

Ecotourism Potential in Kalanthuba Chiefdom

A Working Paper of the Kalanthuba Development Project

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Prefatory Note with Acknowledgments

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Thanks be to God!

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Introduction

Among the important assets of Kalanthuba Chiefdom noted in the 2017 baseline development study conducted by Houghton College researchers (Oakerson, et al, 2018) are its natural resources—forests, rivers, and wildlife—and accompanying biodiversity. Environmental impact studies conducted in relation to the Bumbuna Hydroelectric Project have documented the extraordinary biodiversity of the affected area: 450 plant species, 444 butterfly species, 229 bird species, 53 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 31 small mammal species (see Nippon, 2005; Larssen, 2007; Samba, 2013). The critically endangered West African Chimpanzee is included among its animal species. At the same time, significant forest cover remains. Based on village interviews, the 2017 baseline study estimated the forest cover in the chiefdom’s five sections to range from 10 percent in Kamakihila to 17 percent and 21 percent, respectively, in Kasokira and Folladugu sections, the two sections that border the Bumbuna Reservoir. The combined area of forest and bush is estimated to be much greater—ranging from 31 percent to 42 percent across the five sections of the chiefdom. The 23 km long reservoir created by Bumbuna Dam and the spectacular Bumbuna Falls just down river from the dam combine with the wildlife, forest and bush cover, and an impressive topography of hills and valleys to create an array of opportunities to view wildlife and interact with nature by means of hiking and boating. Moreover, eco-tourism can be combined with cultural tourism—Kalanthuba Chiefdom provides excellent examples of traditional village life.

Presently, however, there is little tourism in the watershed. The Government of Sierra Leone established the Bumbuna Conservation Area (BCA) in 2008 to offset negative environmental impacts of the hydroelectric dam and reservoir. Covering 3,532 hectares in Kalanthuba Chiefdom, mostly in Kasokira section, the BCA supports one of four distinct chimpanzee communities in the watershed identified in 2013 (Samba, 2013). The BCA is managed by the Bumbuna Watershed Management Authority (BWMA), a unit of the Ministry of Energy headquartered near Kadala in Kalanthuba Chiefdom. Among its statutory responsibilities is the promotion of eco-tourism. The BWMA took an important first step toward development of an eco-tourism project with the preparation of a feasibility assessment and action plan.¹ Included in its recommendations was the substantial involvement of local villages as tour guides and hosts.

¹ BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, nd.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship of villages that hold land within the BCA to the conservation area and its management with a focus on the potential for village participation in an eco-tourism program, vetting the ideas being developed for an eco-tourism with local villagers. Interviewers collected responses concerning village land-use; cropping and sources of crop damage; methods of protecting crops from damage; trapping and hunting practices; forest resources; perceptions of and attitudes toward the BCA; knowledge and perceptions of village wildlife, in particular, primates; and attitudes toward a potential eco-tourism program.

Seven villages hold land with the BCA, and all seven were interviewed for this study, with the assistance of local translators. One interview was conducted at a nearby village with no land in the BCA, and two villages more distant from the BCA were interviewed (one in Folladugu section and the other in Kamakihila section).²

The size of the groups interviewed ranged from 9 to 19 individuals with an average of about 12 people per group, predominantly men. The chief and youth leader of the village were often present; once the village's mummy queen was present. By design, the majority of villagers within the interview group were hunters, trappers, or farmers with knowledge about local wildlife. On two occasions, BWMA staff members were present and joined in the discussion.³

Land Use

Each group was asked to divide their village lands into forest and agricultural land (including inland valley swamp, upland, boliland, and fallow land), then to divide their agricultural lands into swamp, upland, and boliland using a 10-seed technique.⁴

As shown in Table 1, five of the seven BCA villages report the major portion of their land area as forested—60 or 70 percent; the other two villages report the reverse—30 percent of land as forested. Overall, the BCA villages report much greater forest cover than found in the chiefdom at large. The type of agricultural land found in the BCA villages exhibits considerable variation, as shown in Table 2.

² At the latter interview individuals from two other villages participated, and some information about their villages was gathered (neither of these villages had land within the BCA).

³ Although the presence of BWMA staff members could possibly influence the villagers' responses, no important differences were noted. Often, they added important information.

⁴ Villagers group the ten seeds in proportion to the share of the total land area in each category.

Village	% Forest	% Agricultural Lands
Kasokira	70	30
Kafungia	60	40
Kadala	60	40
Kamathor	70	30
Kassasi	70	30
Kathombo	30	70
Kegbema	30	70

Table 1: Percentage of BCA Village Land-Use by Forest and Agriculture

Village	% Swamp	% Boliland	% Upland
Kasokira	30	20	50
Kafungia	10	30	60
Kadala	20	10	70
Kamathor	30	20	50
Kassasi	40	30	30
Kathombo	20	30	50
Kegbema	20	40	40

Table 2: Percentages of Agricultural Land by Type in BCA Villages

Crops and Crop Damage

Every village ranks rice as their most important crop and includes soya beans and sorghum among their top four most important crops. Groundnuts, pepper, cassava, and sweet potatoes are also among the top four in several villages. Of those villages that reported their top tree crops, bananas are the only crop that consistently ranks among the most important, with oranges, kola nut, and oil palm making frequent appearances. Kegbema noted that they had made attempts to grow oil palm, but rodents had thwarted their efforts to grow the plants by digging around the roots in search of tubers.

Asked what the leading causes of crop damage are, all villages report animal pests to be the number one cause of crop loss. Soil infertility, wind damage, and weather variations (such as drought) were mentioned as additional factors. Groups were asked to rank which animals do the most damage to their crops. The first step of this question involved villagers listing the animals they considered most harmful. The second step asked them to estimate the percentage of crop damage caused by each of the animals they listed, using the 10-seed method. A majority of villages rank birds and rodents as the top two most damaging pests. Only a single village considers monkeys more damaging than rodents. Monkeys and chimps generally were included among the top four most damaging pests (sometimes being grouped by villagers into one category), and two villages reported termites as a major source of crop loss. Villages with lands near cattle herders (e.g, Kafungia and Kassasi) reported significant damage to their crops by cattle, sometimes more damaging than any other animal.

Kinds of Damage by Animal

Birds are reported by all villages to eat seeds during planting and to pick rice grains or fruit off the plants once they are mature. Weavers and mannikins are widely reported to be the most damaging birds. Birds generally damage ground crops such as rice and groundnuts. Guinea fowl were also mentioned as digging up the seeds of new plants. Rodents, such as rats and grass-cutters, chew the stems of plants and sometimes dig around the roots, thus destroying the entire plant. Monkeys are noted for stealing fruits from plants, eating seeds, and tearing up entire plants in search of food (particularly palm trees). Chimps are noted for a wide variety of crop damaging behaviors, including harvesting crops like humans, carrying off bundles of rice, and tearing the top stem off of palm trees.

Crop Protection Methods

Crop protection methods are fairly uniform throughout all villages interviewed. In order to protect against birds and primates, slings and stones are employed, though they are more effective against birds than against monkeys or chimps. Weavers are reported to be the most difficult birds to protect against because they make their nests in the fronds of palm trees; if too many fronds are cut down, the palm trees

die. Metal noisemakers and scarecrows are used in addition to stones and slings in some villages, primarily to drive off birds, but occasionally scarecrows are also designed to look like humans brandishing sticks to deter monkeys. Wire traps and fencing are used against rodents though villagers noted that rats are hard to trap because they live in the fields and burrow. Villages that have issues with cattle grazing on their land or trampling their crops report no effective means of protection against the cattle: fencing is ineffective, and the cattle cannot be driven away with stones or slings because they are owned by members of the Fullah tribe.

Trapping and Hunting

Trapping and hunting practices vary widely among the villages. Some villages trap exclusively within their fields as a means of protection against rodents, although other animals such as duikers, snakes, and porcupines wander into these traps. Many of the villages report trapping outside of their farmlands in bush fallow or forests. Some villages said they trap specifically for monkeys and chimps by placing wire traps in trees, while others said that primates sometimes are caught in the traps they set for other animals. One village reports trapping specifically for “bush cows” and occasionally snares warthogs in their traps.

Five of the seven villages with lands in the BCA said that they do not hunt at all. The main reason given for this was the nationwide disarmament in 2002, which took away their guns. Several villages said they formerly hunted with dogs, but no longer do, because they no longer have the dogs to hunt with (the villagers from Kasokira noted that all their dogs had been eaten by boa constrictors). Of the two villages that said they do still hunt, one uses its own dogs to hunt for rodents and the other hires the dogs of another village to hunt for rodents.

Villages generally eat the animals are caught by their traps; a Kathombo villager said they had “never seen an animal buried.” Traps often catch rodents, duikers, snakes, porcupines, monkeys, and more. Chimpanzees were mentioned as edible in several villages, but family-specific taboos against eating chimps prevent many from eating chimp meat. Three major family groups mentioned throughout the course of interviews had such a prohibition.

Forest Resources

The amount and kinds of forest resources gathered within village boundaries depends on how much of the village forest is located outside the BCA. Some villages report having no forest outside the BCA other than their sacred forest or bush, from which they do not gather resources.⁵ Common resources

⁵ Sacred forest or bush (including separate male and female areas) is often three or more times the size of the village settlement area, immediately surrounding or adjacent to the settlement.

gathered include honey, bush yams, fruits, sticks for building, firewood, black tumbler, locus beans, plums, and medicinal herbs. A few villages reported gathering timber from within their forest, but none of the villages interviewed sold timber or wood to other villages. Other resources, such as honey, bush yams, and other fruits are sometimes sold.

Bumbuna Conservation Area

Five of the seven BCA villages—Kasokira, Kafungia, Kadala, Kassasi and Kamathor—report losing the use of as much as 60 or 70 percent of their village lands to the BCA (see Table 3). The largest portions of village lands taken for the BCA were forested. Replete with wildlife populations, the areas taken were also reported by villagers as possessing the most fertile soils and the best trapping sites. Villagers no longer interact with the land and forest in the BCA in the same way as before. Although the creation of the BCA has clearly affected the lives of the villagers, none of the seven villages report receiving any compensation for their loss. In Kafungia, the villagers noted that many of their number have emigrated because of how difficult it became to make a living in the village after their land was taken for the conservation area.

Village	% Land inside the BCA	% Land outside the BCA
Kasokira	60	40
Kafungia	60	40
Kadala	60	40
Kamathor	70	30
Kassasi	60	40
Kathombo	30	70
Kegbema	40	60

**Table 3: Reported Percentage of Village Lands
Inside and Outside the BCA**

Villagers are aware that the portions of land claimed for the conservation area have some degree of restricted access. Villagers report that BWMA staff members visit their village to instruct them not to

farm, hunt, or trap in the BCA. Although the awareness of rules governing use of the BCA land is common to the seven villages, responses to these restrictions vary.

Reactions range from the more conservative to those much less so. Kegbema provides a more conservative example. The villagers noted that they had not farmed in the BCA area for fifteen years and said that now they are instructed not to do so by the BWMA. Now, the villagers refuse even to approach the BCA land. They acknowledge that they could not justify their presence there and thus could not argue their case if confronted by the authorities. Villagers from Kamathor and Kassasi claim only to travel through the BCA on their way to the reservoir. In Kasokira, however, the villagers continue to harvest herbaceous resources from the forests in the BCA, but report that they are not allowed to hunt on BCA lands. They are careful not to cut trees there, noting that, because they have a significant patch of forest outside the conservation area, they do not need to rely on the BCA forest. The villagers also commented that they do not trap on BCA land, aware that there are cameras that take pictures of trespassers. Kassasi and Kafungia also report visiting the BCA lands to harvest forest resources.

Many villages report that there is not enough forest left to them to satisfy their needs. In Kafungia, Kadala and Kamathor, the remaining forests on their village lands are limited to the sacred bush of the men's and women's traditional societies. The villagers in Kafungia cited rules that prevent them from freely harvesting forest resources in the sacred bush: crops harvested in one gender's sacred bush cannot be shared with the opposite gender.

Villagers also lament the loss of good land for agriculture. The formation of the conservation area has led to intensification of agricultural practices, some of which may not be sustainable. All the villages with lands within the BCA have reported a decrease in the fallow period for upland crops. The decrease is substantial, typically from 10-15 years before the BCA to 3-5 years presently. Only a single village, Kegbema, reports a more modest decrease in the fallow period—from 9 to 7 years.

Many of the villagers report that they do not appreciate the way that the BCA was established, in particular being promised compensation that they did not receive. This tension was spoken of in all of the BCA villages. The BWMA reports, however, that compensation was paid in 2008 to some community members in Kasokira, Kegbema, and Kawungulu. At the same time, some monies allocated for BCA land compensation were reportedly retracted and therefore never distributed to landowners. The negative perception of the BCA spills over into attitudes toward the BWMA and its staff, although Kadala, Kafungia, Kamathor, Kassasi, and Kegbema all mentioned participating in a quarterly meeting with the BWMA staff.

Wildlife

Villagers in nine villages were asked to identify mammals seen on village lands from a bound collection of photos. Thirty different species were identified, 29 species within the BCA (see table in Appendix II to this chapter). Included are twelve primates, various civits, pangolins, nine sorts of antelopes (mainly duikers), the serval cat, and (less commonly) warthogs and giant hogs. Based on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the village-identified species includes one that is critically endangered, the West African chimpanzee, and two endangered species, the red colubus monkey (identified only in Kawangulu, outside the BCA) and Jentinks Duiker, identified by seven villages. Although the list collected from villagers cannot be considered exhaustive, most of the species identified are widely observed throughout the BCA. All villages, for example, reported having seen both the long-tailed and tree pangolins, noting that pangolins habituated palm trees in search of palm nut kernels. A few are rarely seen, and there is evident decline in the presence of some species. Only the villagers in Kadala were able to identify the pygmy hippo. They reported that, although the hippos formerly lived in the river near their village, the hippos left after the impoundment of the reservoir. Villagers in Kadala, Kamathor, Kassasi, and Kegbema were able to identify or name giant hogs and the common warthog. Elsewhere, hogs are no longer present. In Kegbema, villagers commented that the hogs are a migratory species, seen rarely.

In every village one or more men were able to name a number of bird species seen in the area. In Kasokira, a villager was also able to point out species seen in the area from a field guide. The villagers confidently state that they would be able to take visitors to see birds. Some types of birds are known to visit the village at specific times during the day or throughout the year. Although there were people in every village who displayed knowledge of the local bird species, many villagers acknowledged that there were even more birds present in and around the villages that they could not name.

All villages report that some wildlife populations have increased since the impoundment of the reservoir. This increase was especially seen in the number of monkeys that approach the villages. Villagers also report that since impoundment, there have been larger chimp groups seen in and around the villages. In Kassasi, Kegbema and Kawornor I, villagers pointed out that rodent populations had increased as well. The villagers in Kadala went so far as to exclaim that, “There are more monkeys than people in Kadala.... The chimps! These ones are the Chiefs of the forest.” The BWMA staff members present at the interview in Kadala noted that the ban on eating monkeys following the Ebola outbreak contributed to the growth of monkey populations over the last 3-4 years.

In Kafungia, the villagers report that cattle from the Fullah tribe are encroaching upon the wildlife populations on village lands. According to villagers from Kassasi, species of vulture are common in the

grasslands frequented by cattle herders. The cattle, they say, trample the grasses, making it harder for wild animals to thrive there. The cattle herders also reportedly drive away animals that they believe could threaten or harm their cattle. The villagers from Kassasi suggested that the longer the cattle graze an area, the fewer the species of wildlife that can live in the area.

Village Interaction with Primates

The extent of the interactions between villagers and populations of chimpanzees and monkeys varies from village to village. All the villages report seeing monkeys nearby. The villagers indicated familiarity with the corridors used by the animals, as well as their favorite foods. Groups of monkeys approach the villages, some consisting of as many as 50 individuals. In Kafungia, Kamathor, Kassasi, Kawonor I and Kegbema, villagers see monkeys every day. Many of the villagers indicated the times at which monkeys could be seen near their villages.

Many villages portray a wealth of local knowledge about the chimpanzees. The villagers in Kafungia and Kassasi know that chimps nest on a hill called “Kayayirina.” This hill was identified as being between Kasokira and Kathombo near Kawonor. The villagers in these three villages are also familiar with this location. The villagers in Kafungia not only know of the chimps on Kayayirina but also report that chimps cause problems in the villages nearest to the hill.

The villagers in Kasokira, Kadala and Kamathor report that the chimps frequently visit their village. In Kasokira, the villagers see chimps daily, any time during the year. They report that the chimps are prone to visiting in small groups; the largest group that they have ever seen was comprised of six individuals. Members of the research team assisted with the installation of camera traps near Kadala, Kasokira, and Kathombo,⁶ where BWMA staff reported active chimp corridors. Only the camera near Kadala functioned properly, however, recording a visit from a chimp family group: one male, a female, and at least one juvenile. In Kadala, chimps are said to approach the village stealthily. While the chimps may enter the village silently, they often yell and shake the trees once they have eaten their fill. In Kathombo, the animals are known to frequent the old village site to harvest fruit from the trees there every month or every other month. Villagers are able to identify the leaders of the chimp groups, and they have witnessed fighting among the five members of the group known to frequent their village. Villagers in Kasokira, Kadala, and Kathombo commented that chimps have never attacked them, only causing crop damage; however, the villagers are aware of how strong and dangerous the chimps can be. Villagers in

⁶ Two team members, Clair Brower and Shaphan Hestick, worked as interns with the BWMA for a 3-week period following the conclusion of village interviews.

Kasokira, Kadala and Kathombo expressed confident that they could take visitors to see the chimps' nesting sites.

Ecotourism Potential

All the villages interviewed said that they would appreciate an ecotourism project being set up in or near their village. Several of the village groups applauded during a description of the potential project. Villagers were also excited at the prospect of sharing their culture with visitors. In Kasokira, villagers noted that tourists would be able to observe and even participate in the process of producing palm wine and palm oil from start to finish. Although some villagers stated that they did not know enough about ecotourism to critique the project, or even ask questions, many villagers indicated that they would enjoy any opportunity to participate in helping such a project become a reality.

When prompted, villagers shared many ideas that could improve the project. Many commented on the need for strong leadership at the head of the chiefdom. On multiple occasions villagers discussed the significance of the pending election of the paramount chief in Kalanthuba Chiefdom. Some villagers also observed that the roads to their villages are incomplete and so could inhibit accessibility. The villagers in Kegbema acknowledged that, for development to come to their villages, there must be a process that takes time. They concluded that patience would be necessary to endure the wait until an ecotourism project bears fruit.

Acts of Welcome

During the team's visits, villagers proffered many cultural expressions of welcome and hospitality. In Kasokira, the headman presented the research team with a traditional cup of water and kola nuts. Girls who had recently been initiated into the women's society were dressed in traditional garb consisting of printed dresses and headscarves, jewelry, and purses. In Kegbema, girls sang and clapped as the village men beat the drums in an impromptu reception. A similar greeting was extended in Kawungulu, where the older women sang their welcome, clapping, dancing, and touching the legs of the members of the research team. On multiple occasions, the research team was fed, offered palm wine, introduced to village officials, allowed to see plantation crops, taken to see monkeys, and shown cultural artifacts, including a spool of woven thread and a canoe in the process of being carved.

Literacy and English Language

Hosting tourists requires a degree of literacy and ability to speak English in the host village. Among the seven BCA villages, three have no English speakers, two have one English speaker, one has four English speakers, and one village reports "several" English speakers. Outside the BCA, two villages report having one or two English speakers, respectively. Literacy follows a similar, but not identical, pattern (see Table 4).

Table 4: Number of Literate Residents and English Speakers by Village

Villages	Number of Literate Residents	Number of English Speakers
Kasokira	1	1
Kafungia	0	0
Kadala	1	0
Kamathor	“Several”	“Several”
Kassasi	0	1
Kathombo	5	4
Kawornor I	4	2
Kawungulu	1	1
Kegbema	0	0

Q & A

At the end of every interview, villagers were given the opportunity to pose questions to the research team and make comments. Villagers aired their concerns about whether the ecotourism proposal would become a reality. One villager in Kegbema commented, “If you have visitors bringing news of development, you do not ask many questions.” Some were content simply to express gratitude. In Kawornor I, a villager said that she would appreciate any kind of development effort being brought to the village. Many others, however, asked questions relating to the compensation for land lost to the BCA, the level of contribution to an ecotourism project that would be expected of villagers, and the use of ecotourism as a potential solution for other agricultural issues.

Compensation

Villagers in three BCA villages posed questions about compensation for land taken for the BCA. In the course of the discussion, the ecotourism project was presented as a new way to receive income from land, distinct from agro-forestry. When present, BWMA staff members participated in this phase of discussion and responded to the compensation issue, noting that villagers had previously been informed that the conservation area would eventually provide opportunities for income. While the BCA has not produced any rewards for villagers to date, the introduction of the ecotourism project would create a stream of income sourced in the wildlife present in the conservation area. Although the villagers often

said that they felt that the BWMA cared more about the chimps and monkeys than about the people, they voiced gratitude for the presence of the research team as evidence of the ecotourism development getting under way as well as an opportunity to restore their faith in the BWMA and its leadership.

Contribution Expected from Villagers

Villagers from Kathombo were especially curious about the part they would need to play in supplying housing for visitors. They stated that they were willing to contribute to the construction of housing facilities for ecotourism visitors. Villagers were told that the chiefdom would be taking responsibility for organizing the erection of buildings for the housing of guests.

Ecotourism and Agricultural Issues

On several occasions, villagers asked if the research team or the ecotourism project would address the problems they experience with pests. The ensuing discussions took several various directions. In Kassasi, the point was made that crop protection is a separate issue best addressed by others, including the chiefdom leadership or the Ministry of Agriculture. In Kamathor, the discussion included a reminder that some “pests,” in particular, monkeys and chimpanzees, would be a source of interest for tourists, and therefore a potential source of income for the village. Examples were also given of projects elsewhere, e.g., in Tanzania, where the relationship between people and an animal species once viewed as destructive was transformed and used for the benefit of the people.

Summary and Conclusions

The seven villages with land in the BCA lost between 30 and 70 percent of their land area to the conservation area, significantly impacting the subsistence livelihoods of villagers, including their ability to trap and hunt and gather forest resources. Villagers are expected to observe BCA boundaries while, at the same time, wildlife protected by the BCA, especially primates, know no boundaries and pose substantial threats to farmers’ crops. In most villages, however, rodents do more damage than primates. Birds also do considerable damage. Traps are used in and around fields to protect against rodents, but the traps also occasionally snare antelope, monkeys, and rare occasion a warthog. Traps are generally ineffective against primates, however, and protecting crops against primates as well as birds requires more or less continuous monitoring.

Villages are fully aware of BCA restrictions but have responded in various ways. Though some villages report avoiding BCA lands entirely, others continue to harvest herbaceous resources there. None report hunting or trapping in the BCA.

The villagers interviewed were readily able to identify animal species inhabiting village lands and forests from photos. In total, villagers identified 30 different species including various primates, antelope, civits, pangolins, and (less commonly) warthogs and giant hogs. Each village group interviewed also had at least one man who could name a variety of bird species. Villagers' interactions with primates, including chimpanzees, were frequent and mainly adversarial, as villagers seek to protect their crops from damage. The frequency of interaction has resulted in a wealth of local knowledge of primate habits, corridors, and nesting locations.

In sum, the potential for village participation in ecotourism seems to be strong. Local knowledge of animal and bird species coexists with a willingness to share their knowledge with visitors. All village groups expressed strong interest in participating in an ecotourism project. Interest extends to the sharing of cultural practices, buttressed by strong traditions of welcoming visitors—as experienced by the research team. The main limitation on village participation is the low level of literacy among villagers and the small number of English speakers.

Perhaps the best way forward is to start on a small scale with a pilot eco-lodge developed and managed by the chiefdom in collaboration with the BWMA and a host village with other villages as visit sites. Prior to initiating the project, further vetting of project plans with villages will be necessary to ensure support from villagers and draw upon local knowledge, taking into account the suggestions or concerns that villagers may have.

Both the chiefdom and the BWMA have important leadership roles to fill. Collaboration can also strengthen the relationship between villages and the BWMA, enhancing conservation. Collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and other potential partners, including Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary as well as potential international donors, is also essential for increasing access to training resources and start-up capital. A suitable business plan is required, to include training of project managers, guides, hosts, and villagers, as an important part of the startup process.⁷ Access to persons trained and experienced in business management and tourism is crucial to the success of the endeavor. In order to involve the largest number of locals in the implementation of the project, guides should be selected from the host village and villages nearby and trained to ensure that local knowledge of wildlife and culture is communicated as clearly as possible to visitors.⁸

⁷ The BWMA report recommends the development of human resources for the implementation of the ecotourism project. The recommendations made include apprenticeship programs, training at the secondary and tertiary level, and introduction of certificates and incentives for guides. Every recommendation is paired with a set of organizations that could support the initiative. BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Action Plan, pp. 12-16, 19.

⁸ The BWMA report highlights the need for the involvement of local people to maximize the flow of benefits to their communities. BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Part 2, p. 4.

Tourists also require background training. A structured briefing before their stay in a village would mitigate the risk of cultural misunderstandings and inappropriate behaviors. Such briefing would do well to include an explanation of bush-fallow agriculture, prohibitions on entering a sacred forest, and any other concerns that arise during start-up meetings with villagers.⁹

Potential Structure of the Project

Members of the research team also visited Rogbonko Village Retreat outside of Magburaka, which provides a good example (perhaps the only example to date) of a successful village-based tourism lodge within the interior of Sierra Leone. Two lodges made with traditional mud brick walls and thatched roofs house visitors from Europe and elsewhere for \$20 a night. Located adjacent to the village settlement of Rogbonko, visitors to the eco-lodge are shown various aspects of the daily life in Rogbonko, including the process of cashew farming, weaving of bags and baskets from palm fronds, rides in dugout canoes, and more. On our visit one local man was selling bags he had made from palm fronds for 10,000 Le, an example that speaks to the potential of an eco-tourism site to support other local enterprises and entrepreneurs.¹⁰

The presence of critically endangered chimpanzees within the chiefdom can be a significant draw for an eco-tourism project. Chimp populations in Kalanthuba, however, are currently low, and their habitat is fragmented, making tourist observation difficult. Other wildlife, such as monkeys and birds, can also serve as attractions, and local knowledge of these species is sufficient that villagers can be found who can easily guide tourists to locations the wildlife are known to frequent. Natural attractions such as Bumbuna Falls, the Bumbuna Conservation Area, and the numerous impressive hills and rock outcroppings are additional assets that can be included in eco-tourists' visits (hiking, swimming, and rock climbing being very popular activities for outdoor types). It may also be important for the future of tourism in the region to identify alternative natural sites to advertise in addition to those listed above so as to avoid their overuse and degradation.¹¹

⁹ The BWMA report addresses the need to minimize negative impacts while enhancing the flow of benefits from ecotourism, warning that commercializing culture can harm the environment, thus crippling the ecotourism project. The development of a code of conduct for operators and participants is recommended. BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Part 2, pp. 4, 8.

¹⁰ The BWMA report characterizes "best practices" as "hard to come by" in Sierra Leone, indicating the need for models to inform ecotourism opportunities. BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Part 4, p. 8. The report also makes recommendations for the encouragement and development of entrepreneurial and managerial skills. *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Action plan, p. 13.

¹¹ The BWMA report suggests a need to reduce pressure on known key sites to avoid degradation. Alternative locations should be identified to relieve this pressure. BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Action Plan, p. 13.

Chimp observation can be facilitated by a process of habituation whereby chimps become accustomed to the presence of humans. Habituation of chimps, however, is a long and difficult process, as well as risky. The BWMA assessment report anticipates chimp habituation in order to facilitate observation by tourists (pp. 3, 5);¹² however, a discussion with the expert staff of the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary in Freetown raised questions regarding its feasibility and wisdom. Habituation can cause the chimps to become more aggressive towards humans, increasing the risk of conflict between farmers and chimps and perhaps endangering tourists, as well as potentially exposing the sparse chimp population to human diseases that can easily be transmitted. Tacugama staff suggested that tourist guides keep their distance from chimpanzees, pointing out signs of chimp activity, such as nesting sites, while maintaining a respectful and safe distance from the chimps. Without habituation, chimps are likely to keep their distance from humans. Whether the eco-tourism project will include chimp habituation is an issue still to be resolved.

Cultural activities and traditions should also be considered and included in the program planning. Farming techniques, history of harvesting and processing palm oil, demonstrations of traditional instruments and dances, blacksmithing, palm wine tasting, and sampling local cuisine are just a part of the rich and diverse Limba culture that would prove fascinating for outsiders to observe and, where possible, partake. With the aid of a translator, village elders may also have a part to play in displaying their culture, for the stories of the history of their village and people would greatly enrich the experience of visitors.¹³

Conservation

All of the suggestions above deal with the short-term considerations for getting an eco-tourism project up and running in Kalanthuba chiefdom. Given the nature of this venture, however, the vision of the project must look further ahead than the next few years. In order to ensure the long-term viability of the project steps must be taken to increase awareness and support for conservation efforts in the chiefdom. If forest cover is lost, the future of the chimps currently inhabiting the BCA will be greatly endangered, along with a number of other species that currently have the potential to attract tourists. Because villagers live within the BCA and have frequent interactions with wildlife, their support for conservation efforts is a key component of success. Efforts are already being made by the BWMA to educate villagers on the benefits and importance of conservation, but combining these efforts with chiefdom-endorsed programs related to the eco-tourism project may help to emphasize the ongoing flow of benefits that conservation can provide to villagers. Conservation education in schools could

¹² BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, pp. 3, 5.

¹³ BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Chapter 1, p. 1. Part of the potential identified by the report is the socio-cultural heritage. See Chapter 3, p. 5. The recommended ecotourism strategy includes the enhancement of cultural heritage within the region.

additionally help to spread better understanding of issues related to conserving endangered species and protecting forestlands.

The BWMA assessment report suggests a cycle of profiting from conservation (via a project such as this) then re-investing a portion of the profits into conservation efforts. Increased conservation and forest cover in this area in particular could mean increased chimp populations, which then could mean more tourists, thus continuing the cycle of benefit.¹⁴ The cycle must also include benefits to villages located within the BCA. Village and conservation benefits can be maximized in a community-based enterprise owned and managed by community organizations, such as the chiefdom and the BWMA, able to capture profits from tourism and conservation for community benefit.

“The Debt of Leadership”

In several of the meetings we had, the participants mentioned the “debt of leadership” in the chiefdom. The need for leadership was described in connection with a series of issues. First, the conservation effort in the BCA is severely hampered by the inability of the BWMA staff to enforce the rules that should be promoting conservation. This is, in part, because of the shortages in staff that leads to difficulties in monitoring. The staff is also frequently unpaid. Secondly, the villagers are aware that community development has been stalled during the long period of the chiefdom amalgamation, to the neglect of Kalanthuba by higher levels of government. This need is felt not only in the area of conservation and ecotourism, but in sectors such as education and agriculture as well. Numerous villagers have mentioned the importance of the upcoming paramount chief election.

Not only does an ecotourism project need skilled management, there is also a need for leadership within the chiefdom and the entire watershed to support the development of the area. The BWMA staff and the chiefdom leadership can empower one another, not only in seeking support for an ecotourism project but also in advocating for other development initiatives of common benefit.

¹⁴ BWMA, *Ecotourism Assessment Report*, Chapter 3, p. 5. The report recommends that conservation efforts be supported by the reinvestment of financial returns.

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