

**MOLO CONVENTION**  
**Molo, Uganda 27-30 January 2016**  
***The Coming of Age Convention***

*Compiled by Barbara Heinzen, July 2016*

*New Baltimore, New York, USA*

*Email: [barbara@barbaraheinzen.com](mailto:barbara@barbaraheinzen.com)*

**INTRODUCTION: THE SLOW DEEPENING OF THE BARBETS DUET**

In late January 2016, our mini-van with thirteen passengers pulled away from the home of Oby and Hilda Obyerodhyambo in Nkoroi, outside Nairobi, Kenya. We were on our way to eastern Uganda to attend the sixth Barbets Duet Convention, the Coming of Age Convention, hosted by Magode Ikuya. After a long drive from Nairobi, and a long wait at the Malaba border post, we reached a small guest house outside of Tororo, about 20km south of Molo. The next morning, we were welcomed in Molo by Magode and a Teso band.



**Figure 1: Teso band, welcoming Barbet visitors to Molo**

In the ten years since the first Barbets Duet Concept Note was written, our small experiment in systemic invention has matured and grown. The original founding partners from five countries are still involved and still trying new things at their learning sites. Despite the economic ups and downs of our societies and our lives, we have always found the money to

advance the work at each site and pay the expenses of our Conventions. Our families and friends have helped, but we have remained independent of donors and charities.

While the first [Concept Note](#) said this experiment would need twenty years, the partners quickly realized it requires several generations. The Molo Convention is where the next generation took their place alongside the founding partners. Several of the younger ones are now starting their own Barbet experiments and businesses. Their participation is one reason why this Convention is called the 'Coming of Age' Convention.

This report of the Molo Convention, and subsequent safari to four Barbet sites in Tanzania, is a snapshot of where we are now and what we have been learning. Before travelling to Uganda, we were told that the Convention would have three parts: first, a visit to Magode's learning site and the new fish ponds, then a *baraza*, or community meeting, where we would explain what we are doing to Magode's neighbours; and third, our private meeting to share the news of our sites, learn from each other, and discuss future plans. After our musical welcome, we began with a tour of Magode's site. Following the report of events in Molo, there is a short addendum on the safari to Tanzania where we visited three other Barbet sites.

### **DAY ONE: MAGODE'S LEARNING SITE - A LARGE VISION AND ACHIEVEMENT**

In the time of Magode's grandfather, also called Magode, the British built a railroad through Eastern Uganda that ran through the clan's land. One of the stops on the railway was 'Magodes', a small place north of Tororo and west of Molo. This is where his grandson, James Magode Ikuya, now has his learning site. The site is on clan land that runs for 21km along one bank of the Kagninima stream, a Nile River tributary with headwaters on Mount Elgon.



Figure 2: railway line through Magodes in what was once a forested landscape

After driving across the railway tracks, the group gathered by the side of the Kagninima stream. Due to upstream erosion, the water in the stream was muddy and turbid, making it hard for fish and other water creatures to survive. According to Mr. Magode, the landscape has changed dramatically over the past thirty years.

*“This stream,” said Magode, “used to be crystal clear, full of life, fish, what not, full of life because the embankments were clean. This whole place was forested. Thirty years ago it was a very good place. Now it is going down, so we are working to [change that] ....”*

Chris Jones asked if they would be working in the mountains where erosion was taking place.

*“It will be the whole stretch,” said Magode, “the whole stretch. But my stretch will be a demonstration area so that it will help every place to come up and then we will get a better system of water. ... That is our challenge now, to restore what [we lost].”*

We were standing by a small dam in the stream, part of a water storage system that was being dug while we were there. As Magode explained:

*“We are trying to solve a water problem to the [fish] ponds, rather than relying on raw nature - especially if the water recedes in the dry season. ... So now here, we are trying to build a channel of water, turn this into a shallow well, then we can hand pump the water*

*from a higher level and always get a water supply into the ponds in all seasons. ... So it solves the water problem, permanently!"*

This is not only good for the fish in the ponds, he said, but also helps to avoid conflicts with the neighbours who use the stream to irrigate their rice paddies.



**Figure 3: dam to divert water for dry season storage**



**Figure 4: New fish pond at Magode's learning site**



**Figure 5: net of 12,000 fingerlings, most of which escaped after a bad storm tore the net**



**Figure 6: Mr Magode (on left) showing Sammy Muvelah & Chris Jones the "tourist area" - to be left wild - except for a place for drinks and a meal**

The fish ponds are one of the principle economic activities at the heart of Mr Magode’s plans for environmental restoration and economic sufficiency. The reasoning was simple:

*“The plan is mainly to engage in a number of economic activities as a starting point to make sure that we can sustain the activities as we go. But around the human economic activities, we want to do environmental restoration. First beginning with our stream banks, to restore them to the level they used to be, where we can bring to life the old foliage and growth and plants and trees which used to be here. Alongside that, [we will] introduce other things which have disappeared from the area: medicinal plants, grass types and the shrubs including trees, the old types which we are collecting and we shall have groups of them in the area. So, that will make us have the place as a learning site, people beginning to see what used to be and what is possible to be restored and that restoration is not contradictory with economic activities. Both can go hand in hand, so man can be a useful agent for the protection of nature, rather than being the other way around, seeing ourselves only as wasting nature in order to live. That was, in this area, not the best thing.”*



**Figure 7: Google Maps satellite view of Magode's learning site**

*“So on the land we have a layout where it is now to serve a number of purposes. Part of it we shall put animal grazing, goats and a few cows, not many but we shall keep some few.”*

*Rabbit keeping, we shall also do poultry. ... And then we shall also plant some yams and other crops. You can see some bits of bananas ... And we shall also have some trees, both fruit trees and wild trees.*

*“All of them combined will give a good ecology, which can help us sustain ourselves but at the same time to sustain nature. We are hoping to attract birds, insects, and other things so they can be part of the living, the co-existence of man and the natural. ...*

*We hope we shall create more water in the process because as people replicate our example, we think the water level will be improved, the rainfall will also grow and the general pattern of things will be better. ... It will be much more beautiful than we are now. That is it in a nutshell.”*

As we left the fish ponds, the scale of Magode’s vision and the work done so far were a reminder of what we all want to achieve. This visit was even more remarkable because of the numerous setbacks Magode has experienced, reported at previous conventions. His first crop of fish had been stolen just before harvesting and the ponds were drained, leaving only a puddle to mark where they had been. However, instead of quitting, Mr Magode built a road to the site and a caretaker’s hut to guard against future damage. He then redesigned the ponds and started over again, only to be held back by a serious stroke, from which he has now recovered.

The next event in our day was part of another task Mr Magode has set for himself: to explain his restoration vision and new economy to his neighbours. The visitors’ part in this task began as we returned to the venue for the community meeting where many people had gathered to hear about our visit and the work we are doing together.

## DAY ONE: THE BARAZA - A COMMUNITY MEETING AT MAGODE'S PLACE



**Figures 8: the Baraza begins at Magodes**

Patrick Okware was the master of ceremonies, introducing both the St James Choir and speakers from Kampala, Tororo and Molo who offered their welcome and thoughts on what is being done. In a song composed for the day, the Choir thanked the visitors for coming, saying *“this is a better picture for better cooperation...”* There was then a break for lunch and cold drinks, with a great feast of local cuisine laid out for the Barbet visitors in the garden of Magode’s house, making us feel even more welcome and refreshed after a long morning.



**Figure 9: laying out lunch in Magode's compound**

The rest of the afternoon was taken up with short talks from each Barbet site, with Patrick Okware translating. Despite coming from very different places, their messages were very similar.



**Barbara Heizen, Hannacroix Learning Site, USA**

Barbara Heizen, coordinator of the Barbets Duet and owner of the Hannacroix site in the USA, began by introducing the Barbets Duet idea. She quoted Wembah Rashid, a Tanzanian sociologist, who had told her, *“When the land is sick, the people are sick.”* that means, she said, that *“when the land is healthy the people our healthy.”* However, in all the places she knows, the land is not healthy and needs to be healed. In order to do that, *“We need all the knowledge we have. We need the knowledge of Africa, we need the knowledge of the West, we need any knowledge that will help us to heal the land and become a healthier society and a healthier people.”* In the Barbets Duet, she said, this learning takes place in our own communities, using our own land so that each of our sites can show others what is possible.

She then spoke of her own place in the United States, describing her learning site as one where she could not raise animals or crops, but knew it was a place with high wildlife value in a rare habitat, a freshwater tidal creek entering a big river. However, she quickly discovered the land was more damaged than she had imagined and required more work than she could afford or do on her own. She felt stuck and dismayed, but when three hunters asked for permission to hunt on her land, she drew on lessons from Africa to create an agreement with them: they could hunt, but had to give her land management in return.



*“I learned in Africa that no body owns land - in historical times - but everybody had a right to something on the land. And ... one of the ways to create healthy land was to share the richness of the land with each other.” Thanks to that agreement with the hunters “this small place is much richer and much better than it was.”*

**Mwajuma Mabewa, Msi Choke Seaweed Growers Cooperative, Tanzania**

Following Barbara’s talk, Mwajuma Mabewa spoke about the work of the Msi Choke Seaweed Growers Cooperative in Tanzania - growing, harvesting, selling and making seaweed soap. Seaweed itself was strange to the people of Molo who are very far from the ocean. However, a suggestion that seaweed had many useful, even aphrodisiac properties, prompted many to taste it, urging each other with a mixture of teasing and daring, then surprised by the salty flavor.



**Figure 10: Seaweed from Tanzania being shared for tasting**

**Chris Jones, Woodland Valley Farm Learning Site, UK**

Chris Jones from Cornwall in the UK was the next person to speak. He began by describing his friendship with Helen Kongai, a farmer from Mbale known to several people at the meeting. Helen Kongai had spent time at Woodland Valley Farm as part of the Send-A-Cow project. Their discussions had shown that their two farms, in different parts of the world, had a lot in common.

*“In particular,” said Chris, “we faced problems with weather: she has not enough rain, we usually have too much. The weather is becoming more unpredictable. And we both seem to suffer from poor prices for our produce. The real differences between us were that her farm was very diverse in productivity. Our farm only really produces one thing. So she had this benefit of diversity and this actually made me look at how we do our farming in Britain. As a direct result of her visit to me, we planted six acres of nut trees.”*



**Figure 11: Chris Jones with newly planted nut trees, 2010, inspired by the diversity of an African farm.**

He described his reaction to Barbara Heinzen’s suggestion in 2009 that Woodland Valley Farm be one of Barbet learning sites. *“It just became apparent to me that this was very important work. Especially as I had been working with Helen, I had a great deal to learn from farmers in this country. And that really is the fundamental reason why I am here. It is to learn about the conditions here and most importantly about the way that people think and act in order to change their farming. Because if we just carry on doing things in the same way, we will not be able to respond to the challenges of climate change. The underlying philosophy that I have and that I take from my partners in the Barbets Duet is that every year we should try to make our environment a little bit better and stronger than it was last year.”*

Chris Jones asked people to remember the interlocking relationship of three things: environment, society and economy. *“Without the environment there can be no economy and no society. Without society there is no economy, and without the economy it is going to be pretty tough to have a society. So if I ask you to do anything, it is to think of those three things together.”* And, he concluded, *“please think of me in the cold and the wet of England, because I will be thinking of you here in the lovely warm sunshine of Uganda.”*

### Sammy Muvelah, Lukenya Learning Site, Kenya

Sammy Muvelah, from Nairobi, Kenya, then spoke about his learning site in Lukenya, comparing it to what he had seen that morning at Magode's site. *"I come from a very very dry place. So, why am I here? For me it is to see what has been achieved here which makes most of what some of us are trying to do really really small. We have learnt a lot from what we have seen."*

Sammy went on to talk about the experience of creating a Barbet site, and learning from each other. *"When it comes to the environment, that often starts with a very bad situation. And you often don't know what to do to make it better. But by sharing and learning from others, you learn to make your environment better and you learn to improve it. And that saves you a lot of energy and resources by learning from others because it is like gaining knowledge for a relatively low cost. And I want to tell you that I am a living example of that. Where I come from, about five years ago, six years ago, we didn't have water. We literally, would have to walk from here to .... Mr Magode knows the place. And of course that is a challenge because you can't keep animals, you can't plant crops, if you don't have water. But a few years ago we sat down and we talked about something and I began to develop water resources. Today I think we can go for a year and I think we have water to drink where we live."*



**Figure 12: Mzee Magode (L) with Mzee Zhao (R) at the Lukenya dam, January 2014**

The water is there because Sammy and his neighbours built a dam to hold rain water running off a large rocky slope. Building the dam with his neighbours made a huge difference. *“That has really changed everybody and it has become a very important lesson. People have learned to have tree nurseries and plant trees. I think if that continues to happen our environment will be better. And, as I think Mr Chris Jones said, there is an economy that can depend on that environment. Thank you very much.”*

### **The Next Generation: Felicity Jones and Henricus Odhiambo**

After Sammy Muvelah, the microphone was handed to two of the next generation, Henricus Odhiambo (known as Cus), from Seme in Kenya, and Felicity Jones from Cornwall in the UK. They were two of the young people attending the Barbets Convention from Uganda, Kenya and the UK. While they acted as speakers, Sankara Yambo from Nairobi, was busy recording everything on a small video camera, for later editing.



**Figure 13: Sankara Yambo - Barbets Duet camera man**

Felicity and Cus spoke about their generation’s role in the Barbets Duet, with Felicity first asking people in the audience what they thought made for a healthy environment. *“Afforestation, reforestation and preservation,”* said one. *“Good farming practice,”* said another, but the rest were too shy to answer.

Felicity then provided her answer to the question: *“I think it comes down to developing strategies and attitudes and that can only really be developed by experimentation, which is a big part of Barbets Duet. Trying new things to make a profit while keeping the environmental sustained or keeping sustainable as we’re doing it.”* Cus agreed, adding that

the younger generation needed to support their elders and *“to find what we as young people can add to what they have done.”*

Felicity observed that younger people offer a different perspective, one based on looking forward, something she felt that older politicians in her part of the world did not do very often. She cited the lack of government planning to cope with the increased risks of flooding as climate change brings heavier rainfall to her part of the world in Cornwall, UK.

Cus spoke of his involvement in the learning site at Seme, Kenya, where he is living after attending university. Cus has been supporting his brother, Oby's, projects to test different types of food crops. In addition to potatoes, he said they were doing vegetables like kale, capsicum peppers, *sukuma wiki*, and other local vegetables. *“One thing that cuts across, we use the stuff we plant for the daily food we eat at home. So that is food sustainability. Another thing, the stuff that we have, we can sell. That tells us if we take good care of our environment, it will not only benefit us as individuals, but also our neighbours and people at the market centres - the ones we sell our produce to - [and] we are able to get some money out of it.”*

This was Felicity's first week of her first trip to East Africa and she was impressed by the degree of social cohesion she had experienced in the Barbets Duet and seen in the day's events at Molo. *“I think another good part of Barbets is learning from what everyone else is doing. Now although the UK and East Africa environment are not very [similar], you guys seem to have cohesion as a community pretty well down.”* Citing the failure of her community in Cornwall to agree on siting a windmill, she concluded, *“... at home, it seems to be very difficult to have cohesion of resources in our community.”*

Picking up the same theme, Cus spoke about the need to work with his neighbours in Seme. *“I think as part of cohesion, we found that it is very important for us ... to bring aboard our neighbours. We should know that this learning process is continuous, so as we do our various projects on our own, the other people who are very close to us they will be easily assimilated into their own projects which supports the larger goal that we are all trying to get to.”*

Reflecting the frequent use of social media in her life in England, Felicity ended their talk by asking who used Twitter, Facebook or the internet. Although very few said they did, she pointed out that it could help their businesses. *“It is a great way to advertise produce, and also a great way to make links with others who are similar to you in trying to plan their business.”*

### **Oby Obyerodhyambo - Seme Learning Site, Kenya**

Oby was the last person to speak and held the attention of the group with his practical examples and simple rhetoric. He described the Barbets Duet as *“sharing spaces, because we all live together in the same world.”* Like Mr Magode, he described Seme as a place *“where the land has gone through a really rough time. We have been told that 30 years ago there were very many trees and forests around here. This is the same case with Seme. So what we are trying to do is to restore the land by planting trees - not just any tree, but medicinal trees. So we try and learn from our elders which were those trees that were very valuable for our people in the past. We talk to older people and they teach us which are those trees and we look for them and we try and plant them. Which means we are learning from our elders, we are learning from the past, and we are using that wisdom and bringing it today.”*

Oby also echoed the point made by his younger brother, Cus, that planting new food crops could ensure food security and provide an income, but focused on fruit trees. *“We also plant fruit trees so that the trees not only restore the land, but they also provide food and a source of income. Because it is important that while we restore the earth, we also make sure we build the economy.”* He later gave the example of an improved variety of paw-paw, which can produce sixty fruits in a year and keeps producing.

More generally, Oby described trees as providing a type of savings and insurance. *“If you plant a tree today, it will help you in future - it is like an insurance. If you have 100 trees today, in ten years time, every tree might be worth a lot of money. If you have a child who needs to go to school, all you need to do is tell him: cut down two trees and you can sell for timber. So by healing the earth, we also protect the future because we plant an insurance.”*

One of the reasons for trying out these different crops is that there has been an over-reliance on maize in Seme. That not only reduced crop diversity, it was unsuited to the soils and climate of the area. In searching for alternatives to maize, Oby and his family turned back to traditional crops: sorghum and pumpkin. *"You work very hard with planting maize, you put in a lot to get maize, but you get very little in return. So we have been trying to encourage people, by leading by example, by planting sorghum. ... Before maize, there was sorghum. And sorghum, even when the rain doesn't come a lot, you will get a harvest. There is more security when you plant sorghum compared to maize."* Pumpkins, he said, are another insurance crop during times of drought. *"So we have planted pumpkins. In the past, every homestead you'd find pumpkins. ... When there was drought, the thing that saved people was pumpkins. So we are using the wisdom from the past and bring it to the present to provide food security."* Oby also talked about the value of onions, which can be stored for nine months without spoiling. *"So you see, when you have onions, you have money in the bank."*

Oby also emphasized the need to think of farming as a business, similar to running a shop or having a job. Many of the crops they are trying will provide food for the family, but can also be sold. Recently, for example, they have been raising pigs, selling pork and using the manure to fertilize the fields. Over and over, they keep finding ways to farm in a way that nourishes and restores the land while also producing an income. *"So curing the land is profitable! Curing the land can give you income. So you are doing a good thing and you are finding income from it."*

He repeatedly came back to the theme that they are learning from the past in order to create a better future. In *"learning from our traditions - like using sorghum - we use our traditions and our culture to secure our future. ... The past has a lot of lessons for us [but] ... we must remember we cannot continue doing things from the past without examining them. ... So we have to be able to look back in order to see forward. ... And this is what this group of ours is about."*

Young people are an important part of the Barbets Duet. *"For those of us who are like my age - which is very few people here - we have to pull the young people together with us. We have to learn together with them. ... And when we make mistakes we make mistakes together. When we are old we cannot say, 'this is how my father did it and therefore we*

*must do it like this. Because ... things have changed, so you have to learn afresh. So even if you are old like me, you learn."*

The freedom to learn from our mistakes was a point Oby emphasized repeatedly. *"We try and learn, we try and try, we make mistakes, and we learn from our mistakes and we try again. But when we try the second time, it is better than the first time. So we keep learning from each other. ... What we have learned from Mzee Magode we will use where we are. ... Some things that we have seen here will work. Some will not work, but we will have learned.*

*"That is what we are about. We learn, we try, we make mistakes, we learn from our mistakes, and we try again. Because that is what the cycle of life is about. ... Making mistakes is okay. Because you learn from mistakes. And then you try again. And when you try again you will be better than when you did it the first time."*



**Figure 14: Oby Obyerodhyambo's skill as a speaker and performer captured people's attention**

In closing for all of the Barbet visitors, Oby made an appeal to everyone to start something today. *"So do not stop. And do not try to save the whole world. Start where you are. Start now. Start small and let it grow big. ... Even a child starts when they are small and then they grow up. So start! Even if you plant one tree every day, by the end of the month, you will have 30 trees. By the end of the year you will have almost 800 trees. There are about 30 people here. If the 30 people here plant 800 trees, we will have a forest in Molo and the rain*



*will come back. And the animals Magode was talking about will come back and people will have food and people will be rich.”*

Oby finished by imagining that one day the visitors would come back and find 2300 new trees in Molo. *“And we want to invite you to our places, so that you can also come and see what we are doing. We will encourage each other because we share a space. ... what you do affects me and what I do affects you. So we must work together because we owe it to this world. We want to make this world a better place - for us, and for our children, and for our children’s children.”*

### **Closing Remarks, Music and Conversation**

After Oby spoke, the meeting ended with thanks all around followed by more music, conversation and dancing. The *baraza* was the first time the Barbets Duet partners had presented their work to a public group in East Africa. The event marked a new confidence in what we are doing and how we are doing it.



**Figure 15: the meeting ending as it had begun: with music, dancing & conversation**

**DAY TWO: PRIVATE DISCUSSION AMONG PARTNERS & NEXT GENERATION**

Our second day in Molo, Uganda, was for private discussions and began inside the new walls of a house being built by Mr Magode. As is now customary at Barbet Conventions, we had site reports from everyone attending. The site reports were followed by a discussion around continuity and legacies, including a dialogue with the next generation of young people who had come to the Convention. The day finished with a tougher debate on resource mobilization. Specifically asking ourselves, what do we want to do collectively, and what resources do we have - or can we raise - to achieve our goals? A different partner chaired each discussion and verbatim notes were typed on a computer while the batteries lasted.

**Basic Barbets Duet Principles**

Before the site reports began, everyone read through a summary slide of Barbets Duet principles. Were these principles still the right ones to guide us? With very little discussion everyone agreed they were.

<b>Useful Principles</b>		
<b>Barbets Duet Working Assumptions</b>	<b>Initial Governance Principles</b>	<b>Establishing a Barbet Site</b>
Multiple experiments & diverse sites → rapid learning	Each site evolves in its own way to its own conditions.	“Just Begin” With something that bears fruit quickly
Equity & engagement across knowledge, power & culture	There is value in coming together.	Barbet activity is consistent with its site
Give & gain: Everyone has something to give & something to gain.	In coming together, all have a stake and all share responsibility.	Shape environmental ambitions around immediate needs.
Mosaic Rights → support environmental & social goals.	<b>We are a Jumuiya</b> <i>A jumuiya (collective, or constellation) of learning sites experimenting with ways to support people who support the natural world</i>	Learning by demonstration
		Thinking step by step; one thing follows on another
		Follow the path of least resistance; start with what is most possible.
		Utu Net Benefits

“Rather than ask:  
how can Lukenya support a Friesian cow, I ask:  
what can Lukenya support?”  
Sammy MuveLah, ‘18

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**Figure 16: Barbet principles - as agreed in previous Convention 2009-2014**

## Site Reports and Discussion

Because the founding partners of the Barbets Duet have met six times since 2009, our site reports were quick updates on what each place is doing. This session was chaired and summarized by Oby Obyerodhyambo, of Seme, Kenya.



**Figure 17: Sammy Muvelah (baseball cap) translating for Mzee Machano Ali (left) and Mwajuma Mabewa (right); Oby Obyerodhyambo, far right**

### **Chris Jones, Woodland Valley Farm, UK**

Chris Jones spoke first. For several years, he has wanted to test mob-stocking at Woodland Valley Farm where they raise beef cattle. Mob-stocking involves moving the herd every day from one small area of pasture to the next. Each day, the herd grazes the forage very heavily, but is then moved on and only returns to that spot 3-4 months later after the grass has recovered. *‘The main thing we have learned is that we can increase the amount of grass we produce by closely managing the grazing animals. ... We have more grass in January [i.e. mid- winter] now than ever before. As a result we are going to increase the number of animals. We have had a 10% increase since Lukenya [2014 Convention], and will try to increase another 10% until we hit the ceiling.’*

The farm is also producing cider, using apples from the farm plus apples that are either given to them or cheap to buy locally. The fruit is pressed, and the juice is fermented to produce cider they can sell, said Chris, adding jokingly, *“Given that seaweed increases sexual*

*performance perhaps we can claim the same for cider ....” The farm also produces high quality apple cider vinegar “that can be used for pickling and culinary use and is also a self-treatment for arthritis.”*

Woodland Valley Farm has been an educational centre for some time and educational visits continue, but the farm is also being used to host weddings. *“There is definitely a market for out-of-the-ordinary events in a rural setting with an environmental twist,”* said Chris.

Perhaps the most innovative experiment at Woodland Valley is the reintroduction of beavers. Beavers do not exist in East Africa, but can be found in North America and Europe. They are large, aquatic rodents who take down trees and saplings to build dams, creating ponds they use to escape predators and enter their burrows unseen. Beavers went extinct in Cornwall around 800 years ago.

The village of Ladock is downstream of Woodland Valley Farm and is frequently flooded. By introducing beavers to a five-acre site on the farm, Chris hopes the animals *“will build a dam to create a lake. This will help prevent flooding in the settlement downstream, will provide better habitat for fish and other species, and provide opportunities for tourism.”*



**Figure 18: a beaver dam built by North American beavers on the Hannacroix Bay site, winter 2016**

It remains to be seen if things will work out as planned, so Chris is working with several academics to gather baseline data before the beavers arrive and transform the landscape. *“There is the potential for 20 year research project and it is a long slow project,”* said Chris.

### **Hilda Adhiambo, Seme, Kenya**

Hilda Adhiambo spoke for the Seme site which had several members of the Odhiambo family attending the Convention. The family has been working to diversity production along several different lines, as described during the previous day's community meeting. New crops (onions, bananas, drought-resistant crops) plus increased animal husbandry - first with pigs and then with goats and possibly with chicken and rabbits, have all been important. The diversification of crops increases food security, as does the animal husbandry, but the animals also produce manure that can be used to fertilise the crops while tree planting of fruits (paw-paw, mango, jackfruit) and medicinal plants continues. *"Whenever we come across a medicinal plant, we take it in so we can pass it on to other generations. ... Fruit trees diversify food sources [and] ... serve as a deterrent to the erosion of soil."*

Much of this activity has been supported by better water harvesting - with underground 1000-litre tanks for the kitchen garden and shallow wells to provide larger irrigation in the fields. Water continues to be *"one of our biggest challenges,"* as rainfall in Seme is very unpredictable.

One of the disappointments at Seme has been the slow rate of adoption by their neighbours of the innovations the Odhiambo family have been introducing. When Oby first proposed that the Barbets Duet work be organized around learning sites, it was with the expectation that people would imitate successful practices when they saw them. But, as Hilda described it, *"there is a slow adoption rate. Neighbours are not adopting as quickly as we expected. A few are picking up the butternut squash, and a few have planted bananas. But it is very slow. Perhaps it is something we have to think about again."*

However, they may be achieving a wider impact in a different way, as they need to hire people to help on the farm. Young people who take jobs with them are then trained in something new. *"They may be there for the incomes, but with a little patience and support, they can go far. We have a young man who now knows the process of caring for the pigs. So rather than just telling them to get involved, as a source of employment, these are young people, age 25-26, ... learning new things."*



**Figure 19: Some pigs - photographed in 2014**

It is not always easy, said Hilda. *“Sometimes the youth drop off and we have to find someone else. That is a challenge.”*

#### **Barbara Heinzen, Hannacroix Bay, USA**

Barbara’s site report two years earlier, at Lukenya, had had a distinct note of discouragement. Although the three hunters had given her good land management work in return for hunting rights during the first year, work in the second year had made little progress. In response to this report, Mama Gashindo of Msi Choke, gave Barbara some good advice: *“Involve the hunters more deeply. This is too big for you to handle alone.”* When Barbara returned to the USA, she told the hunters what she had heard and they agreed, saying they had done a lot of thinking about what they might do. They believe that one day they will be able to sell hunting rights to others, earning as much as \$2000 in a weekend. This would help to pay for restoration and reward all of them.

In May 2015 when the most experienced hunter, Eric Remillard, needed a place to live he moved into the downstairs room of Barbara’s house, allowing him to spend more time on the site. He has now become the manager of the swamp forest and together they are a strong partnership. The site has more paths providing edges to wildlife. Several areas have been cleared of invasive shrubs, allowing native plants and trees to re-sprout, and there is a clearing that will be planted with native species palatable to deer. *“Thanks to the paths, we*

*have [also] been able to bring a number of people down to the swamp to see what we are doing.”*

The relationship with Eric Remillard has taught Barbara something important. *“Most of us rely on our families to support us, but working with Eric helped me to realize that the people to carry on our ideas can come from anywhere - not just the family.”*

Barbara also spoke about her commitment to planting native plants, trees and shrubs. In recent years, exotic plants have come to dominate many American gardens but she had learned that *“native plants attract more insects, which in turns attracts more wildlife generally.”* She wanted to demonstrate to her neighbours what a garden of native plants could offer. *“It has been important to make the community understand what I am doing. So in front of the house, by the road, I have been planting a garden with native plants where people passing can see it. ... I want the neighbours to know this is an important recovery process for our environment.”*

She ended her site report by describing a situation similar to one faced by Msi Choke. About a mile upstream of the Hannacroix Bay site, a new deep water port has been expanding aggressively. *“This expansion has corrupted the local town officials and ignored all environmental laws. So I got involved in local politics and in November 2015, we managed to elect a new Town Board, winning by 26 votes. I felt forced into politics because they threatened all that Eric and I are trying to do.”*

### **Mwajuma Mabewa, Msi Choke Seaweed Growers Cooperative**

While Barbara’s place is still a long way off from finding a viable business model, Mwajuma Mabewa offered a refreshingly business-like account of Msi Choke’s work. In 2014, they produced 12 tonnes of seaweed and earned six million Tanzanian shillings (about \$US 3600 in 2014<sup>1</sup>). The following year, production fell to 7 tonnes, thanks to climate change. In response, Msi Choke used the 2014 income to diversify, buying the raw materials (caustic soda and coconut oil) to make seaweed soap. Soap making supplies cost 600,000 shillings, but they sold soap worth 2 millions TSZ (Tanzanian shillings), making a good profit. This profit was used to improve the office (ceiling boards and electricity) and to expand soap

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<sup>1</sup> IN 2014, 1 US Dollar = 653.8757 TSZ source:  
[http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/historical/USD/30\\_06\\_2014](http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/historical/USD/30_06_2014)

production by buying new soap molds and raw materials. They are also applying for certification from the Tanzanian standards bureau to expand into new markets, including exports.

The value of the export market began with Bagamoyo's tourism. Mlingotini village, where Msi Choke is located, is only a few kilometres from the Bagamoyo tourist hotels which offer eco-tourism trips to Mlingotini and Msi Choke. There is also a small Norwegian hotel, Bomani Beach Bungalows, in Mlingotini that sells their soap. Thanks to the tourists from both places, Msi Choke *"were fortunate to have received guests from elsewhere: America, Norway, Mombasa, UK, Congo, Mozambique, Bangladesh. They all made use of our soaps. They confirm they are good and have medicinal properties. ... The Norwegians say there are periods when their skin flakes, but if they use the soap, they actually see the flaking go down. We also hope to bring our children on board to learn."*

With better income, the cooperative have been able to acquire two plots to build offices and they are managing their own credit union. *"We have a capital of 6 million shillings and 15 members in the credit union. Our total loans are 4 million shillings."*

Mwajuma Mabewa said that they have been trying out some of the things learned through the Barbets Duet conventions, specifically mentioning the care of animals, water harvesting and the value of native plants. *"We have also learned that the environment prefers indigenous plants."* Importantly, participating in the Barbets Duet has given the group more confidence. *"We also learned ... that we can make contributions. That Mama Gashindo made suggestions to Barbara that brought success and great friendship is important."* This kind of mutual learning, based on profound respect, is at the heart of the Barbets Duet.

Despite this success, Msi Choke's membership is not as strong as it should be. *"Most of the seaweed farmers are really older women. We only have 4 men and 26 women. Most young people don't value this activity because the income is small."* Mwajuma criticized the impatience of younger people. *"They are more willing to earn money quickly than to try for it with patience. They are not as patient as we are, who waited to build the office and buy machines."* She hopes that as the soap business and its profits expand, more people will join them.



### **Sammy Muvelah, Lukenya, Kenya**

Sammy Muvelah also took a businessman's approach to his site. He reported that since we met at his guesthouse in early 2014, he has enclosed the veranda. *"You remember that the veranda was open, but I have covered that so you won't feel cold."* He has also abandoned any attempt at growing crops, after doing some hard calculating. *"I stopped all farming and crop cultivation on my farm. Instead, I went to livestock, after the conversation with Oby and Hilda about goats. I did this with some mathematics around this. I realized I would never get more than 10 bags of maize from my farm and that is not worth more than 3000 shillings. So I asked myself what did I need to do to make the equivalent of 10 bags on my farm? The conclusion I came to, if I sold 10 young goats in a year, they would be worth more than 10 bags of maize. So I bought 25 goats, for 4000 shillings each. In the first year, I got 18 young goats, the second year, I got 22 young goats, and last year, the third year, I sold 36 goats, all were males, and bought 20 females. From my initial 25 goats, I now have 84 goats. And my return of course is superior to the return from maize. I really think the lesson I learnt, is if we can force ourselves to see the business, we get the discipline to make the right choices. That has really been transformational."*

Looking at the environmental side, Sammy also made a major shift from growing promising exotic trees to growing natives. *"I agree indigenous trees are the solution. I began to plant acacia on the farm, because it grows in the neighbourhood, and my success rate is now higher than all the other trees in the neighbourhood."*

### **Magode Ikuya, Molo, Uganda**

Magode Ikuya was the last to speak, after the chairman, Oby, asked him what were the major lessons from what we saw the previous day. Magode highlighted several important issues.

First, as a man in his late sixties, Magode remembers a time when customary clan management controlled land use in the area. As population increased and private property rules were introduced, this system began to break down, but not completely disappear. *"Traditionally, this area near the swamps would be grazing areas for everyone, as it was common land. But over time, this common land has become private land in its use. ... But*

*this process has got problems. Our people's attitude ... is that we have common, mosaic rights to certain things. ... So private property rights are recognized, but the land is still used as it was before and it looks awkward to appear to be opposing them. ...*

*"When we started the project, [people] ... brought their cows to drink and use our pond to water their cattle. Now that becomes quite a problem, as you cannot continue to farm fish in the pond while cattle are drinking there."*

In the end, Magode decided he had no alternative but to fence off the fishponds to protect them, but made agreements that respected particular needs. *"There are people who want to cross the water, or to take water, so we must have an agreement how they do it. Then there are others, at the other side of the stream, who would like to cross over because they have relatives, funerals and what not. So the crossing point at my land is very nice."* Even with these agreements, trouble still arises. *"When the Karamajong [herding people from further north] come to graze, they also take your cows. When the fish are there, they also take your fish. So we will have an argument with them. So we are building a fence."* This uneasy collision between mosaic rights in common land and private rights in private land is a challenge for several of the Barbet sites in East Africa.

The second observation Magode made on his site concerned the ambition to achieve wider environmental restoration, now that the basic infrastructure is in place. *"We have people who have traditional knowledge of all the plants that we used to have there, but are no longer there. They are reproducing them - either by collecting them or reintroducing plants from Kampala. Then ... we want to accommodate pleasure, as part of culture practice [and] part of the learning process. You learn through many aspects, including pleasure. We want to develop a place where there is a lake with small boats and plants, an eating place, and get the others to contribute to the economy and at the same time learn something."*

Thinking environmentally also means introducing a greater diversity of food crops. *"We are also experimenting with a number of things. The land there is fertile, and we have a water source. So we are just using them to keep bananas [for sale and food]. Yams are there and doing well."* With much of the swamp forest lost to charcoal production, finding new sources of energy will also improve the environmental health of the area. While not keen on

rice growing, which is widespread, Magode thought that the rice plants might be recycled as a biofuel after harvesting.



Figure 20: rice fields using land assigned to Magode Ikuya

The *Kabaka njagala* tree, shown in Figure 21 growing near Magode’s new house, is another possible source of biofuel. The government talks of electrification and Magode plans to invest in solar energy, but *“for now we need biomass, and we can be the facilitators of that.”*



Figure 21: *Kabaka njagala* tree, planted from seed, 5-7 years earlier.

Magode finished his remarks by talking about creating the Molo Integrated Farming Initiative to spread the lessons of this work more widely. This group *“is the one that will be passing on new techniques and initiatives. It becomes an organ for introducing many ideas, so that what we are doing there is not seen as novel, alone there, but is made popular through that initiative. As you saw yesterday, we have many forms of outreach to get people to listen and share. I also happen to be part of the Molo local government, of which Patrick Okware is official. So all that becomes an agency, and we hope that over time that will lead to other sources of resource mobilization.”*

## Summing up and discussion

In summing up the site reports, Oby picked out several issues. From Chris Jones, he noted the benefits of mob-grazing, the community participation in cider making, and the engagement of academics in the beaver project. More generally, said Oby, "*We need to start these research projects now,*" to create valuable long term data. From Hilda's presentation on Seme, Oby noted the possibility that medicinal plants could become an industry. "*Our people still use medicinal plants. The knowledge is waning, but we can recover that. People are still hacking trees, so we can create a forest of medicinal plants.*" He also commented on training young people in new skills, although they may not see this as an opportunity for them, and he noted the slow adoption by neighbours of new ideas.

Barbara's presentation raised the issue of how to get the human resources a site needs by finding what others can achieve by working with you. Working with native plants and documenting progress was another aspect of the Hannacroix presentation as was the issue of becoming engaged in politics. "*We have been adverse to engaging in politics, but how do we engage with the politics so it helps us out?*" asked Oby.

Msi Choke's business focus was very welcome. "*In terms of a business model they are way ahead of us. They say, this is what we put in, this is our profit, and what they do with it.*" They are facing a generational challenge, which led him to ask whether there "*is a way the young people could form a circle that is a benefit over and above the income?*" Sammy's simple calculation comparing the returns on maize versus the returns on goats was also instructive, again taking a more business-like approach to what his site can achieve.

Finally, Oby mentioned Magode's struggles with communal and private ideas of property and access. This is an issue partners face in Seme and Lukenya. "*Sometimes the private-public ownership that Magode is talking about produces problems, people want to come and graze. What are the unexpected outcomes we need to think about?*" Oby thought that the Molo Integrated Agricultural Initiative was a good neutral way to move things forward.

After Oby's summing up, the discussion was opened by David, one of the young men from Molo, who said there used to be a lot of mangos, but many have been cut for charcoal and

fuel. It was also a good area of organs, lemon, pawpaw and jackfruit. *“We used to eat a lot of juicy mangos, but now there are no more.”*

Felicity Jones from Woodland Valley Farm mentioned that they have started *“a forest initiative - primary school children who come to learn about the forest and the farm. Could that be developed here? As a way of involving the community and getting children involved in education about environment?”*

Oby took up the suggestion, as something they had wanted to do in Seme, but not yet managed to achieve. *“We had that plan - to create a place where the elders and young people could come together and learn about medicinal trees and plants. That is something that is in the works...”*

Cus, part of the Seme site, valued the fact that Msi Choke in Tanzania and Sammy in Lukenya were thinking in business terms so that their experiments could earn a profit. Cus noted that Seme also has problems with neighbours, but wondered if fencing was the only response. *“I don’t know if fencing is the solution for our place or if there are other ways for this problem [to be resolved].”* Magode responded by saying that attitudes and thinking needed to change. In time, he thought that more people would be putting up fences, *“then you start talking about what is in common.”*

### **Continuities, Legacies And A New Generation**

*Chair: Hilda Adhiambo*

When the Barbets Duet idea was first tested in 2007, we spoke with several people who had started other complex projects in environmental restoration and economic returns. They warned us that our idea *“would take twenty years.”* They were wrong; we quickly learned it needs several generations. So, how do we ensure the Barbets Duet and its thinking can survive that long? How much can we achieve in our own lifetimes?

These questions were given additional force by Chris Jones’s site report which opened with a personal reminder of our own span of time: *“We lost my mother, mother-in-law and my niece who was only 25 since we last met. This reminds me that human life is short and we must contribute.”* Several speakers referred to Chris’s simple statement in our discussions.

### What do we mean by “continuities and legacies”?

Because there were a number of people from the next generation with us in Molo, much of the discussion involved addressing and hearing from them. First, though, the founding partners worked to define what was meant by ‘Continuities and Legacies’. Hilda Adhiambo, as chair, opened the discussion, often speaking directly to the younger members of her own family and others who were present.

*“We really value the things that we have done and we would like this to be carried over to the next generation, which is why... this discussion ... is very important.” “Continuity,” she said, means to continue what we have begun, while respecting that things, such as technology, are changing. “But the idea of preserving and restoring the land is there.”*

Legacy, however, was a broader responsibility, reaching beyond our immediate acquaintances and activities. *“Legacy: ... how do we carry forward the ideas that we have?”* If, for example, you are left with land, but don’t want to do farming and rent out the land, what is your responsibility? To respect the legacy, said Hilda, means that *“It is left to you to ensure that the person who manages [the farm] carries forward the ideas we have.”*

Hilda finished her introduction by recognizing that *“we are not here forever, so we would like the younger generation to think, if these are good things, how can you take over?”*



Figure 22: Hilda Adhiambo, right with (r-l) Chris Jones, Magode Ikuya, Oby Obyerodhyambo

Magode then intervened, suggested that we, as founding partners, needed first to ensure that the younger people understood what we are saying. *“What we are building,”* he said, *“goes beyond our own lifespan. Environmental destruction happens very quickly, but rebuilding it takes time and we don’t know how long it will take. We never gave ourselves a deadline.”*

*“But”* he noted, *“life doesn’t stop, and people come and go. So now that we have these ideas, what happens to the things that we are trying out if we are not there? Do they die? How do we ensure that our tradition, our legacy, in the future is there? ... How can we ensure that that restoration will continue?”*

Magode spoke of a generational divide in Uganda, with young people in politics waiting for the older generation to give way to them. *“We have in politics young people who are saying, ‘you die quickly so that we can take over,’”* but then he asked, *“how do you ensure what they are taking over?”* Magode spoke of farms taken over by wealthy people from the city, leaving the young ones with nothing. ... *“If [this environment] were a mere possession, people [would] say that is fine, you can do what you like. But restoration of the environment ... if it dies after we are gone, what have you done? That is what we mean by continuity.”*

Magode identified three carriers of continuity, starting with our own children. While instinctively, we may want our offspring to inherit, that might not be the wisest approach as *“There is no guarantee. You can have an offspring who is completely wild. You can have the son of the Reverend, whose children become so irreverent, irreligious! The Reverend dies and that is the end of things.”*

A second possibility is that there are people who share our way of thinking about things, but rather than elaborate that idea, Magode explored a third possibility: that the Barbets Duet could carve out a distinctive role for itself at each learning site.

*“Thirdly, now that we are called the Barbets Duet, we can get a way of reinforcing our sites. Although [our sites] are particular to individuals, we can get trustees who can ensure and protect the elements that are important. For me, I do not see the problem of leaving the property to my relatives, but I want them to have a connection to the Barbets Duet, that you*

*can derive a profit from the land, but you cannot divide and sell it and give it away to hostile groups. So we are groping with an idea that is not yet formed.”*

Chris Jones then added his thoughts on inheritance and the Barbets Duet legacy. *“What are we all doing? We are managing and protecting a natural resource. There is no more important task. Thinking about our family, there is nothing I would do that would put that [task] at risk. I feel so strongly about it and it needs to be enshrined in some sort of legal structure that protects it. Maybe something like what Magode is suggesting.”*

Given that farm prices keep rising, Chris warned that once a farm is sold and the money is spent on something else, *“You will never be able to buy another. You cannot earn enough money. I have seen farms taken over by very wealthy city people who do not know what they are doing, but they are asset-grabbing.”*

Chris recognized that we cannot force anyone in our families to share our interest and excitement, but cautioned, *“if you are not interested, you may find you will not have the control you thought you would.”*

Oby spoke next, agreeing with both Chris and Magode, but taking the conversation in a new direction by referring to the example of Martin Luther King. *“Martin Luther King is known today because he had a dream. ... ‘I have a dream that at one point in time my children will be judged by the strength of their character, and not by the colour of their skin.’”*

Oby then described the Barbets Duet. *“Those involved in Barbets, we have a dream. Magode has a dream that one day that land next to that river will have snakes, insects, and be as it was 40 years ago and will flow with the fish it had 30-40 years ago. A dream that people living around there will have an abundance of food ... and the air will be clean and the land will be clean. ... A dream that all the injuries the earth is suffering ... will be healed. The migration away from the land will have come to an end and people will feel there is a good life to be made on the land.”*

Oby then related this dream to how we respond. *“You can see the destruction and you might decide to be complicit or throw up your hands and give up. But we have decided we*



want to change this trajectory. And everything we do, we are looking for the best way to achieve our dream. ...

*“As Magode says, human life is fickle. Chris started off by talking about the loss of two people and a young person. ... Martin Luther King died when he was barely forty, but his dream at that point in time is why the USA has a man of colour as president at this point in time. ... He did not live to see his dream come true, and we know our dream may not be achieved in our lifetime, but if there are people alive who can continue the dream ... . When you talk about legacy, this is what it takes.”*

### **The next generation**

The next generation then took up the conversation, describing how they see the Barbets Duet and its goals. *“This dream should be everybody’s dream,”* said David from Molo, but added that *“Most of the younger generation want to live like they are in New York.”* David spoke of wanting to start something in Kampala or in Molo. *“As for me, David, I am willing to maintain the legacy and I am looking for land to start something.”*



**Figure 23: Some of the next generation (l-r) Felicity Jones, Rading’ and Cus, Odhiambo family**

Felicity Jones, from Cornwall, had a similar comment. *“Personally, I want to protect the environment and have wanted to protect the environment forever. ... As Barbara said, if the land is unhealthy we are unhealthy.”* Felicity also talked about how she might handle leaving the farm for a while to do other things, first ensuring that the right caretaker was in place. She also saw a need to introduce environmental values to young people at a very early age. *“Like our forest project where primary school children come one day a week to help out. At*

*the minute, the perception of farmers is that we are all a bit stupid and not very clever. That perception needs to change.”*

Her father, Chris Jones, mentioned that it was a very big thing to ask someone at the age of 20 to commit themselves to a life on the land. He had come back to the family farm, age 29, and described his reaction when his father died soon afterwards. He and his five siblings sat around the kitchen table debating what to do with the farm. *“It would have been possible to see the farm sold then. I wanted to avoid that and I said, ‘if no one else wants to do it ... I will take on the farm.’”* Given his own history, Chris said he could *“appreciate it is unrealistic to ask Sankara to say, ‘Okay, Dad, where are my overalls?’”*

Sankara is Oby and Hilda’s eldest son and took up Chris’s observation, putting thing in the context of his generation, as a young man in his mid-20s. *“At the point where you sat down with your siblings, things were different. Right now things are different as well - in the economy and in business supply and demand, the whole, normal workings of every day. ... At your time, you probably had a lot more options and your siblings had a lot more options in terms of jobs, security and investments. ... The value you put on a forest then is not the same as the value on a forest cover now.*

*“So for me it is a no-brainer. It is not whether not you want to take on this legacy. I see it as a responsibility and if we don’t see it as such, you are really in trouble. In Kenya, forest cover is really going down and it won’t stop. The job market has really gone south, people are not earning as much as they used to. People with masters are not getting jobs. So it is a time when we must focus on experimentation and what it means. To have a livelihood and look at the future in terms of what is really happening, rather than what we would like to have in our lives. So that is why I feel a responsibility.”*

When Sankara’s mother, Hilda, apologized for pressuring him too much, he responded by arguing that the pressure was necessary. *“Don’t be sorry ... If what we are talking about is really as serious as it is, the pressure needs to be there.”*

David commented that many young people just want a white-collar job and don’t think of agriculture and a rural living as viable. In his view, however, it provided a more diverse and reliable income, based on the variety of businesses one could have - whether it is grains like

millet and sorghum or growing trees for electric poles. *“There is more money when you are self-employed, than when you are employed.”*

Cus, another one of the Seme young people, added that we needed to bring in more people, to enlarge the scale of what we are doing beyond our own sites. *“My concern is that we need to do income generation and bring others on board ... so it is not just one family in Seme who is doing this. ... One person cannot do it all. We need to bring in more people.”*

This was Cus’s first time attending a Barbet Convention and visiting another Barbet site. He emphasized how much he had learned from being at Magode’s place and hearing about the work done elsewhere. *“This kind of visit today, in Magode’s place, is a good start and it needs to continue more often. I told Magode I really want to come to his place and after talking to Sammy, I really want to visit Sammy.”* Cus also noted the difficulty in finding finance for new experiments that young people might want to try. *“Young people have their own ideas and need support to develop them. The older generation should not leave us, the mentorship should go on. I have learned so much coming here.”*

Hilda responded to Cus, first emphasizing the older generation’s commitment. *“We are not giving up, we are here until the last kick. ... This is still our responsibility. So when we get to the point of not being able to kick properly, to take a panga and do it, we hope you or someone will be there.”*

Hilda also highlighted ways that Cus could develop his own ideas. *“You have Sammy’s email, you can give him a shout. As for resources, sometimes they are there, and sometimes they are not. We begin with what we have.”* More broadly, she spoke of the value of this work. *“The other thing I wanted to say, ‘don’t take this as a second option’. I know you talked about white-collar jobs [and] ... some of us are in white-collar jobs, because it was an option. But I think there is an opportunity now to actually make a decision that this is what I want to do as a profession. It is not a second-class profession; it is one of the best professions. If we are passionate about this thing, we should embrace it as valuable as the white collar job.”*

At this point, the conversation turned to the training needed to support this ‘best profession’, including how to make use of the ‘dotcom-ness’ to attract younger people to this work. *“There is a dotcom generation, but how do we use it, turn it into a strength, and*

*use it in agribusiness? What is the competence that is needed and how do we use it to build on something that has a huge potential?"* asked Oby. This is an area where the young people are likely to be much smarter than the older generation in using online tools to expand our effectiveness - *"to give us traction,"* as Oby put it.

At this point, Sankara spoke of the need to publicise what we have been doing, including writing a book about our experience so far. *"You need to write that book you are talking about. To hear Sammy talking about going from planting moringa to planting acacia... To hear what Chris says about the 6 siblings debating whether to sell the farm. ... People need to hear the stories and the ideas..."*

Sammy picked up on the idea of success stories. *"Sankara has said something I had never thought of as important: people like to hear success stories. ... [but] sometimes success is not described in a way that people can see. So we have success stories, but not always described in a way that people can see them. ... I think our project can demonstrate input and output methodologies. We need to translate the effort and the outcome."*

Hilda echoed Sammy's suggestion, *"I like the idea of each of us writing a chapter and sharing it with each other. We have a lot of success stories, ... stories that have changed lives."*

Sankara then proposed a title, which had been agreed in whispers at the other end of the room. *"We have a proposed title for the book: The Barbets Book of Trial and Error."*

Sammy noted that we have begun to acquire valuable knowledge and that we might also want to think about how we can earn an income from it, seeing our knowledge as a strength and something to guard.

### **Summing up - continuities, legacies & the next generation**

Hilda, as chair, summarized this discussion, often linking it to information from the site reports.



Figure 24: Hilda Adhiambo, right with (r-l) Chris Jones, Magode Ikuya, Oby Obyerodhyambo

*“We are in the business of managing and protecting natural resources. That is what we want to be continued as a legacy ...*

*“One of the important things said by Magode is that future management must have a Barbets connection. There are principles we have laid down ... We want the principles to continue. For most of us the land is very important. How it is managed, passed on and protected is very important. Chris emphasized that land prices will not go down. If you sell now, you cannot buy back later, so you need to protect what you have.*

*“We are not starting from zero. We have living examples - like Magode’s project - which are working... All sites have living examples of things that need to continue. ... We expect other people to replicate what we are doing, to experiment and see.*

*“We emphasized the knowledge of appreciating nature. We need to keep researching and looking for new knowledge on how to improve the land, protect it and renew it. We talked about disciplines to collect new ideas for other sites, not just Barbets sites. ... We need to reach out to the community - cider comes from everyone’s apples and they are pressed together. Spreading the word - how do we do that? ... Technology [can] help people know what we are doing, a small group but big in terms of ideas. Skills transfer -how do we transfer skills - in Some people are given employment, but we also give them training. They have learnt new skills. ... we need to decide what training will help them in this vision: to increase our yield and our business without destroying the environment.*

*“Finally, we said we must write up our success stories and useful failures (like Sammy’s dam). Each site will come up with a chapter with our success stories. We will post it on the Internet and Facebook.”*

Chris Jones closed the session, describing his attempts to create a mixed herbage grassland. *“Before we began, we went to someone who had kept a mixed herbage grassland. He had died, but we read his notes, and bought all the seeds he had suggested. [They grew, but] first one died, then another. I then found an old book, where the same thing had been done, but there were detailed notes about what each plant would do and needed. The availability of that book was very useful, but it would have been better to have read it first, before trying and failing.”*

### **Resource Mobilization**

Chair: Barbara Heinzen

The last conversation of the Molo Convention took place in the garden, after lunch, and concerned resource mobilization: how do we find the resources to meet our goals? As chair, Barbara Heinzen noted that each learning site has financed its own expenses and, with modest support from the Travel Fund, we also finance our own Conventions. However, the Travel Fund is getting low. How might it be replenished and what else might we do with more resources?

Barbara gave three different examples of finding resources in unexpected ways, starting with her agreement to trade hunting rights for work in land management. She also reminded people that the Travel Fund was the result of a letter sent out by a friend of hers to finance a trip to East Africa after Barbara moved to the USA. Barbara’s friends and colleagues were so generous, that the Fund has supported travel costs for various partners for at least three Conventions. Finally, she mentioned internet crowd-funding, which might be useful but needs considerable planning and attention. She then asked the others for their suggestions.

## Crowd-sourcing & other financing options

The conversation focused first on internet crowd-sourcing which several people had already used. Chris had asked people for small donations to support the beaver project at Woodland Valley Farm, while Oby had used it to raise money for some folks in India. Chris reported that *"We needed a long list of people to contact. We had to pitch the idea to the [crowd-funding] site, saying this is what it will achieve, etc. Usually you ask for a small amount of money, but they give you a vast amount more."* Oby had had a similar experience. *"Some guys in India needed 2 million Ksh, but we ended up bringing in 15 million. Within a very short while, after reading the plight of those blokes, many people sent in money. You need the right story/cause, which people identify with in order to do crowd funding."*

Oby speculated that by targeting 'tree-huggers', we might be able to raise funds for the Barbets Duet, but Sankara was more cautious. *"Many [crowd-funding] projects are a short-term thing, while environmental issues are long term."* We therefore needed to create a long-term way to finance the Travel Fund and our other ambitions.

Before leaving the subject of crowd-sourcing, David and Sankara noted the factors that contributed to a successful pitch. David said that the pitch needed to *"be written in an emotive way."* Sankara advised that *"you need different types of media (books, videos, etc.) to support your campaign and show how the money will be used."*

The group then discussed other ways to raise money. Chris said they had used live events to raise charitable money in Cornwall. *"We had "Bands in the Barn" - bringing musicians in for an event. A few modest ambitions like that could enable us to fairly quickly replenish the Travel Fund."* Sankara proposed that each site could pay a percentage of its profits to the Travel Fund, offering to contribute money from his cacti business. Chris offered the Pasture-Fed Livestock Association (PFLA) as another example. When they began, the founding members *"all made annual contributions to the Association. We also bought bonds from the Association."* These bonds were long-term loans from members who did not necessarily expect to be paid back. The money was used to finance a secretariat. The PFLA is now established and thriving.

## **What needs financial support?**

As always, there are more ways to spend money than to raise it, so the next conversation focused on what we wanted to do collectively, with several possibilities immediately coming up. There is a strong desire to support internships where young people can spend time at other Barbet sites. Continuing support for conventions and the Travel Fund was also needed, while it was agreed that getting more publicity and better online media in place would be valuable. The need for a secretariat was also discussed, along with the need to document what we are doing more consistently. If we had a secretariat, that would need supporting hardware - computers, internet connections, smart phones, etc. Oby saw a need to become a registered organisation, a process that would require legal advice and money for legal fees. Barbara referred to Magode's report that a storm had damaged his fingerling nets but he had no insurance. Should we have an insurance fund for climate damage and similar events? Insurance is required in the UK and USA, but largely absent in East Africa.

Barbara listed all the things people wanted to finance and achieve:

- A secretariat, including hardware
- Training and skills
- A Travel Fund for interns, training and conventions
- Documentation
- Costs of holding conventions (e.g. meals, accommodation, public events)
- Legal fees for organizational registration
- An East African insurance fund
- Publicity, including digital presence.

## **What are the priorities? Do we need a secretariat?**

Given this list, the next question was what the priorities should be. There was considerable discussion about the need to create a secretariat, with Chris Jones and Patrick Okware, from Molo, supporting the need for one. Chris put the need for a secretariat in a larger context: *"I believe that we should have a secretariat. Our current structure is transitory and will need to change. Either we stay as we are, or we take a turn on the road and become bigger. I think we need to become bigger."* Sankara had also said he thought we should aim to grow.

Oby, however, first looked at the nature of our association, which had been debated and defined at the Lukenya Convention. *"I would like to take this to the basics: the "Jumuiya". We are a constellation of loosely connected groups. It is important to facilitate learning. We*



*need to document the learning. We need a strategy of dissemination to ourselves and to other people as we are trying to sensitize other people.”* Oby then listed the elements we had identified to meet these goals - site visits, internships, a digital platform, etc., while Chris asked a severely practical question: *“What is the cost of all this?”*

Lurking in this discussion was the implicit possibility of raising money from international donors and philanthropies. Magode addressed this issue, describing the current state of the Barbets Duet collective as *“transitory. At this stage we still need to do a number of things before looking at the possibility of transformation [to a bigger, more formal, organisation]. That said, since the beginning, we have insisted on retaining our independence, without asking others for money that could reduce our independence. So, what is available in our environment that can help us sustain our project?”* He gave the example of political campaigns in Uganda when a lot of money is handed out: *“We can use a straw to access some of that money,”* he said, noting that *“unfortunately resource mobilization is always targeted overseas, but we can include the political/civil groups/middle class right here in Uganda and East Africa.”*

Sammy Muvelah, from Seme, supported that thinking, noting that the new Kenyan constitution had given considerable devolved power, and finance, to local areas with responsibility for the environment. *“We could have the Barbets group set up as a consultancy; being agents of knowledge, using our varied examples. The learning we go through is more attuned, given our competence and specificity. ... We should be the ones setting the standard. If we are gaining traction, we will see others replicating what we have been doing.”*

The current ‘transitory’ and informal nature of the Barbets Duet is something people are were reluctant to abandon. *“There are advantages and disadvantages to structure: ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’,”* said one. Becoming a more structured organisation is time-consuming, expensive and needs considerable thought. *“To become a structured organisation means we must become a registered entity. We need to identify our principles and values. We need to assign responsibilities and accountability (to whom, for what?).”*

In the meantime, said one of the partners, *“How do we enhance what we are doing?”* and find the resources to support our three learning goals:

1. Facilitate learning
2. Document learning
3. Disseminate learning.

There was also a feeling - or hope - that *“As we get tighter, our organisation will morph on its own. We will get to the point that people come to us and say, ‘how did you do this?’”* As Sankara noted, *“Looking at it from that angle, as a group it has taken a long time, to get where we are today. So we could develop traction.”*

Barbara then summarized the thinking: *“we are creating an organisation that*

- *Links the environment and the economy, and we say that*
- *Healing the land must be a part of making a living.”*

However, the nature of that future organisation was left undecided. As Hilda put it: *“Do we become an organized structure, or remain a loose organization? Or do we become an entity, but bound by certain principles and values, responsibility/accountability?”* For the time being, that question was left open, to be answered with a slower evolution.

### **Working with what we have**

Barbara then directed the conversation to the list of things we wanted to do. Which of these was critical to our future and which could be achieved with existing resources? All agreed that the first priority was to document our achievements so far. As Oby put it, *“Put your message out there and make it compelling.”* This documentation would take several forms:

- The *Barbets Book of Trial and Error*, with chapters from each site;
- A video series, titled **“Healing the Earth”** including 3-5 minute clips for each site;
- A good logo and a Barbets YouTube page;
- Update the Barbets Facebook page;
- A publicity campaign, to launch the book and the videos;
- An updated Barbets picture book, last revised in 2012;
- Maintaining the Barbets archive on Barbara Heinzen’s website.

Individuals were then identified who would take charge of each task. Barbara already keeps the archive of meeting notes on her website and has the latest version of the picture book, so she volunteered to continue with those. She will also circulate the accounts for this Convention. Sankara, as the Barbet videographer in Molo, said he would work on the

videos, but would probably need some paid professional help. Oby and Sammy both had ideas for a rolling publicity campaign, while each site is responsible for producing a chapter for the *Barbets Book of Trial and Error*. Everyone agreed to deliver a chapter by the end of March, 2016.

More ambitiously, Oby suggested that we hold our next Convention at Woodland Valley Farm in the UK, but, added Magode, “*Definitely not in the winter!*” October 2018 was set as a provisional date. At that time of year, said Chris, “*We will be making cider then and hopefully the livestock will still be out.*”

The discussion slowly broke up after this agreement to aim for a convention in the UK in 2018 and take on the assignments to document what we have been doing.

#### **CONCLUSION - THE COMING OF AGE CONVENTION IN MOLO, UGANDA, JANUARY 2016**

At earlier conventions, there had been some debate on what governance structures were needed for the Barbets Duet. At this convention, by comparison, people worked together in a way that made sense, taking decisions that were reviewed by others, ensuring sufficient accountability and flexibility to function with honesty, efficacy and trust. There was also a tempered depth to the conversations, born of the partners’ experiences so far. New issues were raised and there was a groping towards different ways of doing things, especially when thinking about how to ensure the continuity and legacy of what has begun. An important dialogue with the next generation was begun, raising new and demanding issues.

It remains to be seen if we can succeed in holding the next Convention in the UK, or writing the *Barbets Book of Trial and Error*, or meeting any of the other goals we gave ourselves. None of these tasks is easy, but there is a dogged, determined quality shared by all the partners that will ensure progress is made in one way or another.

The afternoon conversations had taken place under a mango tree outside the house where we had lunch. As the entire group assembled for a photograph to commemorate the Convention and the discussions we had, everyone knew they had been part of a memorable two days.



**Figure 25: Standing, l to r: Irene Ochoro, Machano Ali, Barbara Heinzen, Sammy Muvelah, Henricus Odhiambo, Magode Ikuya, David, Magode family, Magode family, David, Magode family, Oby Obyerodhyambo.  
Front row l-r: Mwajuma Mabewa, Hilda Adhiambo, Patrick Okware, Rading' Obyerodhyambo, Magode family, Felicity Jones, Sankara Yambo, Chris Jones**

### **Debrief at Nkoroi, outside Nairobi**

The minibus reached Oby and Hilda's place outside of Nairobi in the early evening. Because Oby had to fly out the next day, Machano Ali from Msi Choke, Barbara Heinzen, Chris Jones plus Oby and Hilda held a quick debrief of the Convention. On the whole, the travellers were pleased with the way the Convention went. Chris Jones was impressed by the community participation, while Machano Ali said *"We should all feel encouraged by the Molo Convention."* Oby was said the convention was *"totally beyond my expectations,"* especially the community meeting which gave us a chance to talk about our work. He also described himself as *"overwhelmed by the scope of work and the ambition of Molo. If Magode can do even a fraction of his vision, it will have a huge impact."*

All agreed that the conversation on continuity and legacy had been very important, as had the sense that we were all accountable to each other in delivering on future plans. Both

Hilda and Machano were pleased that we came out with a clear list of things to do, although Machano cautioned that *“we agree actions, but they happen only slowly.”* Machano was also more cautious than the others about involving the young people, whom he thought might need more guidance. *“The older ones need to makes things happen and to make it real. If the youth are involved they might be overwhelmed, because they don’t have the maturity and foresight.”*

Chris and Barbara noted that while we see progress at the learning sites, things move more slowly at the level of the collective. Oby, however, put this pattern in a different light. *“The collective produces concepts and principles, but little that is tangible, so it looks like little has been done. Documentation will bring that conceptual work together and make the work of the jumuiya more visible. The sites illustrate the conceptual work which then stimulates new conceptual work.”*

The conversation ended with a brief discussion on the need - or not - for a secretariat. Barbara has been doing minimal coordination so far, but a secretariat will be needed at some point. For the time being, however, it might make sense to hire people for specific tasks - like raising money to hold the next Convention in the UK.

## CONVENTION COSTS - PRESENT & FUTURE

### Travel Costs to Molo Convention - January & February 2016

On the minibus journey back to Nairobi, Sammy Muvelah and Barbara Heinzen worked out the travel costs to Molo and how they should be shared between Barbet partners and the Travel Fund.

<b>SUMMARY OF MOLO CONVENTION EXPENSES &amp; COST-SHARING</b>			
	<b>TOTAL COST in £ GBP</b>	<b>Travel Fund share</b>	<b>Partners Share</b>
Airfares & travel insurance, 3 people from UK to East Africa	£1,592		£1,592
Msi Choke Air Travel - Mlingotini, TZ to Nairobi, January	£418	£418	
Total Cost of Travel to Uganda + food & lodgings, January	£1,014	£519	£495
Cost of Nairobi stay & site visit safari to Tanzania, January/February	£973	£325	£649
Repair of Canon video camera	£34	£34	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£4,031</b>	<b>£1,296</b>	<b>£2,736</b>
Opening balance in the Travel Fund as of 1 January 2016		£2,435	
less spending for Molo convention & TZ site visits		£1,295	
Balance in Travel Fund as of 24 February 2016		£1,140	

### Convention cost-sharing issues to debate

Everyone on the mini-bus agreed to this sharing of Molo costs, but Oby noted that it raised several issues that needed to be debated at the next partners meeting.

1. Should costs be shared per site or per person? This time, each site paid the same share, even though some sites had more people than others attending.
2. What is fair to ask of the poorest site, in this case, Msi Choke? On this occasion, all their costs were covered by the Travel Fund.

3. Should the hosts be reimbursed for the cost of hosting, and how much? Oby and Hilda hosted all the travellers from the UK and Tanzania for several days either side of the Molo Convention, and were given a contribution to that cost, as was Magode for his hosting costs in Molo. How should this be handled at future conventions?

### Estimated Costs of a Woodland Valley Farm Convention, UK - October 2018

Chris Jones and Barbara Heinzen did a rough estimate of the cost of holding the next convention in Cornwall, UK. They assumed that 12 people would travel from East Africa, that each person has a passport and visa, and that air and train fares do not rise greatly.

#### Rough Estimate: Cost of 2018 Convention at Woodland Valley Farm, Cornwall

<b>Local costs shared by all</b>	£ 420
<i>Van hire to travel in Cornwall, cleaner, station taxi</i>	
<b>Travel Costs - 12 people from East Africa @ £760</b>	£ 9,120
<i>Airfares, ground transport, food, entrance fees in Cornwall, passports &amp; visas not included</i>	
<b>Contingency &amp; unforeseen costs</b>	<u>£ 4,000</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£14,740</b>

#### TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF UK CONVENTION = £10,000-15,000

Exchange rates with £GBP (Feb/Mar 2016)	Cost in local currency
<i>Kenya Shillings - £1 = 145.41 KSh</i>	<b>Kenya</b> 1,454,100 to 2,181,150
<i>Tanzanian Shillings - £1 = 3145.45 TSh</i>	<b>Tanzania</b> 31,454,500 to 47, 181,750
<i>Ugandan Shillings - £1 = 4,801.41USG</i>	<b>Uganda</b> 48,010,100 to 72,021,150
<i>US Dollars - £1 = 1.430 US Dollar</i>	<b>United States</b> \$14,300 to \$21,450