



*Nature* **Uganda**

**RESEARCH STRATEGY**

2015-2020

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## THE STRATEGY

### ***Background***

Research is one of the Key pillars for **Nature**Uganda (NU) and since even the membership and the advocacy pillars all derive their information from data based sources, research becomes the most important pillar and the core objective for NU. Realizing that there is no funding for research programmes currently in NU, there is a need to devise means of capturing the data needed to address the project monitoring and advocacy issues in NU. This follows the increasing challenges in nature conservation and livelihood improvement in many communities around KBAs. Addressing these challenges requires researched and tested approaches that aim at promoting biodiversity conservation while at the same time addressing sustainable livelihoods in communities. Unfortunately, even the little available information at NU is not readily available to the public or to the groups who can utilize them for the benefit of conservation and management, thus calling for an urgent and effective information dissemination plan. With the limited research funds available, NU has the opportunity to obtain data through the working groups that are a technical part of NU. In addition, the activities or interventions being done for all NU projects also need monitoring to ensure that they are addressing the targeted problems. Therefore all projects implemented by NU have to include a research & monitoring component. With this achieved, the publicity and advocacy programmes in NU will be enhanced. There will also be good data available for advising policy makers in making Natural resource conservation and management decisions.

### ***Justification***

Inspired by the original purpose of the society to document natural history of East Africa, the institution work is hinged on scientific information generated through well laid down research and monitoring programmes. The research conducted by NU should therefore be guided by NU's research priorities at the time of programme or project design and implementation. Research in the different projects should be done by the respective project officers with guidance from the research & monitoring Coordinator (R&M) who heads the Research unit of NU. This R&M should use the available policies like this strategy to be able to guide these officers on the kinds of data to collect during project implementation so as to monitor the impacts of the project interventions/ activities over time and to guide the policy and advocacy processes by NU and other partners.

### ***Research Priorities 2015-2020***

In addition to existing programmes, the Research priorities for NU during this period will focus on influences on biodiversity from the following:"

- Climate Change and its impact on Conservation and development
- Invasive and Exotic species control and monitoring
- Land use and Land cover change
- Community Livelihoods and sustainable Natural resource management

## ***Objectives of the Strategy***

1. Generate and/or update Information and data for key biodiversity areas
2. Develop and strengthen Institutional collaboration on data management
3. Improve research information flow and dissemination

## ***Activities***

### **1. Generate and/or update information and data for key biodiversity areas**

- 1.1. Continue with the current and establish new monitoring programmes
- 1.2. Encourage citizen research programmes to increase public participation
- 1.3. Strengthen the role of Working Groups in research and monitoring
- 1.4. Working groups to identify key or focus species and sites like Rocks in Karamoja
- 1.5. Map Invasive species occurrence in Uganda
- 1.6. Collaborate with / involve more people / institutions in research and monitoring
- 1.7. Publish research findings

### **2. Develop and strengthen institutional collaboration on data management**

- 2.1. Support the Institutionalizing of data management centers in Uganda
- 2.2. Operationalise existing and identify new opportunities for MOUs
- 2.3. Enhance the data sharing and access mechanism with other partners

### **3. Improve research information flow and dissemination**

- 3.1. Develop an institutional communication and information management strategy
- 3.2. Improve and update the research section on the NU website regularly
- 3.3. Publish and disseminate research findings see 1.7
- 3.4. Obtain current contact addresses including e-mails for researchers in NU membership
- 3.5. Improve distribution and access of publications to members
- 3.6. Improve set-up and content of the Resource Centre (RC) and at branches
- 3.7. Make NU publications available in all possible formats to fit all relevant audiences
- 3.8. Upload all publications of NU on the website
- 3.9. Organise a biannual NU Conservation Conference

## ANNEX

### **About NU**

**Nature**Uganda, the East African Natural History Society in Uganda was founded in 1909 as a scientific organisation with the primary aim of documenting the diversity of wildlife in East Africa. The society is a membership, research and conservation organisation established to undertake conservation actions using scientifically proven methods for the benefit of the people and nature.

NU has its secretariat based in Kampala with servicing nodes in four upcountry branches that are based at Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) and Busitema University in the East, Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) in the West and Gulu University in the North. All these NU branches have links to research institutions and that is how they support research in NU and the country. MUST – ITFC, Secretariat – Makerere University, Busitema – National Agricultural Research Organisation and IUIU - Mt Elgon Field Station.

In pursuing its mission of **promoting the understanding, appreciation and conservation of nature**, NU strives to: Create a nature friendly public; Enhance knowledge of Uganda’s natural history; Advocate for policies favourable to the environment; and Take action to conserve priority species, sites and habitats. NU hinges all this on its core values of being Science based, with its focus on biodiversity conservation, being Membership based, People oriented and with good governance. The first two core values are key drivers for the NU research programme.

**Science based-** Inspired by the original purpose of the society to document natural history of East Africa, the institution work is hinged on scientific information generated through well laid down research and monitoring programmes.

**Focus on biodiversity conservation-**Considering that 90% of Uganda’s GDP is derived from Natural Resources (tourism, forestry, fisheries), biodiversity is a priority economic development resource and this presents opportunities to promote conservation through research, public awareness and education.

### **NU Research and Conservation Pillars**

NU has six (6) pillars under which it implements its research and conservation programmes. These are;

- i. Engagement in biodiversity offsets and mitigation programmes
- ii. Improving management of Key Conservation areas
- iii. Improving livelihoods of communities around conservation areas
- iv. Increasing awareness and advocacy of conservation
- v. Strengthening the biodiversity research and monitoring programmes
- vi. Conservation and development initiatives
- vii. Identifying and raising profiles of Key biodiversity areas such as IBAs.

## ***NU's Research Programmes***

NU has two major research and monitoring areas; i) Biodiversity Monitoring, ii) Intervention and Impact monitoring. The Biodiversity monitoring programme started in 1995 with the monitoring of Important Bird Areas. Since then the programme has grown to include 5 major monitoring programmes. The programme is mainly run by volunteers across the country but coordinated by the NU at the secretariat. This programme is supported by NU Working Groups (WGs) which are specialist technical groups of NU members interested in Plants, Birds, Herps, Mammals, Insects (Dudus) and Microbial resources. The major NU monitoring programmes include:

1. Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas.
2. Waterfowl counts
3. Bird population monitoring
4. Vulture counts
5. Raptor road counts

Other NU monitoring programmes that are not well developed include;

6. Baseline surveys
7. Bird Ringing
8. Garden Birds monitoring
9. Nesting Records
10. Intervention and impact monitoring

## ***Current structures and strengths***

**Science and Technical Sub-Committee (S&T) of the NU Executive Committee:** The Science and Technical Committee is a subcommittee of the Executive Committee (EC) of NU. It was proposed and approved by the EC to advise and make recommendations to the EC on technical issues relating to the conservation and research programmes of NU. S&T is established by the EC and its decisions will be approved by the EC. The composition of the subcommittee will include up to two representatives from the secretariat and at least three members of the EC. Additional member(s) may be co-opted on to the subcommittee on specific issues, as required. It is recommended that the convener of the Working groups forum be part of this committee. The remit of the subcommittee will encompass all conservation and technical programmes of NU.

**Research & Monitoring Coordinator in place (R&M):** Seated at the secretariat, the R&M is in position to assist the project officers and other staff to collect the right information to help in project monitoring. This person is the head of the Research Department at NU.

**Working Groups:** Working groups (WG) are organized groups of NU members with technical knowledge and interest in specific taxa. These groups are coordinated at the Secretariat by the R&M. The working Groups have a convener selected for each of the working groups to coordinate their respective activities. These conveners in turn select one member to be the convener of conveners and this person directly links the R&M department of NU to the Working Groups.

**Qualified officers:** Most of the staff managing NU projects are well qualified for their roles in data collection

**Volunteers:** NU has a volunteer scheme in place and this provides qualified researchers to support the research work at NU as well as providing training opportunities for these volunteers

**Training Opportunities:** Many of these programmes have training opportunities designed to help staff/ officers perform their duties in collecting data

**Partners:** NU works with a wide range of partners who have the capacity to provide research opportunities for NU. These include research and conservation institutions as well as policy making institutions.

**Membership:** The membership composition of NU includes researchers, students and interested members who are willing to support the NU programmes. These are both at the secretariat and at the NU branches and are all involved in NU research activities.

### **Challenges**

**Limited time and Funding:** Many research reports developed are never published due to lack of funds. For the same reason, the monitoring programme especially for species and sites without on-going projects is often halted and so continuous monitoring for all projects is not always possible. In addition, usually as a result of lack of time to write and publish papers in peer reviewed journals, most of the information collected by NU is never disseminated to the targeted international audiences. The R&M department is understaffed usually with only one member as the R&M, reason being the lack of funds to support the extra staff. This leads to so much work being left undone.

**Low and not ready availability of Expertise:** Some officers and volunteers do not have the required skills to collect some forms of data during project implementation. The methods are sometimes not clear to the staff and at times are very complex and time consuming and yet this was not planned for during the project planning process.

**Data acquisition and Use compromised:** Commonly NU spends so many resources in terms of funds and staff time to collect data and yet most of this data is not fully used except in project reports. It is also commonly availed to researchers free of charge, in which case, there is no value for money. This should be revised and the data use and sharing policy be developed for NU.

**Types of data to be collected are not clear:** The biggest challenge is having no clear guide on what types of data to collect on a particular project in order to answer the project monitoring question by project officers. This is common for projects not directly related to research especially the livelihood projects, where the variable to monitor might not be directly linked to the activity under implementation.

### **Contributors**

*This strategy was developed with technical support from the Science & Technical Sub-Committee on the Nature Uganda Executive Committee 2014-2015*

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