

**Award Rationale**  
**Kibale Association for Rural and Environmental Development**  
**in Uganda**



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**On behalf of**

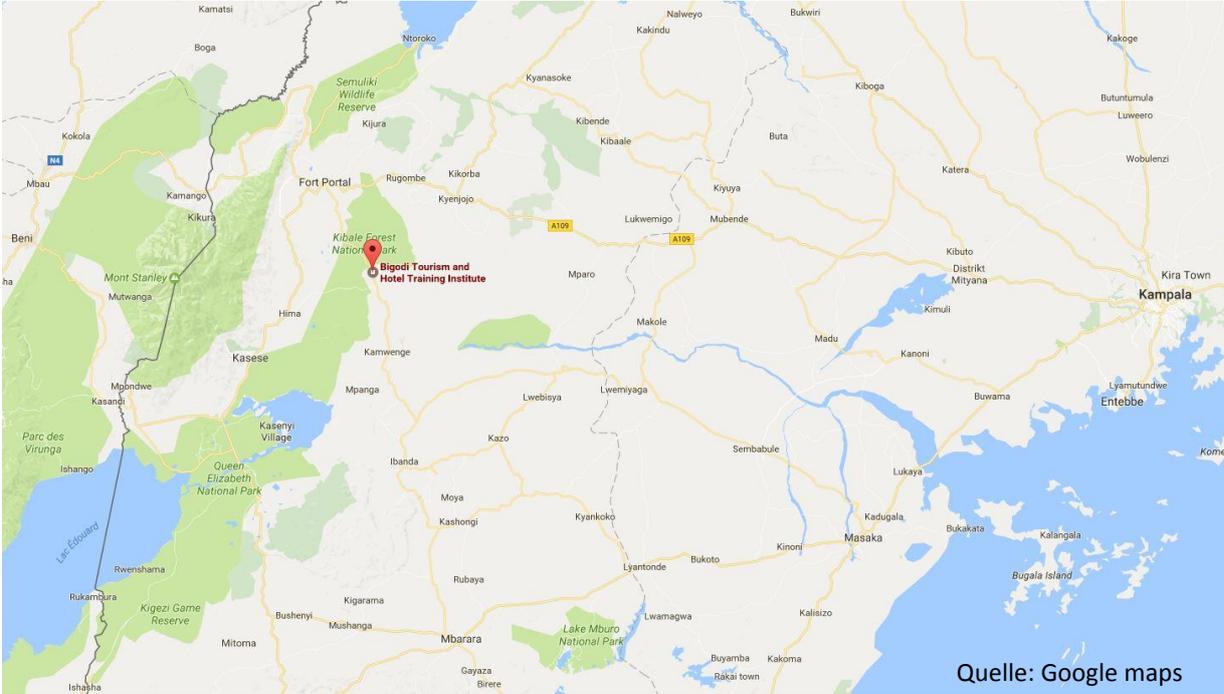
**Institute for Tourism and Development**  
**(Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V.)**

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Outline map of Uganda



Outline map of Kibale Nationalpark



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Kibale Association for Rural and Environmental Development (KAFRED) submitted their application for the TODO! award 2017 in time to the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V. – STE). Their project was nominated by the TODO! jury as eligible for the award. From 28<sup>th</sup> November to 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016, Dietmar Quist visited Uganda – Bigodi and surroundings – on behalf of Studienkreis in order to check the TODO! application by KAFRED on location.

During his stay, the author was well taken care of by Tinka John and Eddy Akampulira and got all the required information, contacts, and guided tours. He could stay in a homestay in Bigodi, got opportunities for various discussions and interviews with board members of KAFRED, local people and tourists, and had access to the minutes of all KAFRED meetings over the past ten years.

KAFRED was founded in 1992. It started with the search for a reliable source of income to develop Bigodi – a poor and backward region at that time. A decision was taken to turn the Bigodi wetlands (an ordinary conservation area bordering the Kibale National Park) into a tourist attraction. The people managed to implement their plan to preserve the wetlands and to enhance their status in a sustainable manner in order to use the income from tourism to develop infrastructure in Bigodi and its surroundings. All measures and projects were jointly planned, decided and implemented by and with the people of the area of Bigodi. The participation of the local population, the development of the region, education, training, wetlands preservation, sustainability, nature conservation, and environmental protection have always been essential elements of the objectives of KAFRED.

In the 1990s, the region was one of the poorest and least developed regions in Uganda. With the help of the tourism income that was invested and with the decisions taken by its inhabitants, Bigodi is now one of the most successful community-based tourism projects in Uganda, the “Pearls of Uganda“ (see TODO! award rationale 2012).

## **2. BACKGROUND AND SETTING**

The area of the landlocked state of Uganda is about 241,000 km<sup>2</sup>; which is about the size of the old Federal Republic of Germany (249,000 km<sup>2</sup>). The extensive equatorial highlands (mostly around 1000 metres) offer comfortable climatic conditions, considering they are situated in the inner tropics: Throughout the year, the average temperatures range between 23 and 25 degrees.

While in 1991 the population of Uganda was stated as 12 million, in 2015 about 40 million were considered a solid estimate. Annual population growth has been more than three percent; six children per woman are the country’s average. The official languages are English and Swahili. Besides, there are 40 to 50 independent local and regional languages. 80 percent of the inhabitants are Protestant and Catholic Christians in equal proportions; about 15 percent are Muslims.

Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than half of the Ugandans are below

the age of 14, and only two percent older than 65. About 30 percent of the population above 15 are illiterate. Only about 15 percent of all students attend a secondary school. UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) weighs life expectancy, educational attainment, and per capital income. In 2015, Uganda ranked 147 of 175 countries (Germany rang 18); over the past four years Uganda rose in the HDI from rang 161 to 147. Even according to Ugandan criteria, 20 to 30 percent of the population are considered poor (living on less than one to two US dollars per day). In comparison to 1992, when the poverty rate was almost 60 percent, significant improvements are visible; the development outlook for Uganda is rated as very positive by international organisations and investors.

For more than ten years, the economic growth rates have usually been above four to six percent. The exploitation of resources such as copper, cobalt, oil, and gas require major investments at first, but could then contribute to further positive development of one of the world's poorest countries. There are one million people living with HIV/Aids, but the rate of new infections is low. Thanks to comprehensive awareness campaigns, HIV/Aids is considered controllable.

About 80 percent of the population are engaged in agriculture. The most important export products are coffee and tea. About 2/3 of the farmers cultivate for their own subsistence, so that agriculture contributes only about 36 percent of GDP. Because of the rapid population growth, more and more agricultural land is needed, but arable land is scarce. Uganda has only ten cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants to date (Kampala has a population of about three million), but there is a rapid increase in migration from rural areas to the cities.

Uganda has been independent since 1962. The recent past still affects the country's image. The cruel dictatorship under Idi Amin, Milton Obote, civil wars, political instability, poverty, hunger, child soldiers, HIV, attacks, border conflicts, etc. still determine the image of Uganda in the West. Under Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power for 30 years, every day life has changed a lot. The country is considered politically stable, the economy is developing, and the rate of inflation decreased from 22 percent in 1990 to currently six percent.

At the moment, Uganda is considered an insider tip in tourism. Uganda always scores high, whether on trip-advisor, in nature magazines of all kinds, in eco documentaries or in Lonely Planet („Emerging from the shadows of its dark history, a new dawn of tourism has risen in Uganda, polishing a glint back into the „pearl of Africa“. Travellers are streaming in to explore what is basically the best of everything the continent has to offer“). The country has glacier covered mountains of more than 5000 metres, volcanos, deep ravines and gorges of the East African Rift Valley, vast savannah, a high diversity of species and impressive adventures and nature experiences in numerous nature parks that are not (yet) flooded by tourists. The lodges offer good comfort, staying in homestays give tourists an understanding of the country and its people. About 1.3 million tourists were registered in 2012. However, only about 16 percent of them were said to be “real“ tourists who came on a holiday and not for professional or business purposes, or to visit friends and relatives in Uganda. The tourists' most important countries of origin were the United States, Australia and EU countries. Disasters such as the Ebola outbreak in 2013 made visitors numbers drop to 800,00. Around the elections in 2015, riots were expected – which did not happen, but made visitor numbers drop prior to the elections, reinforced perhaps by fears that old negative factors (coup, terror, war) could reappear again. The one million visitors mark has not been achieved again. Tourism directly and indirectly employs up to 500,000 people in Uganda. It has become one of the most important sources of income, exceeding remittances which are also important. Tourism in Uganda brings foreign exchange, creates jobs also in rural areas, and slows down migration to the cities. The 13 large national parks and smaller protected areas offer retreats for nature; because of the remoteness

of national parks roads are built even in marginal areas.

Small setbacks and the drop in tourism since 2013, which has not yet been overcome, show the vulnerability and insecurity of the tourism business in Uganda. There are no marketing strategies to quickly compensate setbacks, or there is a lack of financial resources for such strategies. The forms of tourism have also changed. Backpackers characterised tourism to Uganda until the 2000s. Since then, group packages have been dominating. The standards with regard to accommodation have increased. Homestays which generate income in rural areas hardly ever have enough rooms to receive groups.

### **3. KIBALE ASSOCIATION for RURAL and ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT (KAFRED)**

#### **3.1 History and Objective**

The NGO KAFRED began in 1992 with six founding members from Bigodi, among them the person responsible for the TODO! 2017 application, Tinka John. When KAFRED was founded, the main objective was clearly stated: .... "Tourism shall serve to ..... contribute to the development of the rural region of Bigodi... and to sustainably preserve and protect the environment (the Bigodi wetlands)". These objectives were achieved. The protected area was made accessible. The income from tourism has benefitted the entire community. From the beginning, the development goals were elaborated, discussed and decided with the people in joint meetings. Participation has remained one of the main pillars of KAFRED. With the tourism income, the first participatory measure was the construction of a secondary school in 1993 which is still being run today. Environmental and nature protection are part of the curricula, water supply has been improved, guides have been and are being trained, farmers living adjacent to the protected area receive support through a fund, a kindergarten and midwives are supported on a sustainable basis, scholarships are given to talented students, souvenirs produced by the women are being sold. Migration to the cities has slowed down; Bigodi offers jobs. There is hardly anyone below the age of 25 who has not been supported in some way by the community of Bigodi. Today's challenges consist in maintaining what has been achieved, and in developing and implementing new ideas. Smart cooperation, wise planning and several strokes of luck have helped the project succeed.

In the 1990s, more and more primeval forest in Uganda was cleared and new agricultural areas were developed by draining wetlands. The poor and underdeveloped region of Bigodi used to be a backward region. It is probably thanks to its backwardness that one of the few wetland areas in Uganda, the Bigodi wetlands, remained largely intact. In the early 1990s, there were only two/three brick buildings in Bigodi; there were hippos in the wetlands; there were lion populations. The inauguration (1993) of the almost 800 km<sup>2</sup> Kibale Nature Park (and later National Park), "home of the chimpanzees", only a few kilometres away, was the next stroke of luck for Bigodi. The wetlands directly border the Kibale National Park, but were not integrated into the park. Communities near national parks hardly ever benefit from tourism, since the income goes to the Ministry of Finance. There is no compensation for damage caused by wildlife. The wetlands thus became only a nature conservation area and not part of a national park. This opened up the possibility of directly investing the income from tourism in the region, thanks to KAFRED. A development worker from USAID recognised the importance of this situation. He advised KAFRED when the organisation was founded and during its first activities.

Tourists would come to watch chimpanzees and forest elephants in the Kibale National Park and then also make use of the opportunity to visit the protected Bigodi wetlands.

The wetlands are a very different habitat than the forest in the national park. Once a few small wooden footpaths had been constructed, the wetlands were easily accessible. The diversity of species within a very small area still enchants nature lovers. An area of only a few square kilometres is home to eight primates, more than 200 bird species, more than 25 kinds of dragonflies, and a unique wetland vegetation dominated by papyrus and wild palm trees. Primates and birds are very easy to observe and easy to photograph without a huge telephoto lens. And it was a stroke of luck that the founders did not want to earn an income from tourism themselves, but identified the wetlands as a sustainable starting point and development aid for their region. KAFRED was registered as a charitable organisation. The income goes to the organisation and KAFRED is in charge of ensuring that it is invested in the community in ways that serve the public good. The income remains directly in Bigodi, is being monitored and benefits everybody. And of course all the measures were jointly decided and always had the support of the majority of the local people.

At the beginning, there was a lot of scepticism and distrust. Neither the hunters nor the farmers were able to imagine that there might be people who would travel so far just to watch the animals instead of hunting them. Draining the wetlands, felling the trees and selling the timber, and developing new agricultural land seemed to be more logical and easier to understand. But the experiment was successful and convincing. The wetlands are a common good and the community suddenly had money which they could use at their own discretion. The tourists came and now there were resources available to effect change. The entire community made the decisions when developing their first list of priorities. It was considered most important to establish and run a secondary school.

The decision was implemented and in as early as 1993 the secondary school was built. It still exists, it was expanded later, and it is financed till today. Until then, Bigodi only had one primary school. It had practically been impossible for the students to continue their education. The nearest secondary school was almost 40 km away. The road was not paved and often impossible to use during the rainy seasons. The students would have had to stay at the boarding school, which hardly anyone could afford. From 2017, the government wants to acknowledge the community's own initiative and pay the salaries of the more than 20 teachers. Today, there is hardly anyone below 25 to 30 in and around Bigodi who did not in some shape or form get support from KAFRED. The organisation is deeply rooted in Bigodi.

The second major project suggested by the people was to improve water supply. Especially those community members who do not live in the centre had to buy their water in cans there. The water was expensive, often polluted and had to be transported to the houses. Since 2014, the less central parts of Bigodi have their direct water supplies.

About 15 percent of the income in 2015/16 went into supporting the secondary school; about 40 percent are needed to finance the water project. 25 percent benefit KAFRED's self-organised sub-groups (women's group, dance and drama group, bee keeping group, farmers' group, etc.). 20 percent are earmarked for education and materials for guides (rubber boots, rain coats, bags) and the construction of KAFRED's new entrance building to the protected area.

### 3.2 Concept and Programme

In the first few years, KAFRED had to do a lot of convincing. Everybody had a say in making the list of priorities. From the beginning, the children of families who were not members could also attend the secondary school. Nevertheless, it was a slow process for people to change their 'wait and see' attitudes. Today, these obstacles have been overcome. KAFRED finds it difficult to limit the number of members. It turned out that a (too) numerous membership makes it increasingly difficult to take day-to-day decisions and establish clear majorities. Therefore, the number of members needs to be limited to about 200, as it is now. Currently, there are discussions on how many new members can be accepted per year without endangering the organisation's capacity to act. In the meantime, KAFRED is one of the most convincing examples of a community's own initiative in the field of community based tourism in Uganda. Many people apply for membership in order to be part of the organisation for reasons of prestige, for political and economic reasons, in order to support relatives, or to push their own interests.

According to the statutes, one annual general meeting has to take place every year. Elections are held biennially. Board meetings are held in irregular intervals about four to eight times a year. KAFRED's sub-groups manage their own affairs and act on their own responsibility. For example, the members of the group living adjacent to the wetlands decide on the measures to be taken to provide aid or loans to their members. As with national parks, there are no provisions to directly compensate farmers in cases of damage caused by wildlife. Those affected, however, can get small loans with long credit periods. The decisions are directly made within the groups.

KAFRED's support for groups and projects quite clearly reflects the interests of the majority in the community. Secondary school, training, education, kindergarten, clinic, presence of midwives, water supply, environmental issues, empowerment of women are basic themes of the social development that the community wants. One of KAFRED's concerns is to show perspectives for the future: Stabilising tourism, but also diversifying and developing new products to reduce the dependence on tourism. For example, KAFRED suggests to establish another eight homestays in Bigodi to improve people's income, and the organisation then provides advice regarding the implementation to those who are interested.

It is very important to ensure the sustainability of the project. Even today, there is a need for decisions to directly protect the project. There are cases of illegal deforestation in the wetlands, also by members. Most of the farmers have very little money, so there is a strong temptation to "make a quick buck". There are also attempts to install drainages to drain the swamps. KAFRED tries to mediate, to conciliate and to involve the people in the organisation and in local groups. If discussions do not help, in extreme cases legal action needs to be taken. The members of the sub-groups sometimes need explanations to understand that the surplus generated from the project work must go to KAFRED and is not to be spent on personal consumption.

Children are instructed not to beg. Tourists are informed to only give something if a service has been rendered. Tourists going for a walk need to be reminded not to buy souvenirs from children especially in the mornings. Children must be at school at that time. Apart from these more or less daily efforts to keep the project going, KAFRED tries to respond to the changes and problems in tourism and to develop new ideas and plans.

The decline in tourism and the structural changes also have an impact in Bigodi. Since 2013, the income could not be increased as planned, and at times it even declined. Projects had to be postponed. For some time, the salaries of the teachers could be paid only with major delays.

That's why KAFRED intensively thinks about how to make up for the loss in tourism income and how to reduce the total dependence on tourism.

Environmental and nature protection and the importance of the wetlands for Bigodi get strong emphasis in the school curricula in the region. In this context, KAFRED cooperates with UNITE (Unite for the Environment, North Carolina Zoo). UNITE trains teachers in the entire region who can then teach environmental studies in a competent manner. The objective is to ensure that the students (but not only the students) know that even in difficult times with no income from tourism the protection of the wetlands and nature needs to be ensured. Destroying the wetlands to use the timber and cultivate the land would prevent returning to tourism at a later stage.

At the same time, KAFRED understood that they need to improve their own marketing of the project and establish closer contacts with international tour operators, despite all the support by the Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA).

Efforts are being made to increase the attractiveness of the nature conservation area for visitors. Preparations are under way to establish a small snake zoo – with local species. Along with these efforts, KAFRED tries to introduce new projects to reduce the dependence on tourism. At the moment, the introduction of bee keeping projects is being planned. In many parts of Uganda, the production of honey offers new and good sources of income for farmers. At the same time, efforts are made to improve the health of livestock and to increase the livestock in order to get away from mere subsistence farming.

#### **4. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE TO DO! CONTEST CRITERIA**

Checking the activities by KAFRED against the **TODO! contest criteria** leads to the following assessment:

##### **4.1 Taking different needs and interests of the local population into consideration**

When KAFRED was founded in 1992, the organisation had clear objectives. The most important one was to promote the region and improve the infrastructure – jointly with the people living there. From the beginning, the focus was on sustainable tourism in order to have a fixed and stable source of income for a development in line with the ideas and wishes of the people of Bigodi. Sustainable tourism was achievable only with the protection of nature and the environment and the preservation of the community-owned Magombe wetlands (today usually called Bigodi wetlands), the adjacent Kibale national park, and the entire region.

Participation was the key to a development in which the interests of the majority of the inhabitants were realised. They were then owners of this development. The developments in the community have been determined by the members and inhabitants. All the groups (women, farmers, people with disabilities, the elderly, children, youths, etc.) were/are involved. The entire wetlands belong to the community, KAFRED is fully owned by the community and is 100 percent community run and managed.

There are several meetings per year, one annual general meeting, and elections of the board every other year. About one third of the board members are women. The budget and the expenses are made public. Proposals are elaborated by the management and presented at the annual general meeting to be voted on. The list of priorities is being voted on in the meetings and adopted.

In as early as 1993, the secondary school was built and started to function. Primary schools in

the region are also supported time and again. The water project (development of a source, construction of a tank, installation of water pipes, purchase of pumps, and connection to the houses) was the second major project by KAFRED. Educational programmes for women in ecology, trainings for KAFRED staff as eco-guides in the wetlands, and nature conservation management are conducted regularly. Funds for the women's project and another three associations of women and people living adjacent to the wetlands were established and are being fed when money is available. A house for midwives was built for the small clinic. Midwives can now also be reached at night and pregnant women do not have to be taken to the clinic at Fort Portal 40 km away. A first (pioneer) beehive for teaching and demonstration purposes has been installed. Agricultural enterprises, shops, restaurants, homestays and lodges close-by also benefit from KAFRED's work. Some of the guides at Kibale National Park also got their first training in the Bigodi wetlands.

Through the cooperation of KAFRED and the Kibale Fuel Wood Project, about 100 energy saving earthen stoves were built in the community. In comparison to a traditional fireplace made of three stones, these stoves only need one third of the firewood and help a household save about 100 € per year. At the same time, this reduces the pressure on the trees which are in demand as firewood.

#### **4.2 Raising awareness of the risks and opportunities associated with tourism development and its impacts on economic, social, and cultural aspects of local people's daily lives**

The success and opportunities of the work done by KAFRED are obvious to everyone in Bigodi. Latest since the decline in tourism in 2013, awareness has increased that tourism does not guarantee a regular flow of income. Attempts to diversify the sources of income and to develop non-touristic sources are getting support. Producing honey from bee-keeping and increasing livestock are new project approaches.

For 13 years, UNITE (Unite for the Environment; North Carolina Zoo) have been training teachers in sustainability, environmental protection, and nature conservation at eleven schools in the region. In this way, UNITE reaches about 6000 students per day. UNITE has been one of KAFRED's partners for many years. In Bigodi, too, students are taught about the need to preserve nature reserves and protected areas for the next generation. Earth Day is celebrated every year. There is hope that this kind of awareness-raising will preserve the protected area in times when tourism is difficult.

KAFRED will remain strongly dependent on tourism at least for some time to come.

#### **4.3 Participation of broad parts of the local population in the positive economic, social and cultural impacts of tourism**

In 2015 the income KAFRED generated mainly from guided tours was about 60,000 €. Through the jobs created in tourism, accommodation, food prepared for groups, and the sale of souvenirs another 80,000 € were generated in Bigodi. Community members, children and youths who are not directly or indirectly involved in tourism also benefit from the work done by KAFRED. Every year, the secondary school – one of KAFRED's projects – teaches 320 students from about 300 families. Very talented students get scholarships. Since it was founded, more than 1000

students completed the Bigodi secondary school. The families save on transport and accommodation at the boarding school 40 kilometres away. These savings have resulted in a higher standard of living, and/or students were able to attend secondary school at all. Despite their schooling, the children staying at home are more often available to help with household chores. This alone was often key for them to get permission to go to school at all. The level of education in the community has increased and the employment opportunities of school graduates in the locality or in the region have greatly improved; and there is less migration.

The KAFRED project "Clean Water" so far connected about 80 households to the water supply. They now get clean water in their houses and it is also cheaper than the water in cans. On average, a family will save about 100 € per year. Women report that this has made their daily chores much easier, as they no longer have to transport water cans every day. The men often work far away. One person living adjacent to the wetlands has started a biogas plant. Without regular water supply this would have been difficult.

KAFRED currently employs 39 persons: Guides, teachers, and administrative staff. The number of people benefitting from tourism is estimated to be up to 300. KAFRED's construction activities and the maintenance of the wetlands trail temporarily employ up to 300 local workers.

For about 150 farmers with fields adjacent to the wetlands a fund was set up that is being administered by the farmers themselves. After small loans have been repaid, the money can be given to others. This system has been functioning for 12 years. About 70 percent of the families have been benefitting from this fund. In a region where hardly anyone has money, where no bank would provide loans, such a support is invaluable. The loans given are small, they rarely exceed 20 € and can often be paid back within a year. 20 € are sufficient to buy a goat that can have offspring. The loan can be paid back with the money earned from selling the goatlings. After ten years of "goat production", some families now have two or three cows that give milk.

One of the women's groups produces handicraft and souvenirs. Ten percent of the income goes to a fund to support the kindergarten. The children who completed kindergarten will on the last day be dressed in festive clothing and will be guided through the village and be "handed over" to the primary school where a small festival will be organised. Apart from the joy and recognition for the children, parents with children who do not go to kindergarten are to be encouraged to send their children to kindergarten and primary school in Bigodi (250 pupils).

The hosts of two homestays (2 and 5 rooms) do not only earn money from the 20 to 50 guests who are staying there per month, but also cook for larger tourist groups. Food and beverages are provided for about 50 guests per month; an additional income that adds up to about 5,000 € per year.

Apart from excursions to the wetlands, KAFRED also offers an agricultural tour and a village tour, visiting the local healer, a 90-year-old man and an 80-year-old woman who tell visitors about their work, their lives, their customs and traditions. They talk about every day life, tell stories from the village, talk about the "old days", and about the major changes brought about by modernity. This opens a new world for the visitors. For the people of Bigodi, the interest that the (mostly white) visitors take in their culture and lives shows them that "their world" is special. This increases their self-confidence and makes them proud of their own history. Groups have formed to tell stories from the "old times". Old dances and dramas are revived, tradition comes back to life. This enrichment of cultural awareness in turn benefits the tourists. At times, poems and stories are told in the evenings, short performances and dances are performed for the guests.

#### **4.4 Ensuring the attractiveness of jobs in tourism for local people by improving the working conditions with regard to remuneration, social security, working hours, and training**

Before tourism started, there were hardly any jobs and no opportunities for higher education and training in Bigodi. The secondary school founded by KAFRED offers better, higher education and thus better job opportunities. I was told that the number of direct and indirect jobs in tourism must be more than 300. The jobs created include regular ones with a regular income and offer a certain degree of social security. Even low but regular incomes are of great value in Uganda.

KAFRED publicly advertises job vacancies. In the selection process, a representative of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) is part of the team deciding on the candidates. Overtime, holidays, the job description, etc. are all stipulated in an employment contract. All employees have social insurance coverage.

A large part of the agricultural units only cultivate for their own subsistence. Every income, no matter how small, leads to a leap improvement in a family's standard of living. There are hardly any jobs beyond agriculture. A simple job in tourism may mean that a family becomes part of the money economy. There are usually eight to ten members living together in a family. The annual family income in Bigodi is 500 €.

#### **4.5 Strengthening local culture and the cultural identity of local people in tourist destinations**

Kindergarten, primary and secondary school enhance and stabilise a child's personal development. The curricula which include both environmental issues and culturally specific education contribute to a stronger identification with their own culture, environment and traditions – a development that is also wanted and supported by the parents. Local dances, singing and drumming are part of celebrations and school festivals. KAFRED supports members' groups that keep music and songs alive and that revive dance, drama and local story telling. The tourists, who usually take a keen interest, respect and in this way strengthen local people's independent cultural identity. The two homestays offer local and regional food for tourist groups. This also strengthens the hosts' feeling of being special.

KAFRED also tries to slowly replace eucalyptus with local types of trees. Whoever removes a eucalyptus will get two local seedlings. One reason is that eucalyptus reduces the water level in the wetlands. But KAFRED also wants to create awareness of the endemic flora: Flora and fauna are part of cultural identity. Up to now, about 1000 eucalypti were replaced by local trees.

The agro-tour offered gives opportunities for conversations with the farmers, fostering respect on both sides. Farmers show the (almost exclusively) organic cultivation of cassava, yam, banana, maize, coffee, tea, fruit trees and local trees.

#### **4.6 Avoiding/minimising tourism related social and cultural damage in tourist destinations**

In order to minimise the negative side effects of tourism, rules were established that are also taught at schools. Children are instructed not to beg or pester tourists. They are not allowed to sell souvenirs along the footpaths in the wetlands. The tourists are also addressed: They should not give money, pens, or souvenirs to children. They should give something only if it is clear that a service has been rendered in return. Such rules are helpful, even though they may never be fully observed. Police sometimes control the footpaths near the wetlands.

The mood among tourists and local people remains very relaxed and peaceful. That impressed me during my week in Bigodi, also when I was travelling alone.

#### **4.7 Compatibility with principles of environmental sustainability**

Implementing nature conservation and environmental protection are the pragmatic objectives that KAFRED is committed to. The environment is to be protected and preserved. On the one hand, for nature's own sake and to mitigate climate change, on the other hand for future generations and last but not least also in order to use tourism to build a local economic and social network in the community. KAFRED uses the cooperation with UNITE. UNITE trains teachers and thus raises awareness among the students. These are the major objectives. However, over those noble goals the less prominent but necessary aspects are not forgotten: KAFRED also installed waste bins in Bigodi to invite people to dispose of non-biodegradable waste.

#### **4.8 Gender Equity**

According to KAFRED, women enjoy equal rights. Among the nine board members there are four men, three women, one handicapped person and one elder, the latter being male or female, depending on the office period. At the regular meetings, between one third and half of the people attending are women, according to the minutes. In order to promote gender equity, KAFRED publishes job adverts explicitly encouraging women to apply. Both men and women can be trained as nature guides. Four women's projects are being supported. To provide better assistance to pregnant women, a house for midwives to stay at night was built by KAFRED next to the local clinic. The school supported by KAFRED employs male and female teachers.

One woman of Bigodi made an extraordinary career. Harriet Kemigisha was trained by KAFRED as eco-guide for the Bigodi wetlands. After a short time, she knew all the bird species in the wetlands by their scientific names. Then she got a job offer from Kibale National Park and specialised further in the knowledge of bird species. After a short time, she discovered a bird in the park that was considered extinct there. She was able to publish about it in an ornithological journal. She was then booked by bird watchers. Due to her excellent knowledge she soon guided travellers from all over the world around Uganda. In the meantime, she has acquired an excellent knowledge of almost all the bird species in Uganda. There continues to be a demand and today she runs a specialised tour company in Bigodi and can put up guests in her own home stay.

#### **4.9 Measures to ensure the economic and institutional sustainability of the project**

KAFRED and the future development of Bigodi strongly depend on tourism in Uganda. The setbacks over the past few years have made this very clear. Tourism will remain the main source of income. That cannot be changed. KAFRED rightfully points out the successful work they have been doing for 25 years, well managing ups and downs. Structural changes during the past ten years have already required adaptations of plans. Homestays are not strongly propagated any more, as the number of backpackers and individual travellers has decreased significantly. Today, tourist groups dominate, demanding more comfort and staying in lodges. Despite the support by the Ugandan authorities, KAFRED is planning to strengthen their own marketing efforts of the region.

Attempts are also made to increase the attractiveness of the wetlands for visitors. A snake house in which local species are to be kept is under construction.

Alternative sources of income are under consideration. Honey production from bee-keeping and improved and expanded livestock rearing are strongly propagated at the moment. Both measures would benefit farmers who currently only do subsistence farming and get only very little income.

If tourists stopped coming, it would be a disaster for Bigodi and the region. To take precautions against this worst-case scenario, education is expanded. With programmes to sensitise teachers and students as well as the local population, the importance of nature and the environment for their own sake is being presented. The responsibility of leaving a sound environment for future generations is being taught, as well as the importance of the wetlands as a unique habitat, as a water reservoir and a basis for climate protection, and last but not least to generate foreign exchange. In this way, there is hope that the wetlands will also survive an unavoidable break in the tourism activities.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The author strongly recommends awarding KAFRED with a TO-DO! 2017. KAFRED fulfils all TODO! contest criteria in a convincing manner.

Hard, continuous, and often cumbersome work and fortunate conditions over the past 25 years have contributed to the Bigodi wetlands turning an entire region from a poorhouse into a pearl. When KAFRED was founded, the wetlands were largely intact – which was special. Without the Kibale National Park in the neighbourhood, only very few tourists would find their way to this region. The Kibale Park as „home of the chimpanzees“ who have over many years got used to the presence of human beings, is a tourist attraction. Tourists visit the wetlands „on the way“, though they represent a valuable habitat of their own. It was a stroke of luck for Bigodi that the wetlands were not integrated into the park. Most of the places adjacent to national parks are hardly able to benefit from tourism. The income goes to the Ministry of Finance in Kampala; and there is no compensation for damage caused by wildlife.

KAFRED was registered early as a charitable non-governmental organisation and thus able to use the income directly for participatory community projects. Decisions are always owned by the majority of the population. Utter misery, hunger, or stark poverty practically no longer exist in the Bigodi region. The impact of tourism directly and indirectly benefits more than 500 families, even if only through improved education, more and new jobs, or the regular presence of midwives in the local clinic, etc. In lesser terms, the entire region with about 5,000 families also benefitted.

All this was achieved with an annual budget of about 60,000 €, generated by about 3,000 visitors per year. But actually there is more to it. Apart from the improved living conditions, many inhabitants have become more self-confident. Many of them are proud of their project and their successful decisions.

Bigodi, represented by KAFRED, shows that environmental protection and tourism adapted to the local conditions can develop an entire region. It is not only the number of tourists or the amount of money earned that determines the success of the project. The data must be assessed in relation to the local and regional value of this income. Investments, financed with money from tourism which may not seem worth mentioning in the Western world, can indeed – through consistent work and participation over 25 years – change a small world in a significant manner.