



**MGAHINGA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION
(MCDO)**

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

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1.0 Introduction

MCDO was designed to work as an umbrella organisation for different projects that operate in the community surrounding Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) Kisoro district, south western Uganda aiming at saving people and conserving wild life. MCDO is the leading community non governmental organisation that is working towards conservation of the MGNP area. MCDO operates from communities that are adjacent to the national park. MCDO's main objective is to build the capacity of local community from the Mgahinga area so as to achieve sustainable development through conservation of the community and Mgahinga Gorilla NP which is a home for the rare mountain gorillas. The aim of MCDO is to help these communities attain sustainable development through poverty reduction, conservation of the beautiful environment, education, good health, income generation and sustainable agriculture.

Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, as part of the Virunga Volcanoes region is recognised by the international community for its importance in conserving biological diversity and in providing crucial environmental services to the surrounding human communities. Despite relative success in conservation of some of its resources e.g. the endangered mountain gorillas, there are increasing threats to the park's resources emanating from the surrounding growing human population and their activities.

The projects that are being carried out by MCDO address threats that are derived from the fact that the surrounding communities have limited incomes and diversification from their current livelihood options. It is based on the assumption that successful conservation of Mgahinga GNP requires the support of the neighboring communities and that these communities will only support the park if there is some value derived from the park and its resources. Therefore the projects supported by MCDO bring benefits to the people and at the same time build the capacity of Mgahinga GNP to better manage the park.

By aiming to enhance the conservation of Mgahinga GNP which is an important area of biological diversity, MCDO work relates directly on biodiversity conservation. As a forested area, Mgahinga GNP plays the additional role of a water catchment area and also contributes towards soil conservation, carbon storage (therefore linking to global climate change) and regulation of local climate.

The projects supported by MCDO are:

- Amajambere Iwacu Community Camp (AICC)
- Mgahinga Community Heritage (MCHO)
- Mgahinga Community Sponsorship Scheme (MCSS)
- Mgahinga Parkview Credit & Savings (MPCS)
- Mutanda Eco Community Centre (M.E.C.C)
- Gisozi Duterimbere Farmers' Association (GDFA)

2.0 Executive Summary

This report was written to give a broader picture of the projects and major achievements of MCDO in the year 2009. During this period, MCDO used the available resources to implement some projects. The organisation has managed to achieve this through the assistance from the member organisations, volunteers and partner organisations like MbirimBiri Association (MMA) in Sweden. The report also provides information on the activities of MCDO member groups.

The projects that have setoff in 2009 include research on golden monkeys of Mgahinga Gorilla National Park that is being carried out by Sandra Gray, a volunteer from United Kingdom. The research is about ***The Status and Ecology of Golden Monkeys***. GDFA also started a mushroom growing project. MCDO has provided funds to start this project and the project is beneficial in a sense that it will boost income generation for the local farmers by selling the produce.

More still, in 2009, the organisation hosted two intern students from Sweden and they have been training in the organization's different projects. One of them was a nurse and worked with Mutolere hospital and Gisozi health II in addition to making sensitization about family planning in the communities of Mgahinga and Chihe parish.

MCDO has improved its member organisations skills in many fields through its educating, supporting and coordinating role. Since its founding, women groups have made a living through AICG, agricultural strategies have spread through GDFA, MCSS has supported more than 120 students education, profits from MCH have benefited community health initiatives through stretcher groups and formerly impoverished people have been strengthened through MPCs' micro credit loans. On a more abstract level, many opportunities for meaningful and fruitful occupation have initiated. Additionally, MCDO explores the opportunities involved by adopting a tourism development strategy.

The lake Mutanda ecological community center is also under construction and there is much progress. Currently, some activities can be carried out at the site such as canoeing, bird watching, snake visit, swimming lessons, medicinal plants and other biodiversity identification. Facilities to be provided include limited accommodation, ground for do it yourself tents, meals with order. One may inquire for any other activity. MCDO together with its partner organisation MbirimBiri Foundation together within other volunteers are trying to do everything possible to develop MECC as international conservation education center.

2.1 MCDO Mission

To up bring the livelihood of the native people living in the Mgahinga conservation area by supporting the MCDO departments in promoting quality community based tourism and benefiting the communities, through sustainable development.

2.2 MCDO Vision

To improve the quality of life of the communities around Mgahinga conservation area and its neighborhood towards sustainable development.

2.3 Objectives:

- To educate, facilitate and coordinate the MCDO member groups.
- To promote community based tourism and environment conservation.
- To undertake any viable income generating activity as long as it is environmentally friendly and socially acceptable.
- To sensitize communities through information exchange on development and conservation issues.
- To lobby government to formulate fair policies for the rural communities especially those living around Lake Mutanda and protected areas.

3.0 Background Information

Uganda is a relatively small country, about size of United Kingdom. It has a population of about 31.9 million people (UN, 2008). Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world. Infant mortality rate is 81 per 1000 live births and the life expectancy is 51 years (men), 52 years (women) (UN 2008) and child mortality index of 10%. The lack of sanitation and resulting spread of infectious disease are the main reasons for low life expectancy and high child mortality rates. Today, only 60% of Uganda's population has access to safe drinking water. The adult literacy rate varies from region to region but the national rate is approximately 67%.

As for the immediate location of MCDO, Kisoro is a rural district in the southwestern part of Uganda. The district borders Kanungu district to the north, Kabale district to the east, Republic of Rwanda to the south and Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. The district lies over 500 km from Kampala in rough mountainous terrain with numerous chains of hills and ridges. The average fertility rate, stated by UBOS, in the south western Uganda is 6.2 children per woman and this makes Kisoro one of the most densely populated districts with more than 350 persons per square kilometer. The sustainability of the districts principal occupation, agriculture, has began to become a problem as land for cultivation is not enough.

The average temperature for Kisoro district is 24 degrees Celsius. The district receives rainfall twice a year, the first rains are heavy in intensity and stretch from April to June in which over 2000 mm of rainfall is received. The second season begins in August to October and amounts to 1,200 mm. The mean annual rainfall received in Kisoro district is 1600mm. This supports a variety of subsistence, maize, Irish potatoes, beans and livestock (cattle, goats and chickens) which is the main source of income to the rural poor.

Kisoro district is also a famous tourist destination in Uganda. The district has three volcanic mountains; Muhavura, Sabyinyo and Gahinga and they are part of the Virunga ranges that stretch from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to Rwanda and then Uganda. This is a home for more than 300 mountain gorillas. The Ugandan part of the Virungas was gazetted into a national park in 1991 in order to secure a habitat for the endangered mountain gorillas. The Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) which is about 33.7 square kms is one of the Ugandan top tourist destinations.

At the time of the gazetting, many people who lived in the then game reserve were forced to live their land and go to look for other areas of settlement. The high cost of land in Kisoro district led many to migrate further away, and many others into poverty. Some families who managed to get land close to the park settled near the boundary and others went to some far places in the country. The indigenous people the Batwa who could survive on hunting were left with no land or housing. The Batwa are part of MCDO target group and are one of the marginalized communities in Uganda and most of their challenges in life include poor housing, lack of access to education and medical care among others.

4.0 List of projects implemented, Trainings and Educational events organised by MCDO in 2009.

4.1. Hosted International students.

In February/ March 2009, the organisation received two groups of students from Sweden and one was from Nikolai Skolan in Helsingborg and the other group was from Osterlens Folks School in Tomelilla. These students are on Africa Study Program and they always come every year to do their social, cultural and economic projects in Kisoro. They stay is always helpful as they contribute to the wellbeing of the local people.

4.2. MCDO accreditation by the Global Environment Facility (the GEF).

In May 2009, the organisation applied to the GEF in order to join the GEF-NGO Net work accreditation and was approved. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an international organisation that addresses global environmental issues and is headquartered in Washington DC, USA. An independent financial organization, the GEF provides grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. These projects benefit the global environment, linking local, national, and global environmental challenges and promoting sustainable livelihoods. One of the benefits of being accredited by the GEF is to attend GEF Council meetings that are held twice in a year in Washington. In November 2009, we received an invitation to attend the council meetings and Sheba Hanyurwa was to represent MCDO but because of visa problems he didn't make it. However we much hope that the organisation will be able to send a representative to the May 2010 GEF General Assembly.

4.3. Intern students:

From June to December 2009, the organisation hosted two Intern students from Sweden by names of Cliff EK Gren and Elisabeth (Sanna). The former did construction and maintenance work at MECC especially with the Kitchen and the later practiced her nursing from Mutolere Hospital as well as Gisozi Health Centre II in Gisozi parish, Muramba Sub-county. Elisabeth has also held several sensitization meetings with the local women educating them about family planning and better health.

4.4. Volunteers:

In 2009, the organisation was privileged to receive 7 volunteers. They were involved in the organization's development work especially in the education programme in schools and others were for golden monkey research. The volunteers are Andy Browning, Tommy Atkins, Geoff Gilfillan, Lucy Cook, Rachel Service, Isobel Giblin all from United Kingdom and Caitriona Begley from Republic of Ireland. Isobel Giblin also assisted in conducting computer training lessons for the school children from local primary schools in Kisoro. This was a pilot project that was initiated by MCDO together with Mr. Peter

Nsanze a Ugandan born volunteer, who lives in the UK. The major goal of this project is to equip the young generation with computer knowledge and skills.

4.5. Computer training



Computer training for school children is now on going. In December 2009, the organisation got well wishers who donated one computer to start the computer training. This project started with 20 students from primary schools in Kisoro. The project started with children from Gisozi SDA Primary School in Gisozi Parish and Chihe Primary School from Chihe Parish, Nyakinama Sub-county. The project began with these few schools because of a small manpower.

When the organisation gets more computers, the number of students who will train will increase and many people will definitely benefit from this program. The plan is also to get these computers connected to the internet and every trainee will get his/her own email. With the progress of this project, many locals will obtain more knowledge in information technology.

4.6. Adult literacy education:

Adult literacy classes are also on going at Gisozi SDA church. There are two classes: one for Rufumbira and English for beginners.

4.7. Participation at the USAID-Star Retreat in Jinja.



MCDO participated at the STAR Retreat titled "Responsible Tourism for Biodiversity and Economic Growth" that was held at Nile Resort Jinja from October 20-22, 2009. The planning retreat was organised under the auspices of the Sustainable Tourism in the Albertine Rift (STAR) program, a new United States Agency for International

Development (USAID) funded project. The objective of the retreat was to gather all tourism stake holders to pursue together desirable future scenarios for sustainable tourism in Uganda. These scenarios, indicating what stakeholders want tourism in Uganda to become in the next ten years was developed by all stake holders in self managed exercises and developed short term and long term action plans. MCDO was represented at the STAR Retreat by its Director Ndayambaje Edison. Here is list of common goals that were shared by all participants:

- ❖ Product development
- ❖ Environmental Conservation
- ❖ Better information sharing
- ❖ Shared vision
- ❖ Stake holder engagement
- ❖ Improved infrastructure
- ❖ Marketing
- ❖ Research
- ❖ Media involvement
- ❖ Improved standards and training
- ❖ Community empowerment
- ❖ Increased funding

4.8. Golden Monkey Research in Mgahinga Gorilla National Park.



The Research is being carried out by MCDO's volunteer coordinator Mrs. Sandra Gray from UK. The research is about the status, behaviour and ecology of the golden monkeys. The research is beneficial to the local community, UWA as well as the national park. After the research, these monkeys will be open for tourism and this will attract more tourists and hence more revenue. The community will benefit in away of providing accommodation and other tourism services. The research is also beneficial in terms of employment. So far two people from the community have secured employment and they are working as Field Assistants.

4.9. Application for participation at the CBI: Export Coaching for Tourism.

The CBI, Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries, an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, aims to assist companies from developing countries in making an entry or enlarging their exports on the EU markets. For this purpose it has developed a wide range of support programmes. The CBI's work is financed by the Dutch government which means participation costs are limited.

The CBI was founded in 1971. Its many years of experience and its extensive international network make the CBI one of the most important centres of expertise in export marketing and export management from developing countries.

What can CBI do for you?

When your company participates in an ECP, you and CBI will have a common goal: to make your company do (more) business in Europe. CBI will:

- Help you get technically ready for the European market;
- Provide you with skills and knowledge on the European market and its major players;
- Provide you with opportunities to enter the market, for example by arranging participations in trade fairs, individual presentations to buyers and road shows.

Within the programme, a team of CBI experts all having a long track record on different parts of the European market, will assist you. The knowledge, experience and network of this team of CBI sector experts will be at your disposal.

MCDO is likely to participate in the March 2010 EXPRO seminar in Rotterdam if the application for participation passes through.

4.10. Environmental and conservation education workshops:

Conservation education in schools is also going on and we have managed to implement it with help from volunteers. This is being done from primary schools of Chihe, Gisozi SDA, Real Quality, Mutolere, and Gisoro. This is a good project being under taken because children are the few conservation agents of the country and conservation of the environment is one of MCDO major concerns.

5.0 MCDO supported projects and achievements reached in 2009.

5.1 Amajambere Iwacu Community Camp (AICC)



Amajambere Iwacu Community Group (AICG) runs an *eco community* camp just outside the main gate of MGNP. In 2009, there were many things that were improved at AICC especially putting up a new toilet and bathrooms. The camp has also provided avenues for various community gatherings and meetings.

On the side of accommodation, the camp received relatively few visitors in the low season between January and May but from June to December, the camp has been receiving relatively a large number of visitors.

5.2 Mgahinga Community Heritage (MCH)

The Mgahinga Community Heritage (MCH) is one of the MCDO's Departments. The main objective of this group is to help the community by using the revenue got from community tourism sites/ activities like village walks, King's hill hike, cave exploration, black smith visits, story telling, cultural entertainment and others. The beneficiaries are stretcher groups that take sick people to the near by hospitals and tourism site owners as well as guides. This group is a member based with a total of 12 members (3 females and 9 males).

In 2009, MCDO adopted a new marketing strategy of giving out information pull outs to every visitor at AICC and Golden Monkey Guest House in Kisoro town so that the information about the community tourism sites in Mgahinga is availed. So far there are relatively few visitors who visit the Batwa village, go caving and King's hill hike. MCDO has also designed a price list for these activities and it can be found on AICC notice boards and we are soon posting the same information on the MCDO website.

5.3 Mgahinga Community Sponsorship Scheme (MCSS)



The sponsorship scheme assists needy students in the community to meet their school fees and few scholastic necessities. The scheme that is coordinated by MCDO is funded by well wishers from Sweden, the UK and USA. In the year 2009, the student enrolment totaled to 81 and among these, 4 completed their studies which mean the scheme only looks after 61 students. New entrants were 10 students. We have also

launched a computer training sessions for these students so that they can also acquire computer knowledge. Some schools do offer computer training at a certain cost but still many schools where the organisation has students doesn't have the computers. The organisation is emphasizing this so that even those who don't access computer benefit from this project

Challenges:

- Limited sources of funding
- Poor performance to some students
- High expectations among some students and parents/guardians

Recommendations

- Students and parents/guardians participation to the project sustainability
- Students' workshops and seminars to be arranged during holidays
- General meetings with parents/guardians to be arranged in order to share experiences and knowledge

5.4 Mgahinga Park view Credit & Savings (MPCS)

Mgahinga Park view Credit & Savings Association (MPCS) is a community micro finance located in Gisozi Parish, Muramba Sub County. The main objective is to provide small scale loans to the local people at an affordable interest rate. Since MPCS establishment, many people have managed to uplift their livelihood through acquiring loans which has helped many to meet their basic standards of living through improved crop and live stock farming.

However, most of times, there is a challenge of limited funds in the association so as to fulfill the customers' demands. The demand for the loans is very high beyond the capacity of the association.

The association has plans of becoming a village bank for the community people to have access to banking facilities. This is because banking facilities can only be accessed from

the immediate town of Kisoro which is 14 kilometers away. This would help the people access loans at a low interest so people can invest much in income earning enterprises as well as in agriculture, a sector that employs more than 80% of the Ugandan population.

MCDO has held several meetings with MPCs members on how well the loan project can be developed. There is much hope that in 2010 the interest rate paid on the borrowings will reduce from 10% to at least 5% and as long as the share capital is raised from members. MCDO is also willing to support this idea when funds allow.

5.5 Mutanda Eco Community Centre (M.E.C.C)



Mutanda Eco Community Centre (M.E.C.C) is an eco site that is being developed at south shores of Lake Mutanda, Kisoro district. The very first idea of developing this sustainable environmental centre focused on education, benefiting local communities, emerged in 1998. The idea was initiated by Amajambere Iwacu Community Group (AICG) in partnership with a Swedish organisation, MbiriMbiri Foundation (MMF).

The main idea of the M.E.C.C project is to use tourism as a tool to enhance educational opportunities for the local population as well as students interested in the specific environment of the area. The revenues generated through tourism will serve as an economic source to finance, and develop the education centre, enabling for example MCDO to run workshops and provide access to lecture halls.

The Lake Mutanda Project provides alternatives to various visitors who want to carry out community based activities that generate income to the local communities. The main attractions for visitors in Kisoro District are the famous Mountain Gorillas. However, the communities want to provide more alternatives for tourists such as birding, canoeing, snake visits, swimming, handcrafts, and entertainment among others. The proposed activities on Lake Mutanda provide visitors with great experience and add value for conservation of natural resources in and around Lake Mutanda.

Currently, some activities can be carried out at the site such as canoeing, bird watching, snake visit, swimming lessons, medicinal plants and other biodiversity identification. Facilities to be provided include limited accommodation, ground for do it yourself tents, meals with order. One may inquire for any other activity.

Challenges at MECC

- **Road infrastructure**

There is still a lack of proper accessibility from Chihe primary school to the site for the guests who would wish to come with vehicles. This causes other challenges of parking near the school compound hence interrupting pupils' attention to studies and putting guests' vehicles on risk as they may be damaged by pupils.

- **Local Community Behaviors**

When it comes to the community members especially children towards foreign guests, it becomes worse when they shout "Mzungu... Give me..." They follow the guests for long distances, others abuse them and throwing stones at them and unfortunately even some few adult people do the same! This shows bad image of Kisoro and Uganda at large as it seems to be discrimination though may be it is not what the doers mean.

- **Natural Animal kingdom Violation:**

One of the reasons why M.E.C.C was initiated is to conserve the natural environment hence benefiting the local community in the area. It is therefore sad news if the same people remain to be environmental threat especially by destroying the swamp which would lead to deduction of the water in the lake and destroy wildlife therein.

Recommendations

- We hope, if the local government decides to help in sensitizing the community about the project, they will allow the road accessibility.
- The local government should help in sensitizing community members and schools about the importance of hosting the foreign guests such that they respect them more by avoiding do the same as mentioned above. They should see them as NOT strangers because in doing so, our community will loose much of cultural and behavioral benefits.
- The local government should provide a helping hand in sensitizing the local community in utilizing the lakes, swamps and other natural resources in sustainable way so as to save them for future generation keeping in mind that our grand parents did the same for us. We should also make sure that we keep different wildlife species not to loose them as it happened with hippos.

5.6 Gisozi Duterimbere Farmers Association

The Gisozi Duterimbere Farmers Association (GDFA) is a group of local farmers from the Mgahinga community united by a common goal to develop through modern and commercial agriculture.

GDFA has realized much benefit from their agricultural initiatives like Irish potato growing. In 2009, they started a mushroom growing project with MCDO providing some little funding for it. This will be a boost to the farmers because mushrooms have a ready market in Kisoro and other areas and this will increase on their incomes. MCDO also got a donation of sheep from Caitriona Begley, an Irish volunteer that has been doing research for 3 months with Golden monkeys in Mgahinga Gorilla NP from September – December 2009. She got interest in GDFA work because of being a women's group and decided to give these sheep to the farmers. More than 80 people especially women have benefited from it and a group of five people were given one sheep and they will all share on rotational basis. When a young one is born, the other member will get as form of gift and the process will continue till every one gets one. This is a practical approach that will ensure a quick multiplier effect.

6.0 Activities/projects for 2010

- ❖ Establishment of an animal farm
- ❖ Computer training
- ❖ Solar installation at the MCDO office
- ❖ Rabies vaccination in Jan/Feb 2010 (volunteer Jesus)
- ❖ Participation in the GEF Council meetings
- ❖ Participation at the CBI EXPRO seminar in Rotterdam
- ❖ Participation in the USAID-STAR programs

7.0 Challenges within MCDO as an umbrella organisation

- Limited access to computers for IT literacy
- Power at the MCDO office
- Tools for handcraft making especially for those who wish to deal with carving
- Limited funds for awareness rising for disease prevention especially HIV/AIDS
- Limited capacity for awareness on environment conservation
- Animal disturbances on community farms
- Lack of enough land especially for the Batwa community

8.0 Recommendations for the future

- Capacity building for MCDO management, MCDO member groups and the community at large in development programs.
- MCDO office power supply. The office being in a rural area is not in reach with hydro electricity. The power shortage has affected the organisation work and if this problem can be minimized by using solar power. We shall be grateful if the organisation can get people, volunteers, organisations and corporate bodies who can support us.
- Equipments e.g. computers, furniture, communication equipments and stationery in office. If the office would acquire these equipments, there would be efficiency and much output at work.
- Extended skills for Adult literacy in vocational activities so as to have diversification of income other than agriculture.
- Awareness of disease prevention especially HIV/AIDS. This is the world's most escalating challenge and for the Mgahinga community, much has not been done especially in sensitizing people on how they can control themselves from contracting the disease. We hope as MCDO, if happens to get more funds, much will be done in the fight against AIDS.
- Awareness on environment conservation. If much sensitization on how to conserve our beautiful environment is carried out, then sustainable development will be achieved. This area is very sensitive because it is adjacent to MGNP which is a home for the mountain gorillas. If work hand in hand with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), other development and conservation partners, many achievements will be realized in the Virunga ecosystem.
- MCDO is appealing to UWA's intervention and every body concerned in the escalating problem of crop raiding by animals from MGNP especially buffalos which raid community farms especially those with Irish potatoes and maize.
- Means of transport e.g. for staff, volunteers and for sick people from the community in case of emergency.
- Maximizing financial sources for the organisation sustainability

9.0 List of acronyms

| | |
|---------------|---|
| MCDO: | Mgahinga Community Development Organisation |
| AICG: | Amajambere Iwacu Community Group |
| UNDP: | United Nations Development Programme |
| NGO: | Non- Governmental Organisation |
| MECC: | Mutanda Eco Community Centre |
| MPCS: | Mgahinga Parkview Credit and Savings |
| GDFA: | Gisozi Duterimbere Farmers Association |
| MGNP: | Mgahinga Gorilla National Park |
| MCH: | Mgahinga Community Heritage |
| UWA: | Uganda Wildlife Authority |
| MMF: | MbiriMbiri Foundation |
| UK: | United Kingdom |
| UBOS: | Uganda Bureau of Statistics |
| DRC: | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| CBOs: | Community Based Organisations |
| ECP: | Export Centre Promotion |
| GEF: | Global Environment Facility |
| CBI: | Centre for Promotion of Imports from developing countries |
| USAID: | United States Agency for International Development |
| IT: | Information technology |
| UN: | United Nations |
| SDA: | Seventh Day Adventist Church |