

# NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT BY RWOHO FOREST EDGE COMMUNITY

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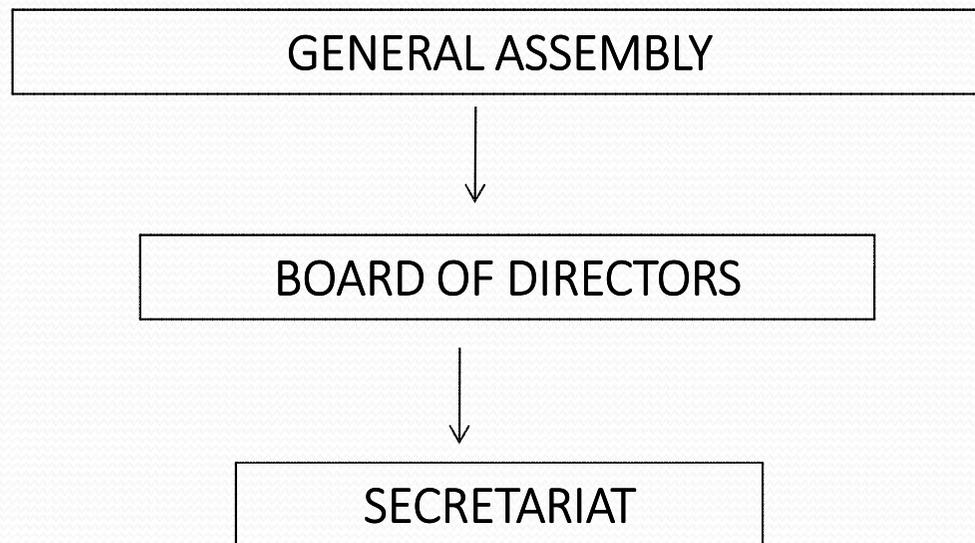
Presented at the Satoyama Initiative Regional Workshop for Africa  
10-12 August 2015, Accra Ghana.



# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION INFORMATION CENTRE (EPIC)

- EPIC is a non profit making and a non governmental organization.
- It was conceived in 1998 to address environmental issues in the region.
- EPIC is governed by its general assembly which elects a board of directors.
- The board is the supreme policy making body of the organization while the secretariat headed by the Coordinator is the technical arm of the organization that implements projects.
- EPIC operates in partnership with other local NGOs, international development agencies and information centers. EPIC is a member of IPSI and the Vetiver Network International.

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# PROJECT LOCATION

MWIZI SUBCOUNTY, MBARARA DISTRICT, UGANDA.



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## BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT SITE

- Rwoho forest edge communities are mainly peasants that depend on rain fed agriculture for both food and income.
- Food produced include: Plantains (matoke), cassava, sweet potatoes, beans cowpeas, sorghum, maize and millet.
- Coffee is also grown as the major cash crop.
- Average land holding is about 2 ha and land ownership is under customary law.
- Rwoho forest reserve provides employment to community members. However, the population is mainly engaged in subsistence farming.
- Population density is 486/sq.km and annual population growth rate is 3%.

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- The highlands receive more than 1000 mm of rainfall annually, which is higher than 650mm that is received by the surrounding low lying semi arid areas.
  - The area is therefore a major food producer in the western region of the country.
  - Infrastructure is very poor with the majority of the roads being earth roads that are almost impassible in the rainy season.
  - The nearest town Mbarara is a distance of 50km .
  - Rwoho central forest reserve covers an area of 9000ha extending in the districts of Ntungamo and Mbarara. Out of this area, 7000ha is softwood plantations for commercial timber production while the remaining 2000ha is conserved in its natural state.

Adjacent communities access some of the forest resources through collaborative forest management (CFM) with the National Forestry Authority (NFA).

Under the CFM arrangement, accessibility is limited to a few non timber products which has created shortages of timber and timber products for the community.

Converting the forest landscape into monoculture tree plantation destroys biological diversity and affects environmental goods and services derived from the ecosystem



## Background to the project

Uganda has one of the highest rates of deforestation in Africa and current estimates put it at 90,000 hectares per year.

Rwoho is a rainforest ecosystem but its natural trees have in the past been cut at an alarming rate with little replacement.

This has led to frequent land slides, floods, silting of water sources, severe soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and a decline in agricultural productivity.

It has also created a problem of inadequate trees for fuel wood, building poles, shade, wind break and even food.



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- Scarcity of woodfuel affects women most because it is women and girls who walk long distances looking for fire wood.
  - The Rwoho community like most Ugandans (about 85% of the population) depends on wood fuel as the main source of energy.
  - Its scarcity affects the quality and number of meals that a family can have in a day which contributes to malnutrition especially among children.
  - Walking long distances by women and girls in search of wood fuel reduces on the time that is dedicated to food production.

- Realizing the hardships women and girls face in search of fuelwood and their role in improving the quality of life in rural areas, the project's strategy is to provide women with alternatives within ease reach.
- The project has worked with local communities to build their skills and practical ability in tree nursery management to provide seedlings for their planting.
- This will enable them overcome shortages of fuelwood and other tree products and help to improve the environment through tree planting so as to enhance social and ecological stability.



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- The project is also exploring other sources of renewable energy and is introducing the communities to energy saving cook stoves.
  - It will in addition support women in 5 parishes (a parish is an administration unit made up of 5-8 villages) of Mwizi sub county namely Kigoma, Kigaga, Bushwere, Rukarabo, and Byabihonga, to establish five community tree nurseries of indigenous and multipurpose trees to enable women solve the problem of shortages of fuelwood and other tree products.
  - In order to address the problem of soil erosion a *Vetiveria zizanioides* grass nursery will be established to serve as source of slips.



# Project objectives

## **Long term objective**

To halt the rampant environmental degradation, restore and maintain ecological stability through properly planned management of natural resources in order to improve living standards of forest edge communities and ensure that they live in harmony with nature.



## Medium Term Objectives

- To establish community tree nurseries stocked with indigenous multipurpose trees for fruits, fuelwood, fiber, timber, poles, honey production and water catchment.
- To raise environmental awareness on the dangers and solutions to environmental degradation.
- To increase supply of trees and tree products from private wood lots.
- To encourage income generating activities such as honey production, handcrafts and vegetable growing.
- To establish *vetiveria* hedge rows to stop soil erosion in farmers' fields.



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## Activities

- Community sensitization.
- Training.
- Community tree nursery establishment and management.
- Formation of community tree nursery management committees.
- *Vetiver* grass nursery establishment.

## Expected benefits

- Reduced pressure on the existing natural resources e.g. forests, water catchment areas, wildlife, soils and climate.
- Forest adjacent communities will adopt tree planting as an economic venture.
- Communities will be supported to participate effectively in collaborative forest management (CFM) by helping them understand the guidelines and their rights.
- Fuel wood, poles and timber will be available on sustainable basis thus alleviating socio-economic hardships.
- Enhanced watershed management and controlled soil erosion will be promoted.



## Outputs

- 5 model tree nurseries will be established one in each of the five parishes, with the capacity of producing 2.5million seedlings every season.
- 30,000 kms of *vetiveria* hedgerows will be established in the entire watershed area.
- 70% increase in crop production per ha will be expected as a result of erosion control and improved crop husbandry.
- 10,000 wood lots of small to medium sizes will be established on private holdings.

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- 30,000 households are expected to adapt improved methods of agriculture and better land use practices.
  - A *vetiveria* grass nursery for the community with the capacity of producing 1 million slips each planting season.



## Observation

- The project was initiated in response to call for proposals from Satoyama Development Mechanism. Unfortunately our application was unsuccessful, however sensitization of target community has been carried out.
- We hope that our application will be put into consideration during the next round of assessment.

Training on application of *Vetiveria* hedge rows technology is also progressing. The nurseries are yet to be established and efforts are being made to raise material and financial support to that effect.





Thank you for your kind attention