



Barbets Duet

Founding Partners

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BARBETS DUET INVENTION CONVENTION

Mlingotini, Tanzania

17-18 October 2009

Hosted by

Msichoke Seaweed Farmers Cooperative

& Mwajuma Masaiganah

Summary Report¹

4 December 2009

The Barbets Duet Invention Convention

The Barbets Duet is a business idea, not a charity. Its goal is to create new economic systems that reward people who support the health and diversity of the natural world. In 2008, the six founding partners of the Barbets Duet offered their own land and communities as learning sites where the principles of the Barbets Duet could be tested in the context of specific societies, nations and ecologies. There are now five Barbet Learning sites in East Africa, and two in the United Kingdom.

In October 2009, the founding partners were hosted for two days by the Msichoke Seaweed Farmers Cooperative in Mlingotini, Tanzania, one of the founding Barbet Learning sites. This Invention Convention was the first time everyone had met and marked the formal inauguration of the Barbets Duet.

Achievements of the Invention Convention

There were a number of important achievements of the Invention Convention. Simply getting together allowed the partners to develop a shared understanding of what is being done and how Barbet principles might apply. The sites represent six different ecologies, societies, economies and governments. As each site was presented to the others, everyone saw the value of learning from each other and the potential for developing shared business opportunities. There was huge benefit from engaging with each other across all boundaries, including those of culture, education, wealth, language and skill; everyone had something to offer and something to learn. Importantly, the reports from the Barbet learning sites illustrated the value of a mosaic rights approach to environmental management and markets. Mosaic rights had been discussed conceptually, but the utility of the concept became clear during the site reports.² The Barbets Duet has been slow and self-financed, but progress has been persistent and sustainable. Ideas have been tested in practical ways, based on what each site can afford. However, two critical issues came out strongly. First, today's hard economics militate against healthy environments. Second, governments have failed to protect the environment. Both make the Barbets Duet more difficult and more significant.

In the evenings, after dinner, the founding partners discussed the future structure and governance of the Barbets Duet. Among a number of complex questions, two simple conclusions stood out: 1) each Barbet site evolves in its own way to its own conditions and, 2) governance concerns how we come together.

Next Steps

During the coming year, each Barbet Learning Site will continue to evolve, with all sites meeting again at another Barbet Learning Site in East Africa in a year or two. Before that gathering, the founding partners will continue their discussions on constitutional issues and set up some type of trust or corporate structure to facilitate long term financing and recognition. Barbara Heinzen will continue to coordinate activities

¹ The full report of the Invention Convention will be produced once summaries are available of the Barbet site presentations in Kiswahili.

² Traditional African property rights have used a 'mosaic rights' system in which no one owns the land, but different groups have rights to different goods at specified times under specified conditions. By comparison, industrial society often aims for a 'column' rights system where one owner controls all land rights from air rights to mineral rights and everything in between. While column rights have created today's successful markets, mosaic rights are better at supporting high social equity and high biodiversity; and should be able to support successful markets.

and all partners will work to make our thinking familiar. To help publicise this work, a DVD will be produced using videos of the Invention Convention and the East African Barbet Learning Sites.

Concluding Comments

Some readers may find the achievements recorded here to be very small, especially given the record of rapid environmental degradation in East Africa, a catalogue of destruction which too creates a sense of futility. However, there was no futility at the Invention Convention. Instead, the elation of discovering we are not helpless, but powerful in our ability to act together, is what will remain with all those who met in Mlingotini, Tanzania in October 2009.

Barbet Learning Sites Presented at the Invention Convention³

Seme, Kenya

Oby & Hilda Obyerodhyambo are working with family land on the shores of Lake Victoria in Seme, near Kisumu, Kenya. They are experimenting with tissue culture bananas, agro-forestry and the restoration of land that has been over-cropped and over-grazed. They are also investing in indigenous trees and medicinal plants.

Lukenya, Kenya

Sammy Muvelah has land in Lukenya, about 50 km outside of Nairobi, on a small rocky hillside in dry rangeland. He is creating a woodland plantation of moringa to provide food and fuel, while also planting trees indigenous to the area. He is investing in water harvesting and is selling excursions to Nairobi residents interested in the environment.

Molo, Uganda

James Magode Ikuya is working with twelve families along 21km of the Kanginima stream. This is a badly deforested part of the Mt Elgon watershed in eastern Uganda. He is introducing high cash value crops (fish farming, bee keeping, fruit growing) and will also be replanting indigenous trees to restore lost watershed services and biodiversity.

Rufiji, Tanzania

Rose Lyimo is hoping to acquire land in Rufiji, Tanzania which can be used for eco-tourism and carbon sequestration.

Mlingotini, Tanzania

Mwajuma Masaiganah is working with the Msichoke Seaweed Farmers Cooperative. Msichoke are looking for ways to improve their income from seaweed farming and hope to develop environmental incomes from the protection of mangroves and the provision of other environmental products, such as tree seedlings grown in indigenous tree nurseries.

London, UK

Barbara Heinzen is responsible for coordinating the activities of the Barbets Duet and ensuring that this work becomes better known. She also has a 'micro-site' of potted plants on the front step of her flat in a Central London garden square. Her work has inspired a neighbourhood group to increase the biodiversity and drought tolerance of the square.



Barbet Learning Sites & founding partners at Invention Convention



Participants in the Barbets Duet Invention Convention, Oct. 2009

³ A seventh site, in Cornwall, England, joined the Barbets Duet just before the Invention Convention in Tanzania.