

The Panda

Our Conservation Conversation



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 kampala@wwfuganda.org

KICHIDA Represents Uganda During a Great Ape Conservation Discussion



Julius Kaganda (second from left) during the conference.

On October 22, 2018, the Chairperson of Kinyampanika Chimpanzee Conservation and Development Association, (KICHIDA) Julius Kaganda got an opportunity to share a world stage with some of the renowned practitioners in wild life conservation.

He was invited to present about his community's efforts to protect

the chimpanzees in the Rwenzoris during a conference under the theme "Saving the great apes: A challenge for humanity."

The conference was held in Paris with an aim of sharing lessons and strategies to promote the threatened welfare of the great apes.

The participants included scientists, conservation prac-

tioners and researchers and notable among these was Sabrina Krief, one of the world's most famous primatologists that have concentrated her research on the chimpanzees in Uganda and particularly in Kibale National Park. Asked about the experience Julius commented "This opportunity came at the right time and the prospects from it

are great.

The opportunity for my community to have our work publicized in a global conference cannot be underestimated. I believe that this exposure will increase interest and support to our project aimed at conserving chimpanzees."

KICHIDA is a community of people in the Rwenzori region who belong to the Batangyi clan whose totem is a chimpanzee culturally mandated to protect this animal species.

This being a unique and sustainable opportunity of achieving conservation goals through a community/cultural approach, was soon identified and supported by WWF to strengthen these efforts.

WWF Uganda Country Office and WWF France are supporting KICHIDA to enhance conservation and improve livelihoods of the local communities among the initiatives being supported is opening a chimpanzee tourism trail to be run by the community members who when they earn from tourism will be better placed to protect the resource.

Partnering with Local Communities to Protect Endangered Mountain Gorilla Habitat in Uganda

As human the population increases, so does the potential for conflict over living space and food with wildlife.

When Communities that live adjacent to protected areas understand and appreciate the value of the natural resources around them, then conservation of these habitats is more likely to be achieved.

This is the case for communities in Rubuguri and Nteko parishes in Kisoro District that border the southern sector of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, a home to the critically endangered mountain gorillas.

Before intervention

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park like many other protected areas in Uganda is faced with poaching, illegal logging and encroachment. “Each week, my group, would successfully hunt not less than 50 animals from the park” Damaino Rwarinda a member of the Nteko Reformed Poachers Association narrates how was involved in poaching before he was reformed.

Besides poaching, the indigenous private forest owners were cutting down forests at a high rate, converting their land to farming especially tea growing. The challenge with this is twofold; escalating loss of natural forest cover and reducing habitats for the gorillas.

In 2014, WWF working with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and Nkuringo Community Conservation and Development Foundation (NCCDF), an umbrella community based organization, mobilized groups of poachers and indigenous private forest owners to engage in community conservation and development activities.

These efforts included strengthening the institutions’ organization capacity as well as technical capacities to develop fundable proposals that would address effective natural resource management and providing sustainable alternative livelihood options.

Awareness creation and sensitization

To influence attitude change on conservation, poachers, illegal loggers and private forest owners were sensitized and trained on how to sustainably manage the forest resources.

“I was planning to cut down my forest and plant millet but after the training, I learnt that if I enrich my forest, I will get even more benefits in future” said Aurelia Mihanda, the chairperson of the Nkuringo Indigenous Private Forest Owners Association.

The Association comprises of 122 households, 13 of which are female headed.

“There are many competing land use options and talking about conservation without providing alternative income sources cannot maintain the forest especially for a community that has for generations looked at the



One of the Gorillas feeding the youngone. Photo/Susan Tumuhairwe/WWF

forest as their main source of livelihood”.

WWF in consultation with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders has worked to enhance capacity in management of sustainable alternative forest based enterprises.

Alternative options introduced for income generation.

Apiculture training and 300 beehives have been provided to the two community groups and they have already started harvesting honey for sale.

Bee keeping is a viable forest based enterprise because it addresses livelihood and environmental issues.

It also reduces human wildlife conflicts by strategically placing the hives in locations that would otherwise be paths for animals such as elephants and gorillas to access community land.

Through cost sharing with the beneficiary communities, WWF has provided 58 rain water harvesting tanks with a 10,000 litre capacity each in Rubuguri and Nteko parishes.

“Water has been a big challenge. Women and children could spend up to 6 hours collecting water from far off sources in a difficult terrain but now that we have more free time to get involved in other economic activities.” said Aurelia.

For those homesteads with water harvesting tanks, women and children are no longer at risk of meeting wild animals at water points that are shared by both humans and animals. This will also reduce incidences of disease transmission.

Nteko Reformed Poachers Association which is composed of 55 men and 10 women has so far received 100 goats. These were proportionately distributed among the members and have since multiplied to over 280.

Goat manure is also being utilized to

nourish their kitchen vegetable gardens that have boosted their nutrition and especially that of their children.

They have also been trained on Sustainable Land Management which will increase their yield and consequently their incomes.

Challenges

Due to the cold weather, bees cannot colonize modern beehives such as Kenya Top Bar so the beekeepers are forced to stick with traditional hives which are not as efficient.

The indigenous private forest owners get pressure from other communities members to cut their forests citing that they attract problem animals which destroy their crops. They also hope that they can directly benefit from tourism especially since tourists often times view the gorillas from their private forests.

Tea growing and other forms of farming are still attractive economic ventures to forest owners so the threat to lose more forests still lingers.

The need for safe water is still great as most of the families are still faced with this challenge which is being worsened by the change in climatic conditions.

Looking Forward

There is need to adopt sustainable tea practices and engage duty bearers on finding lasting solutions to water shortage and high levels of poverty in the area. Although many indigenous private forest owners are still committed to maintaining them, enriching the degraded ones and expanding enterprises that they can gain from the forests is vital. UWA should also begin thinking of ideas on how forest owners whose forests are visited by gorillas can be rewarded especially when tracking is done on such lands.

Meet the Reformed Poacher Who is Conserving Mountain Gorillas in Uganda



Damiano (on the right) supervising one of the water tanks that WWF gave to reformed poachers .
Photo/Susan Tumuhairwe/WWF

Sitting in a lush green garden with a beautiful view of the national park Bwindi, Damiano Rwarinda in a relaxed but confident manner narrates his transformation journey; one that spans a few decades and depicts a complete change from poacher to conservationist.

The 57 year old is now a conservation advocate in his community.

“As early as 5 years old, I started going along with my father and grandfather to hunt and collect timber from the forest. Already by the time I was 14 years

old, I was a very experienced hunter. We often camped in the forest for 3 -5 days until we got enough game which sometimes totaled to 50 animals a week. We mainly hunted wild pigs and duikers”

Asked if gorillas were also killed, he responds that although they were never targeted during the hunting, they often fell in the hunter’s traps or the hunters killed them in self-defense when they charged at them or attacked their hunting dogs.

Damiano is a member of the Nteko Reformed Poachers Association, a community group that lives adjacent to the Bwindi

Impenetrable National Park. This association was formed after Uganda Wildlife Authority launched an awareness campaign on environmental conservation and its benefits.

In 2014, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) came in to provide livelihood options to this group.

“In such communities, awareness of the value of conservation is important, but it is not enough to ensure protection of forest habitats because they still have needs to cater for.

Talking conservation without providing alternative income sources cannot maintain the for-

est especially for a community that has for generations looked at the forest as their main source of livelihood” said George Kaija, the WWF Forest Governance Officer.

WWF supported the group in creating sustainable forest based enterprises, provided goats and improved banana species. Rain water harvesting tanks solved two problems; the lengthy walks to fetch water – sometimes up to 5 hours – and it has also reduced contact with wild animals because these water sources are often shared with wildlife.

On reflecting on his past and his current experience, Damiano comments that poaching is a very selfish act which only benefits the people who practice it whereas a conserved resource benefits the whole community.

This is the message that he emphasizes to those that are not yet converted. The number of reformed poachers is now at 86 in 2017 from the 27 in the beginning.

“I am now a farmer growing bananas, vegetables and trees. I also have a craft shop and most of my customers are tourists which makes a clear connection for me and my conservation efforts. If gorillas were not there, I would not have people coming to my shop. My hope is that all poachers learn from my story” he says.



FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR
L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK
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