

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE MOLO CONVENTION*

Molo, Uganda 27-30 January 2016

The Coming of Age Convention

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In late January 2016, most of the Barbets Duet partners met for the sixth Barbets Duet Convention, the Coming of Age Convention, hosted by Magode Ikuya in Molo, eastern Uganda. At this Convention, the next generation took their place alongside the founding partners. The group agreed to produce a series of short videos and prepare the *Barbets Book of Trial and Error* with chapters from each site. They also backed the idea of holding the next convention at Woodland Valley Farm in Cornwall in 2018.

Site Visit to Magode's Fish Ponds

The Molo Convention began with a visit to the fish ponds Magode has built near a muddy Nile River tributary. *"This stream,"* said Magode, *"used to be crystal clear, full of life, fish. ... This whole place was forested. ... our challenge now, is to restore what [we lost]."*



Figure 1: New fish pond at Magode's learning site



Figure 2: Kagninima stream at dam to divert water for fish ponds in dry season

The fish ponds are one of the principle economic activities at the heart of Mr Magode's plans for environmental restoration and economic sufficiency. His reasoning was simple: *"Around the human economic activities, we want to do environmental restoration, ... to bring to life the old foliage and growth and plants and trees which used to be here... so people can begin to see ... that restoration is not contradictory with economic activities" ...*



Figure 3: 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

* For the full report, go to the [Barbets page](#) on Barbara Heinzen's website.

Community Meeting with People of Molo

A meeting with the Molo community followed the site visit. Patrick Okware was the master of ceremonies, introducing entertainers and local speakers as well Barbet members. Barbara Heinzen, Coordinator of the Barbets with a site in the USA, described their purpose as healing the land. To do that, she said, *“We need the knowledge of Africa, we need the knowledge of the West, we need any knowledge that will help us.”*



Figure 4: Barbet speakers at the Molo community meeting

Mwajuma Mabewa, from the Msi Choke Seaweed Growers Cooperative in Tanzania, spoke as did Chris Jones, from Cornwall, in Britain. Sammy Muvelah from Kenya said he came to Molo *“to see what has been achieved here ... [It] makes most of what some of us are trying to do really really small. We have learnt a lot...”* Two of the next generation also spoke, Henricus Odhiambo from Seme in Kenya, and Felicity Jones from Cornwall, while Oby Obyerodhyambo, also from Seme, closed the Barbet presentations, by talking about learning. *“That is what we are about. We learn, we try, we make mistakes, we learn from our mistakes, and we try again. ... And when you try again you will be better than when you did it the first time.”* He made an appeal to everyone: *“Start where you are. Start now. Start small and let it grow big. ... Even if you plant one tree every day, by the end of the month, you will have 30 trees.”* The day ended with thanks all round, music and dancing.



Figure 5: Oby Obyerodhyambo's skill as a speaker and performer captured people's attention



Barbet visitors to Molo

Site Reports

The second day of the Molo Convention was taken up with private discussions, beginning with a reaffirmation of 'Useful Principles', followed by brief site reports, where partners noted their more ambitious initiatives or unresolved challenges.

Useful Principles		
Barbets Duet Working Assumptions	Initial Governance Principles	Establishing a Barbet Site
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.	We are a Jumuiya <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 Lukenyia support a Friesian cow. I ask: what can Lukenyia support?"
Sammy Muvelah, '18

© Barbets Duet 2012 p. 18

Figure 7: Barbet Duet's useful principles, agreed at various conventions

Chris Jones reported he has started mob-grazing at Woodland Valley Farm and an experiment to reintroduce beavers to help with flood control. Barbara spoke of her focus on native trees and plants as well as her deeper collaboration with several local hunters. Msi Choke offered useful business information about expanding the production and sale of their seaweed soap. Sammy Muvelah calculated that goats offered better financial returns than maize, and is now planting more acacias: *"indigenous trees are the solution."* Hilda, from Seme, and Magode in Molo spoke of the conflicts between old and new property rights. *"Private property rights are recognized,"* said Magode, *"but the land is still used as it was before and it looks awkward to appear to be opposing them."* For the time being, he saw no alternative to fencing off key areas.

Continuities, Legacies and the Next Generation

Early on, the founding partners recognized that the Barbets Duet requires several generations to succeed. Magode Ikuya, the oldest person, defined the issue succinctly



Figure 8: Hilda Adhiambo, right with (r-l) Chris Jones, Magode Ikuya, Oby Obyerodhyambo

“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 said, “life doesn’t stop, and people come and go. ... [so] how can we ensure that that restoration will continue?”

Magode identified three carriers of continuity: one’s own children, people who share our way of thinking, and the role of the Barbets Duet itself. *“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”* Chris Jones agreed. *“We are managing and protecting a natural resource. There is no more important task ... and it needs to be enshrined in some sort of legal structure...”*

Oby saw the legacy more poetically: *“Those involved in Barbets,”* said Oby, *“have a dream. ... You can see the destruction and you might decide to be complicit or ... give up. But we have decided we want to change this trajectory. ... if there are people alive who can continue the dream, [that is our legacy].”*

The next generation shared their commitment. *“This dream should be everybody’s dream,”* said David from Molo while Sankara Yambo spoke from the perspective of a young Kenyan. *“I see it as a responsibility ... In Kenya, forest cover is really going down and it won’t stop. The job market has really gone south ... So ... we must focus on experimentation and what it means. To ... look at the future in terms of what is really happening, rather than what we would like to have in our lives.”*



Figure 9: Some of the next generation (l-r) Felicity Jones, Rading’ and Cus, Odhiambo family

Resource Mobilization and Goals

The last conversation of the Molo Convention concerned resource mobilization and goals, considering several different financing options while settling on none of them: internet crowd-sourcing, live events, like *“Bands in the Barn”* at Woodland Valley Farm, partners paying an annual contributions to a shared fund, or possibly partners buying bonds in the Barbets Duet (effectively long-term loans) to finance a secretariat.

There was considerable discussion on whether we needed to establish a secretariat to grow bigger or continue as we are. While seen as transitory, the current informal nature of the Barbets Duet is something people were reluctant to abandon. *“There are advantages and disadvantages to structure: ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,’”* said one.

Implicitly, all were thinking of raising money from international donors or philanthropies. Magode addressed this issue. *“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?”*

Ultimately, people agreed that the first priority is to document our achievements and to do so using our own time, skill and finance. *“Put your message out there and make it compelling.”* In addition to the Barbet Facebook page and the archive kept on Barbara Heinzen’s website, all agreed to contribute a chapter to a ***Barbets Book of Trial and Error***, while Sankara Yambo agreed to work on a video series, titled ***Healing the Earth***, with 3-5 minute clips for each site.

The Next Barbet Convention

More ambitiously, all endorsed the idea of holding our next Convention at Woodland Valley Farm in the UK, in October 2018.

CONCLUSION: THE COMING OF AGE CONVENTION, MOLO, UGANDA, 2016

At Molo, there was a tempered depth to the conversations, born of the partners’ experiences so far and the presence of the next generation. New issues were raised as well as hints of new ways to ensure the survival of what has begun. It remains to be seen if the group will hold the next Convention in the UK, or write the *Barbets Book of Trial and Error*, or meet their other goals, none of which is easy. However, the dogged, determined quality shared by all the partners will ensure progress is made in one way or another.



Figure 10: Standing, l to r: Irene Ochoro, Machano Ali, Barbara Heinzen, Sammy Muvelah, Henricus Odhiambo, Magode Ikuya, David, Magode family, Magode family uncle, David, Magode family, Obyerodhyambo.

Front row l-r: Mwajuma Mabewa, Hilda Adhiambo, Patrick Okware, Rading’ Obyerodhyambo, Magode family, Felicity Jones, Sankara Yambo, Chris Jones

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 partners and the Travel Fund.

SUMMARY OF MOLO CONVENTION EXPENSES & COST-SHARING			
	TOTAL COST in £ GBP	Travel Fund share	Partners Share
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	
TOTALS	£4,031	£1,296	£2,736
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	

**After the Molo convention, Chris and Felicity Jones, Sankara Yambo and Barbara Heinzen hired Bernard Mburu to drive them from Nairobi to Himo, Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam to visit the Tanzanian sites.*

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 attending than other sites.
2. What is fair to ask of the poorest site, in this case, Msi Choke? On this occasion, the Travel Fund covered all their costs.
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

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

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

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