

DISCOVERING COMMUNITY MUSEUMS IN UGANDA.

Exhibition at the National Theatre 18th -19th May 2010



REPORT

BY

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Introduction

Community Museums in Uganda represent a strong desire by individuals, families and communities to preserve and promote their cultures. However, not much has been done to recognize their importance in development of Uganda.

As one of the ways to promote the recognition of culture in development that responds to our national identity, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda has supported 11 community or people's museums across Uganda over the past two years. Many of these are little known both locally and at the national level yet they have potential both Cultural tourism development as well as research opportunities.

CCFU, with support from UNESCO regional office in Nairobi, organized the first national Community Museums exhibition in Uganda at the National Theatre from 18th to 19th May 2010. one of the key objectives of the Community Museums exhibition was to raise the profile of Community Museums and linking them to partners and potential funders

On 18th May was a mini-workshop which provided representatives of the participating museums the opportunity to meet again, welcome new members to the group and discuss the policy context under which Museums operate as well as the relevance of forming a Community Museums association.

The exhibition which was partially open to the public on 18th May was set up and opened to both invited and other members of the public. The Museums exhibited both cultural and natural heritage objects and antiques.

The exhibition which was attended by more than 150 people was officially opened by Mr. Akankwasa Barirega who represented the State Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities. He also launched a common brochure and a road map for the Community Museums in Uganda.

Part one:

Tuesday 18th May 2010

Introductions and sharing news. 15 Community Museums from the different regions of Uganda participated in the exhibition. Representatives of the Community Museums introduced themselves and new members were welcomed to the group.

They also had the opportunity to share news on developments at their respective museums (see examples in Box 1)

The programme for day one also included reviewing the objectives of the exhibition which were;

- 1) raising the profile of Community Museums and linking them to partners and potential funders;
- 2) showcasing efforts to preserve and promote Uganda's heritage by Community Museums
- 3) engaging government officials and the private sector (e.g. tourism sector) by the Community Museums;
- 4) having discussions on the policy context relevant to Community Museums as well as discussing the formation of an association.

Box 1: Some of the News

- Butambala officially opened the Foundry for black-smith on 2nd/5/2010
- Ankore Cultural Drama Actors participated in Radio West's musical extravaganza (*ekitagururo*) for 2010
- The home of Edirisa has acquired another spacious place, 10 km from Kabale town for the new home of Edirisa
- Gulu Peace Museum temporarily closed the exhibition of the Matoput to the public. They are looking for another place for the museum
- Kikonzo Language Center now collaborates with the Obusinga to promote the Kikonzo language

Fredrick Nsibambi (CCFU) conducted the session for introductions and sharing news. He reminded the Museums representatives that other purposes of meeting again in Kampala were to renew our contacts and share progress as well as challenges in our museums.

Policy context: Fredrick also took the participants through the policy context under which museums operate. He showed how the policy context is composed of international and national policy instruments although none of them is directly related to the operations of Community Museums in Uganda. He encouraged participants to exploit the existing policies since all of them provide for protection and promotion of our heritage while others provide for both technical and financial support to our heritage.

He invited the participants to join hands to lobby government to ratify the international policy instruments as well as updating the local ones that are relevant to Community Museums. (see box 2)

Fredrick facilitated a discussion on registration of Community Museums. He highlighted the different categories under which museums can register, including non-government organizations, community based-Organizations, associations and business enterprises. He pointed out the advantages of registering museums if they are to be recognized by the government and other organizations

Box2: International & National policy instruments for Community Museums

International

- The Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948
- The 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.
- The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
- The 2003 The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
- The 2003 UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

National

- The 2003 Tourism policy
- The 2006 Cultural policy
- The 1967 Historical Monuments Act
- The 1995 Constitution
- The Traditional Rulers (Restitution of Assets and Properties) Act 1993
- The Local Government Act, 1997, amended 2002
- The National Environment Management Act, 1998 (CAP 153)
- Copyright Act and Neighboring Rights Act, 2006
- Uganda Wildlife Statute of 1996

SWOT analysis of Community Museums. Emily Drani (CCFU) took the participants through a SWOT for Community Museums in Uganda (see box 3). She said that a contextual analysis reveals strengths, opportunities and threats that Community Museums need to take into account to advance their development. She also pointed out that the concept of Community Museums is still new in Uganda and, as a result, they have not been included in the existing policy framework. However, the different policies provide opportunities for the museums as actors in the culture sector to utilize. Community Museums therefore have to lobby for their inclusion and recognition in the national policy framework.

Box 3: SWOT for Community Museums in Uganda.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Museums are cultural roots of community • They provide shelter, display space to accommodate the museum objects • Willingness and cooperative community members • Resource centre on culture (in some cases the only centre) • Staff and volunteers • Increase collection of artefacts • Availability of artefacts • Registration and recognition • Community participation in the museum 	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of funds / supportive donors • Political stability - secure / access • Networking • Strategically located • Existing policies to support culture e.g. UNESCO and national policies • Government support – set up cultural institution • Local language national policy • Media engagement – radio stations, publicize the museum • Networking, public awareness raising publicity and publicity materials • Good administration – accountability • Registration as legal entities as CSOs, NGOs and Associations
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited space • Lack of voluntary staff to manage the community museum • Preservation of artefacts – pests, termites • Lack of authentic information about the artifacts 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitudes towards culture – youth and some religious leaders • Limited funding • Lack of licenses to operate legally

Formation of Community Museums Association.

John De Coninck (CCFU) led the session on forming an association. All participants indicated interest in having an association to help them to speak with a common and a strong voice, to lobby and advocate for their interests in Uganda and to create a strong link between the government and other support organizations. John pointed out that the association has to have committed leadership and it has to be guarded against individual interests. The association has to be owned by the museum owners themselves and membership procedures have to be clear. John also guided a discussion on starting a Community Museum association which included: i) establishing a name (Uganda Community Museums Association (UCOMA), ii) developing a statement of intent, iii) defining membership, iv) developing objectives/mission, activities and guidelines on meetings (**Annex I**).

An interim committee of five members was selected to spearhead the initial activities of the association. The committee included: Ali Ssemperera from Butambala Heritage of Civilization, Joachim Muhindo from Kikonzo Language and Culture, Monica Mutesi from Center for Christian African Studies, Joseph Apuuli from Bunyoro Community Museum and Margaret Lomonyang from Karamoja Women Cultural Group Museum.

Statement from the Community Museums. A team of four Community Museum representatives (Margaret from Karamoja Women Cultural group, Muhindo from Kikonzo Language & Culture, Denis from Igongo Cultural Center, Oloka from Cultural Research Center) were tasked to draft a statement (**Annex II**) which would be presented to Minister of State for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities. In the Statement, the team highlighted the contribution of Community Museums to national development, the support Community Museums have received from government and civil society organizations such as the Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda and the request for support from government.

The museums requested for adequate funds to be reflected in the national budget and a tax free working environment since they are non profit making organisations.

The Museums also requested for support in terms of capacity building which could be through external technical experts in museum management and Community Development Officers (CDOs), exchange visits abroad or through identifying training opportunities for Community Museum operators.

Marketing Community Museums. Naomi Kabarungi (CCFU) facilitated a role play on how Community Museums can engage various publics. Participants were given tips on how to attract the attention of people to their museums (**Annex III**). Naomi advised the museums owners to think about the “what”, “who” and “the why” before thinking of attracting attention to the museums. She said that the “what” makes the museum different from others, the “who” determines the museum’s target audience and the “why” determines what people should do after they have heard about your museum.

On 18th May the Community Museums exhibition was opened to both selected and the general public for 2 hours (4-6pm). On display was a diversity of both cultural and natural museum objects from the different parts of Uganda (further details on objects displayed in the list of participants)

Part two:

On 19th May, Margaret Lomonyang from Karamoja Women Cultural Group read the draft Statement from Community Museums which was approved by all participating museums with amendments.

Monica Mutesi from the Centre for African Christian Studies (CACISA) on behalf of the interim committee read a Statement of intent of the Uganda Community Museums Association (UCOMA), which is **“We members of community museums in Uganda have today the 18th May 2010 come together at the Uganda national theatre and agreed upon making an association of Community Museums in Uganda and agreed that we shall be called, Uganda Community Museums Association (UCOMA)”** Monica also outlined UCOMA’s mission and objectives, activities and membership and rights of members.

Who participated and who exhibited what?

The following Community Museums took part in the exhibition. (see pictorial in **Annex IV**)

	Community Museum	Some of the objects exhibited.
1	Butambala Heritage Centre of Civilisation Ssana Walukagga-(BHCCSW)	iron smith skills; how to make spears and mudfish trap (<i>omuya</i>)
2	Human Rights Focus-Peace Museum from Gulu	Local herbs used in conflict resolution ceremonies (the <i>matoput</i>)
3	Edirisa from Kabale	Traditional umbrellas, shield and sandals
4	Karamoja Women's Cultural Group	Original beads, sandals, attires for traditional marriage ceremonies
5	Igongo Cultural Centre-Biharwe-Mbarara	<i>Omugamba</i> (a collection of pots used during traditional marriage)
6	Cultural Assets Centre (Uganda Rural Development and Training programme -UDRDT) from Kagadi	<i>Ekirumiko</i> (Traditional healing methods)
7	Cultural Research Centre	Publications on <i>Lusoga</i> language and <i>Kisoga</i> culture, wooden weighing scale, painting of <i>Budhagaali</i> , the traditional god of the Nile
8	Kawere African Museum	The different uses of bark cloth, unique photos and a gramophone
9	Ankole Cultural Drama Actors-Isingiro women	Artifacts and pictures depicting the traditions of Banyankore including <i>ekyotezo</i> , the traditional perfume for ladies
10	African Research and Documentation Centre, Nkozi University	Divination and healing objects- <i>abalongo</i> , a trap from Karamoja & wooden sandals and <i>faces of god</i> sculpture.
11	Kizonzo Language and Culture	Publications on Kizonzo language including DVDs
12	Kabalega Development Foundation	Pictures of the <i>Nyamyalo</i> (the royal seat of the Omukama of Bunyoro) and power symbols
13	African Christian museum-Bbunga (CACISA)	Traditional fishing equipment and musical instruments used for worshipping in African Traditional Society, python skins, Colobus monkey skin (a totem in Buganda region)
14	Iteso Cultural Union-Soroti	Local brew from Teso land (Ajon), traditional plates and cups, walking sticks and grinding stones as well as traditional attire
15	Bunyoro Community Museum	Traditional musical instruments, dancing costumes for <i>nyoro</i> dance (<i>lunyege</i>) and traditional salt processing skills.

Commitment from the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities.

Honourable Serapio Rukundo, the State Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities had been invited as the chief guest but delegated Mr. Akankwasa Barirega, the Principal Wildlife Officer. In his speech the Minister pledged total government support to Community Museums in Uganda. According to the Minister, the government is in the process of diversifying its tourism products. This will involve incorporating Community Museums into the tourist packages that are going to be promoted by the government of Uganda.

The Minister also said that government appreciates the work of non-government organizations such as CCFU in supporting local initiatives to preserve culture and local identities as one of the ways to influence human development in Uganda.

A common brochure for Community Museums in Uganda together with a DVD was launched by Mr. Akankwasa Barirega, the Principle Wildlife Officer in the Ministry of Tourism. The brochure has a road map indicating the location of each museum in Uganda. The DVD summarizes the achievements, challenges and opportunities for Community Museums in Uganda.

Conclusion, out puts, action points and suggestions for future exhibitions.

The exhibition revealed that Community Museums in Uganda are a potential attraction which needs to be developed and publicized. The museums exhibited unique and fascinating cultural heritage objects from across Uganda which attracted the attention of different people.

The exhibition also revealed that Ugandans have started appreciating their cultural heritage and taking pride in it. This was manifested in the turn up of different sections of the public to the exhibition which included government officials, members from the private sector (tour companies), government parastatals (for instance the Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Uganda Tourism Board), members from the different media houses, members from the cultural institutions and academic institutions as well as members from the general public.

The government of Uganda pledged support especially in terms of recognizing Community Museums in the relevant national policy framework. The museums also stand a chance to benefit from the government tourism strategy of a diversified Uganda tourism product because of their potential for cultural tourism development.

Out puts of the exhibition

- 1) Community museums produced a Statement which they presented to the Minister's representative
- 2) The museums were covered by both print and electronic Ugandan media. (the daily news papers, the New Vision (17th and 21st May 2010) and the Daily Monitor (18th and 29th May 2010) recorded statements about the exhibition by the Community Museums in Uganda.
- 3) Community Museums were also exposed to Tour Operators and other Tourism Organizations (Afri Tours and Travel) who promised to include Community Museums in the tourism itineraries. Tour Operators also encouraged Community Museums to work with them.
- 4) In addition, Community Museums got in touch with many other organizations such as Uganda Wildlife Authority and Uganda Tourist Board who promised support to Community Museums. UWA Community Conservation Coordinator promised to allow museums close to the National Parks to display their objects in the parks or they will encourage tourists to visit such museums.
- 5) The Minister pledged support to Community Museums since the government is working towards a diversified tourism Ugandan product. (**Annex V**), Minister's Speech)

Action points and Suggestions.

- The Community Museums Association Interim Committee was requested to draft a Constitution for the Association and share it with other members for approval by e-mail in a month time. After approving the Constitution, the registration process for the association will start at the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry.
- Mr. Akankwasa Barirega requested for a list of Community Museums. A list, report and copies to be sent.
- The list of Community Museums in Uganda to be sent to the Minister Sate for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities.
- Seek to meet the Minister to discuss the way forward for Community Museums in Uganda, including the Association.

Suggestions from for future exhibition.

- CCFU should organize the Community Museums Exhibition annually
- CCFU should identify a place where Community Museums can showcase their objects for at least a week
- Collaboration with other mind-like organizations including UNNC, Bayimba Cultural Foundation, the Home of Edirisa and UNESCO