



Report of the Lekki-Lobito Knowledge exchange

Supported by

Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative



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INTRODUCTION

Lobito Wetland Site (LWS) in Angola is an important sanctuary for migratory waterbirds along the East Atlantic Flyway, with specific characteristics as it is located deep inside an urban area, surrounded by residential neighbourhoods with high human pressure. ADAMA (Association of Defenders and Friends of the Environment), a non-governmental, non-partisan and non-profit organization based in Lobito, is the local institution that since its foundation in 1993 has been working towards the conservation of the LWS habitat and the species that depend on it. It is in this context that in recent years ADAMA has been receiving support from the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI) in order to double efforts towards the establishment and conservation of the LWS and the frequent migratory waterbirds in this ecosystem, through environmental education and awareness campaigns.

Lekki Conservation Centre (LCC) is a well-known 78-hectare natural reserve in Lagos, Nigeria, established in 1990 to serve as a biodiversity conservation, research & environmental education, policy advocacy and ecotourism Centre. The LCC is a project of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) and a Wetland Centre located along the East Atlantic Flyway. LCC also plays host to a range of migratory bird species and hosts over 60,000 visitors annually. From 2021 to date, the Centre has hosted over 250,000 visitors.

ADAMA, supported by WSFI, intends to establish a Wetland Centre in Lobito. It is thus relevant for ADAMA to develop a close relationship with a well-established Wetland Nature Reserve such as LCC. LCC and LWS have some similarities as both are wetlands, have birds and are within urban areas.

This knowledge exchange between LCC and ADAMA will strengthen the Migratory Birds for People (MBP) network especially within Africa along the East Atlantic flyway. An itinerary for the visit was submitted as shown in Appendix 1.

TOUR OF LCC AND MEETING WITH NCF MANAGEMENT TEAM

WSFI supported the exchange program between Lekki Conservation Centre (LCC), a project of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) and ADAMA - located in Lobito, Angola. This knowledge exchange visit is to foster bonds between African wetland centres located along the East Atlantic Flyway. An itinerary was drawn up on how the exchange visit would proceed (Appendix 1).

This partnership and knowledge exchange visit took place from August 19th to 25th 2023. Constantino, a representative of ADAMA, Lobito, Angola arrived in Lagos, Nigeria in the evening of August 19th 2023.

The second day, being a Sunday, provided an opportunity for him to see that LCC, although a wetland centre, was also a tourist attraction site. Weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) for LCC are busy due to the influx of tourists to the centre. This offered Constantino the opportunity to experience first-hand how busy a tourist centre could be. He went on a tour of LCC with the Project Manager who gave an



insight into the establishment of LCC, the purpose and how it has come to stay within the urban and concrete ecosystem of Lagos State. The location of LCC and LWS in Lobito are quite similar - wetlands in urban concrete jungles. The LCC Project Manager gave a brief nature interpretation of LCC, introducing some plant and animal species and how the development surrounding LCC has impacted the ecosystem within.

The take home lessons for Constantino were to:

- Ensure that the wetlands of Lobito be fenced to avoid land grabbing and other forms of encroachment that could negatively impact the habitat.
- Visitors need to be guided during tours.
- A form of refreshment should be provided to tourists to encourage employment for host communities while showcasing the unique culture/tradition of the people.

The next day, Constantino met with the NCF management team. He made a presentation on ADAMA while the LCC Project Manager made a presentation of LCC. Both organizations shared ideas on how best to operate a sustainable wetland centre. LWS, being strategically located, is suitable for tourism and would attract the right number of people once ADAMA has secured the relevant documentation from the government. It is expected that they have a strategic action plan outlining their short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals.

The Director General of NCF, Dr. Joseph Onoja, also encouraged ADAMA to get registered as a BirdLife Partner seeing that there are no BirdLife Partners in Angola. ADAMA with the right team could be the first strategically positioned BirdLife partner in Angola. We also discussed the financial management system of ADAMA; most of their accounting is done using Excel. Constantino acknowledged that they intend to engage young people who will be trained with the right expertise to implement their financial transactions and reporting systems.

Tourists to LCC

Tourists to LCC call to make enquires via phone or Instagram, and some come in person to the reception to make enquiries. Requests range from ecotourism (touring the facility), photoshoots, video shoots, parties, conferences, meetings, picnics to group visits - team bonding, mental and physical wellness. The prices for the mentioned categories of visitors varies. Some people come as visitors and end up signing up as members of NCF. NCF membership has various categories.

Group visits attract various prices based on the facility to be hired for use and the duration. Also, a refundable deposit is included in the cost of facility hire and refunded if there are no damages recorded after usage. Charges for cleaning the hired facility after usage are also included in the hire.

All visiting and intending customers to the reserve are given information of safety tips while on our premises.

School visits: Schools write formally informing the NCF Education Unit of their intended excursion or visit to our facility, indicating the purpose of the visit, the number of children and adults, and the duration of their stay. The NCF Education Unit, which is under the Technical Programmes Department, will then respond to the school's email by giving them an information sheet which contains all the necessary information the school requires to make a reservation.



LCC OPERATIONS





VISIT TO SIMILAR PLACES OF CONSERVATION INTEREST

Bose and Constantino paid a visit to Omu Resort in Bojige, Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos State. Omu Resort is considered a home of conservation, education and entertainment, located on 22 hectares of land. This resort has translated into a cashless tourist centre. We observed that there is a lot to learn from them, especially in making a wetland centre more attractive and accessible to tourists.

Accessibility to Omu Resort is difficult due to its location and access road, which is still undergoing construction. Upon arrival at the resort, we made payments and were informed of the facilities in the resort which are a zoo with a mix of exotic and indigenous species. This is similar to the aquarium called Sea World and a play area for adults and children.

We did not have any guide while there, so we had to figure out the location of the different places of interest ourselves. Overall we got insights into enhancing a relaxing atmosphere in a natural environment by establishing recreation facilities that have minimal impact on the environment although at Omu Resort we observed that there was ongoing construction for the go karting area.

LESSONS LEARNT

1. Locating a conservation centre in an urban area boosts the wellbeing of the people.
2. The ambience in a natural environment for most visitors to LCC is therapeutic and most visitors are more relaxed when leaving LCC.
3. Nature interpretation and environmental education are vital to the visitor/tourist experience.
4. Citizen science is important for advocacy and for continuous support to conservation centres.
5. Visits between conservation centres in Africa cannot be over-emphasised as this enables cross-fertilization of ideas to enhance customer experience, while bridging the knowledge gap.
6. Science informs visitors' engagement with conservation centers.

APPRECIATION

This funding bridges the knowledge and experience gap in African Wetland Centres along the East Atlantic Flyway. The unwavering support of Mr. Tim Dodman in facilitating this distinctive exchange between Lekki Conservation Centre (LCC) and Associação Defensores e Amigos do Ambiente (ADAMA) with funding from the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (WSFI) is appreciated.

APPENDIX 1 - KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE VISIT ITINERARY

Day 0: 19/08/2023 (Saturday) - Arrival of the representative of ADAMA in Lagos
Day 1: 20/08/2023 (Sunday) - Welcome, Introduction and Orientation
Day 2: 21/08/2023 (Monday) - Meeting with NCF Management Team & reserve visit
Day 3: 22/08/2023 (Tuesday) - Daily Operations
Day 4: 23/08/2023 (Wednesday) - Daily Operations and visit to similar sites within Lekki
Day 5: 24/08/2023 (Thursday) Visit to Similar sites within Lekki, Farewell Dinner and departure for the airport
Day 6: 25/08/2023 (Friday) Depart from Lagos to Angola at 02:00 AM.



PHOTO GALLERY



First day at LCC- Constantino gifts Bose Lobito Flamingos



NCF Director General- Dr. Joseph Onoja and Constantino



Constantino and NCF management team



Constantino at Omu Resort, Bogije, Lekki, Lagos



Constantino and Bose on the LCC Canopy walkway



Constantino at the exit of the canopy walkway