama, travelled with Mwajuma Masaiganah and the MsiChoke partners. *“I should say thank you ... for the opportunity to be one of the youngest. I have not visited so many areas, but through the reports, I have the idea of what they are doing ... We all have the same idea on conserving the environment. I think for me, it is a great opportunity. I get so many ideas through the discussions of so many things. This will not be the end for my side. ... I am happy just because of this discussion we had about Facebook and Twitter, it will be a great opportunity for us and will be able to contribute. ... Seeing so many trees in different areas and so beautiful. ... I can say everything you have done here is good to my sight. I will continue from this and make it go ahead. Thank you very much.”*

Sammy then asked Chris Jones to speak. *“I am going to ask Chris Jones to speak. He represents the best idea of what we should NOT try to do: to have the same green grass he has in England. We have what we have, and we should take care of it. So Chris, give us your sentiments.”*

“I have known Barbara and about her concept of the Barbets Duet for about six years,” said Chris. *“When she invited me to be a member of the Duet, I was very eager to do so ... In the story of humanity we have had many kinds of revolution – some technical, some social. We have had the agricultural and industrial revolutions. And now is the time, the start of the ecological revolution. The work that we are all doing as individuals and jointly is of the utmost importance.*

“Up to now, it has been very difficult to [come to a Convention]. But also I have been reluctant to take the resources and emit the carbon needed to make a flight to East Africa. Until it became apparent that possibly this could be justified by the gain in my understanding. I can report that my expectations have been completely exceeded by what I have witnessed here. Meeting you here, it strengthens me. And there are things I can apply at home or things we can try here. I have now an understanding of exactly how committed all you members of this jumuiya are, having experienced some of the problems of travel and communication you have. I now am sitting in a very special group. ... And while I accept there may be very many

failures and disappointments in our experiments, as was said yesterday, it is a little bit like childbirth, in the end we are going to produce a very beautiful baby.”

CLOSE

As host and chairman of the meeting, Sammy offered a formal close: *“I think we have come to the end of this meeting and I can say without a doubt we have made progress. I think the journey ahead will be a bit more challenging. We know there is a great product out there, we just don’t know how to sell it. And that product is based on the environment.”*