

BCT vivid vision

Picture this:

The riverbank is thriving. A buffer zone of papyrus at the water's edge protects from river-based erosion, offering habitat and sustainably harvestable material. A lush green blanket of young, diverse, indigenous trees lace their roots through the soil and keep it from eroding during heavy rains. The animals flourish with the forest and we track them using our camera trap program. Previously threatened species—pangolin, porcupine, genet—are now abundant in this restored ecosystem.

The community's relationship with the environment is shifting. They understand the consequences of deforestation and unsustainable use of soils, the risks of climate change and their vulnerabilities. Communities no longer cut firewood from the natural forest as they understand the consequences and can meet their fuel needs through sustainable fuel sources closer to home. Households have clean cooking technologies, such as biogas or an improved cookstove. Gas can be purchased at a lower cost than charcoal. Farmers grow fodder to feed their animals instead of grazing on the riverbank. The farmland has shifted back towards an agro-forestry based system/climate smart agriculture, where the young trees provide windbreak, soil nitrogen, erosion prevention, and future timber for boat construction. Soils are fertile and crops have higher yields, providing a sustainable income and food source for farmers.

These improvements can be seen in the wider community as well—a clean trading center where waste is sorted and recycled or brought to the landfill, profitable small businesses (some headed by our UgandaMade weavers), running water and public toilets, and improved family planning.

In three years, we envision Bubugo Conservation Trust as an epicenter of community collaboration and environmental restoration. This document has been created to outline that vision and how it will manifest for our organization, the community and the surrounding environment.

BCT's vision for the Nile riverbank and its surrounding villages is achieved by living our mission each and every day: to catalyse a shift from community-driven degradation to community-led restoration and protection of the Nile Riverbank and its surrounding habitat and villages. Our target by 2023 is to be a professional self-sufficient organization, formally registered as an NGO, that is scaling our proven environmental and social interventions beyond Bubugo to communities further along the Nile riverbank and on the opposing riverbank side.

We have a solid financial and operational foundation to allow us to continue our journey to reforest and conserve the Nile riverbank wildlife and empower its communities to improve their livelihoods and protect the environment. BCT has a continuously positive income statement with any profits being re-invested into community and environmental projects. Half of BCT income is from grant funding for specific projects, 25% from offset payments such as payments for carbon credits, 10% from the sale of BCT-partnered products, and 15% from accommodation and support fees from volunteers and interns. With this, BCT revenue increases at least 20% each year. Our strategy focuses on using grant funding for projects, leading to social enterprise development in the future. We aim to deliver projects which can produce long-term incomes and foster sustainable impacts.

Brand Presence

In order for our organization to be effective, we must have outstanding reviews from all we collaborate with. Not only are our partners, clients, and the media impressed by our projects, but the communities themselves say that we are respectful and empower them to be both climate resilient and financially independent.

We are an example of a successful model for promoting wide-scale sustainability in Uganda and East Africa. We encourage others to apply this model to different communities, keeping cultural relevancy in mind. Our reach extends far beyond Bubugo and Uganda, as we encourage others to replicate our successful model.

Our Approach

Our approach is to address issues of environmental degradation and community poverty through engaging and empowering local communities. We act as a catalyst of change, mobilizing external finances to support community and business development, alongside environmental restoration and conservation. We avoid regression of degrading behaviour through emphasis on the link between the environment, ecosystem services and the benefits to people. We expect our staff and community to take responsibility for their work and our projects, through a two-way flow of energy, ideas and interaction. This is also demonstrated by staff working enthusiastically as a team and community members enthusiastically contributing to projects. The community is not dependent on BCT, the government, or another organization to be sustainable and financially successful. Our goal is not to be a community's foundation, but to hand them the hammer, nails, and other tools they need to build it.

The BCT Working Oasis

We inhabit an open-air, calm, clean, inspiring space that we're proud to call our BCT headquarters. Our **primary office building** provides working space for our staff, interns and volunteers. We have a private **meeting space** for community and training groups, including our Trees and Bees, weaver and agroforestry training groups. There is also the **Honey Centre**, which handles and stores all the honey produced from our Trees and Bees project and trades it with the buyers. The **Tree Nursery** stocks a diverse range of indigenous and useful species which are distributed to the wider community through projects, internship opportunities and nature-based education in local schools. A small **guest house** with rooms for visiting researchers, a communal kitchen and a lounge space serves as a safe, restful place for visitors to relax or work on their laptops in the evening, as it is equipped with Wifi, electricity and water. Staff and guests are able to relax, reflect and reboot in the Working Oasis as they live and learn with the community.

Research

Research is a critical part of tracking impact and developing evidence-based solutions to local problems. A research team, comprised of a research manager and local research assistants, runs a research program based on our current projects, the needs of the community, and our measured impact. They are based at our head office, with time spent in the field conducting research. We have permanent monitoring points in the environment and the community to track our impact and inform

our development. Our local and national visiting researchers work with us for at least a month on specific deliverables that provide insight into new solutions for conservation, landscape management, and community empowerment. We have established relationships with local and international Universities for research placements and visiting researchers share workspace in our head office.

Research is analyzed and presented appropriately by BCT researchers as material which can be used in our marketing and fundraising efforts and project design. Our research allows us to track the success of our projects and how we should alter them in the future. It also inspires further funding from donors and support from our partners to achieve our mission of catalyzing community-led restoration of the riverbank and surrounding areas.

Leadership

BCT operates an upside-down approach to leadership, with the Director/CEO at the bottom of the pyramid, the administrative staff above, followed by the Heads of programmes, the field staff, and at the top the community and customers. This approach recognizes the critical role that the field staff play in the successful delivery of our work to the people we serve and creates space for the tasks of the front line. Every level of the pyramid supports and enables those above them. The **community and customers** are motivated by BCT to address social and environmental change. The **field staff** are highly motivated to deliver positive outcomes for the communities they work with. They are open minded, engaged, innovative, supportive, and have strong relationships with the local community. The **head of fund management** is a diligent, methodical, focused individual who maintains tight control over the organisation's incoming and outgoing finances. The **head of research and education** is able to plan and evaluate the need for data collection, consider future research interests, and has a strong research or education background. The **head of restoration and conservation** is an innovative, well-read individual, a strong thinker, adaptable, and passionate about conservation and biodiversity. The **head of community support** is a compassionate, sympathetic individual, a good listener, a dynamic communicator and a strong collaborator. The **BCT Director/CEO** is a trusted leader who remains focused on the strategic delivery of BCT's objectives. The **Board of Advisors** is made up of 4 to 10 individuals who have complimentary expertise in conservation and communication to effectively advise BCT on major decisions.

Communication

Crucial to our vision is clear, structured communication channels within the organization, flowing both from senior staff to field staff and vice versa. BCT has regular social events for staff to come together, such as coffee mornings, seminars and evening social events. BCT uses internal online systems for communications, and all documentation is stored on a central server accessible to all staff and volunteers.

Markers of success

Markers of the success of this vision come from every part of the organization, such as staff that are happy to work with us, continued collaboration with our partners, applications for volunteer positions consistently over-subscribed by at least 100%, and receiving media recognition for our work. Reflecting the extension of our work beyond Bubugo, we also re-name our organization, to

include reference to the communities we serve. We continue to increase our income year on year, by at least 20%.

Within the community, every household has a diversified source of income. Community members can speak with confidence on issues of land use, biodiversity and soil conservation. We are on track that by 2025, 100% of households in our community will be using energy efficient cooking technologies. At least two social enterprises have spun out of BCT's work and are self-established independent entities that support social development of community members and have a positive impact on the environment, with a portion of their sales donated to BCT. The riverbanks where our Trees and Bees projects are being implemented are within the vegetation cover trajectory expected for that age of recovery. There is 50% tree cover within the farming landscape, as land managers work within an agro-forestry style farming system.

People, Culture, Values, and Spirit

People are the heart of our organization's success and the first level of advocating for BCT. BCT employees are hardworking, mindful, honest and dedicated to delivering BCT's mission. They are motivated members of the community and are trusted by their peers and BCT alike. They listen, engage, and reflect on their day-to-day experiences to make every day a learning experience and an opportunity to improve. Our volunteers and interns are all passionate about delivering real change and bring a positive energy with them to work. They respect cultural differences and behave in a respectful manner to our communities and staff. BCT staff are adaptable and be creative in identifying solutions. They are emerging leaders in their field and bring that dedication to their work at BCT.

BCT fosters and supports the development of our staff, supporting continued professional development. BCT senior staff have an open-door policy, and meet regularly with staff to discuss workloads, ideas, and needs, ensuring staff are supported, listened to, and growing. Once a week all BCT staff attend a Moment of Reflection, where the staff come together and share experiences from the week.

At BCT, we take pride in being considerate, ethical, empowering, collaborative and dedicated. We are considerate in the way we work with others, listening carefully to those we serve and evaluating our impact to improve. We are ethical in our operations, our use of materials and the projects that we work on. We empower our communities to become self-sufficient and sustainable. We are collaborative in all that we do, involving our partners and communities at all levels. BCT has a culture and atmosphere of openness, mindfulness, ease and resilience. We are dedicated to delivering positive social and environmental change.