



Barbets Duet

Attending

Barbara Heinzen

James Magode Ikuya

Rose Lyimo

Sammy Muvelah

Oby & Hilda Obyerodhyambo, hosts

Neliswa Mrobo, Guest

Mwajuma Masaiganah - absent

Website: www.barbaraheinzen.com → BARBETS

BARBETS DUET PARTNERS MEETING

Nkoroi, Kenya

28 August 2010

Hosted by

Oby & Hilda Obyerodhyambo

Summary Report

13 December 2010

Background

The Barbets Duet was formally established at the Invention Convention, held in Mlingotini, Tanzania, October 2009. This movement is organized around Barbet Learning Sites. The five founding sites are all in East Africa, with two new sites in Cornwall, UK and upstate New York, USA. Importantly, Barbet sites are not pristine wildernesses, but places where people live and work to feed themselves and their families. The ambition of the founders, therefore, is to create working systems which respect and integrate the needs of people and of the natural world so that they can function symbiotically and resiliently.

Excitement of the Experiment

In August 2010, six of the founding partners met for a day at Nkoroi, Kenya to report on progress to date. While some sites had made more progress than others, the partners' commitment to the Barbets Duet had only grown. *'We should be proud of starting this process,'* said James Magode Ikuya from Uganda. *'It may not be very fashionable in various circles yet, but it is something for the future.'* Sammy Muvelah, from Kenya, echoed this: *'The Barbets today looks like an experiment. We all feel like an experiment. But for me the Barbets is a solution... We are providing a solution that is lacking across the whole region.'* Rose Lyimo from Tanzania, a founder of the Akiba Commercial Bank, compared the start of the Barbets Duet to the founding of the Akiba Bank. *'What I am trying to say is that when you put your brains together you are sure to find solutions to your problems. So when Barbara told me about the Barbets Duet, I wanted to be a part of it.'* When the host of the meeting, Oby Obyerodhyambo, welcomed everyone, he echoed this statement. *'It is so important to meet. It seems there are certain principles, and a spirit. Just talking at breakfast we can see that. ... It is a great privilege that you are under our roof, a great blessing.'*

Barbet Learning Site Reports

The hours before lunch were occupied with updates from existing sites and introductions to the new sites in Cornwall, England and New York, USA. Both sites in Tanzania had suffered setbacks, in part because the government wants to develop other plans for both the Rufiji area and Mlingotini. Despite the uncertainty, both sites are continuing to press ahead. The two Kenyan sites, in Lukenya and Seme, have both made good progress in their separate ways, while work at the Ugandan site in Molo was slowed down by exceptionally heavy and untimely rains. The group congratulated Barbara Heinzen on acquiring land in New York State, on the Hudson River, the first Barbet Learning Site in North America. When Woodland Valley Farm in Cornwall, UK

joined the experiment, it confirmed the founders' belief that societies everywhere need to learn how to live creatively with the wider natural environment. Lukenya, Seme, Molo, Mlingotini and Woodland Valley Farm are all attracting visitors who want to learn from their experience.

Emerging Barbet Site Principles

At one point, Magode Ikuya noted that, “*We are starting a new rationale which hitherto was not there.*” For that reason, Sammy Mulvelah pushed the group to articulate the principles behind what a Barbet site should be. Seven principles emerged from the discussion.

1. Barbet activity is **Consistent with Its Site**: The site determines what happens, growing out of its ecology.
2. **Learning by Demonstration**: How do you foster learning? By demonstration. You show what can work.
3. **Just Begin**: But begin with something that can bear fruit quickly. Something enticing and exciting, e.g. at Lukenya, a tree nursery is being imitated by others. The nursery is an end in itself, then the fruit you sell or the wood you coppice is the later achievement.
4. **Thinking Step by Step**: Every process follows on another one. In Molo, a new fish pond fosters the idea of a bridge which will foster the learning on the other side of the stream.
5. **Shape Environmental Ambitions around Immediate Needs**, e.g. income opportunities, food security and other critical questions of life & livelihood.
6. **Follow the Path of Least Resistance**. Start with what is most possible. This is easiest where ownership & control are in our hands, but might also include other approaches, especially to power which can help or hinder us. You need to understand how power operates.
7. **Utu Net Benefits**: Benefits are widely defined: to us personally, to the community around us, to the environment.

Barbets Duet as a Collective

With these principles still emerging from practice, the partners discussed the admission of new members and the implications for governance. Oby Obyerodhyambo, recognized that ‘*There is movement which will inevitably happen*’ as others imitate and multiply what has been learned from the Barbet Sites. However, he added, ‘*A Barbet site is a very distinctive idea, with a lot of thinking and broad principles behind.*’ While no one wanted to get into the bureaucratic business of deciding who did or did not qualify as a Barbet Learning Site, Magode Ikuya noted that ‘*We must prepare for linkage to others by encouraging them to imitate what is going on. ... we must learn from the new sites of the future.*’ Several ideas were proposed, but any decision was postponed for a year to allow for more experience to accumulate.

In the meantime, the partners agreed to keep going and to meet again in Molo, Uganda, hosted by James Magode Ikuya. The proposed date is Easter Weekend, April 20 11.

Barbet Learning Sites as of December 2010

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, green house tomatoes, 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 value cash crops (fish farming, bee keeping, fruit growing) and will also be replanting indigenous trees to restore lost watershed services and biodiversity.

Rufji, 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.

Cornwall, UK

Chris and Janet Jones manage Woodland Valley Farm in Ladock, Cornwall as an organic, low carbon farm producing beef and pork. It also functions as an outdoor classroom with a learning centre for school children. <http://www.woodlandvalley.co.uk/index.php>

Hannacroix Creek, New York, USA

Barbara Heinzen lives in London, UK and coordinates the activities of the Barbets Duet. She has recently bought property along the Hudson River in New York where her family lives. The Hannacroix Creek site is largely swamp forest lying between the Creek and the Hudson River. It will be managed to maximize wild biodiversity.