

LEADING THE CHANGE

December 2023



Communities have been empowered to be instruments of their own destiny.

Our Stories of Change

Securing the
future for
mountain
gorillas



Government Offices of Sweden



**International Gorilla
Conservation Programme**

**Securing the future for
mountain gorillas**

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Key Successes

- ▶ *Increased understanding and support towards mountain gorilla conservation*
- ▶ *Increased household incomes*
- ▶ *Improved livelihoods and standards of living*
- ▶ *Improved governance and leadership of the CBOs*
- ▶ *Increased participation of women in development actions*
- ▶ *Increased community participation in planning and natural resource management*
- ▶ *Reduced Human Wildlife conflict and Improved Park – Community relations*

Buhoma Nutrition Project members together with Alice from IGCP and Moses, BMCDA



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In 2017 IGCP through WWF Sweden signed a partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to implement the Leading the Change Program around the Virunga – Bwindi landscape. About USD 304,924 was received and invested in the program during the five years implementation period.

About twenty-four CBOs were involved in this program; eleven around Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Area in Uganda, eight around Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda and five around Virunga National Park in DRC respectively.

Among others, the program addressed challenges that directly affect the park edge communities e.g., human wildlife conflict, poverty, illiteracy, poor governance, malnutrition and hunger, poor park-community relations, lack and or limited access to safe and clean water, and unemployment.

Several interventions including capacity building, financial support – sub-granting - to implement planned development actions and sensitization about conservation were undertaken.

A couple of approaches including Community Based Planning and Monitoring (CBPM) and Human Rights Based (HRB) approach were deployed to implement this program. Through CBPM communities learned to identify their development needs and jointly devise means to address them. Communities



CBOS and CSOs were trained in various things including Community Based Planning and Monitoring, Human Rights Based Approach, mountain gorilla conservation, proposal writing

were empowered to develop program proposals that they use(d) to fundraise for resources to address the identified community/development needs. Several proposals have since been developed and funded by both IGCP and other development partners.

“We are grateful to IGCP for the knowledge and skills in proposal writing. We have been able to develop around 36 proposals out of which ten have been funded. It is exciting to see ourselves facilitating and ushering in the change that we had long desired to see in our community” says Eliezar Twizerimana, Chairman KOUHSHI Cooperative.

A lot of positive transformation has been witnessed ranging from attitude change, increased appreciation and support towards mountain gorilla conservation, improved governance of CBOs, increased financial literacy and management, improved

household incomes and standards of living as well as increased community interest and participation in mountain gorilla conservation.

The goal of the “Leading the change” program is to empower park-edge CBOs in the greater Virunga – Bwindi landscape with both financial and technical support to exercise their rights in decision making and influence policy in natural resource management.

Overall, the program achieved it's intended objectives and this is attributed to the buy-in of the program by the key stakeholders (Local governments and Communities), the willingness from the beneficiaries to achieve results and the availability of funds/grants for the community projects that have contributed to livelihood improvement” Wellard Makambo - IGCP Director.

THE CHANGE

Overview about LTC in Uganda



Henry Mutabaazi - IGCP
Uganda country Coordinator

Between 2018-2022 IGCP sub granted 11 CBOs/CSOs around BMCA (Nkuringo Conservation and Development Foundation, Buhoma Mukono Community Development Association, Bwindi Community Nutrition Demonstration Nursery, Rubuguri Nteko Women Handicraft Cooperative Society, Buremba Women Handicraft Group, Gisozi Problem Animal Control (GPACA) Association, Mgahinga Community Conservation and Development Association, Gitenderi Protect Environment Group, Nkuringo Beekeepers Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Nkuringo Women Artisans Group and Nkuringo Conservation and Development Foundation) to implement various projects including onion growing, loans and savings scheme, vegetable growing, cattle rearing and construction of rainwater harvesting tanks among others.

Over 20,000 community members were reached and impacted by these interventions. Several results have been registered among the beneficiary community. Women especially have been encouraged and brought forward to lead and participate in these CBOs. Involving women has reduced domestic violence and impacted on resource management at home and in the respective CBOs).

Other results include improved livelihoods and increased conservation awareness, because for every program that we supported, mountain gorilla conservation was the key word. All benefits stem from conservation and all the results are attached to it. A couple of hiccups however were encountered including sabotage of interventions by some communities, misallocation of funds, non-adherence to good governance standards....and non-compliance timelines and other grant management issues among others. Fortunately, IGCP resolved them.





FIGHTING MALNUTRITION

THROUGH VEGETABLE GROWING

“We have seen a tremendous decline in malnutrition among children under 2 years of age, especially in villages where this program operates”. “We are also grateful to the group for their generosity in donating vegetables to pregnant women who come for antenatal care at the hospital” Mr. Nelson Kagurusi, In-charge of nutrition at Bwindi Community Hospital.

For a long time, the community in Kanyashande village in Buhoma Town Council around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park struggled with child malnutrition, poor health, poor feeding, and other related diseases until 2015 when Bwindi Community Nutrition and Nursery Demonstration started. Later in 2022 the group received funds from IGCP under the Leading the Change program to boost their efforts.



Vegetable growing continues to impact the lives of the group members in multiple ways

The purpose of this was to improve household nutrition, incomes, and standards of living. Irrespective of the disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic the program is evidently impacting its members and the surrounding community.

According to the group Chairman, Warren Babyebuza, all the 40 members of the group have benefited in multiple ways while over 400 other people from the community have also received vegetable seedlings, sheep, and capacity building on how to start and maintain kitchen gardens. “Through this program, we have witnessed a complete shift in mindset when it comes to nutrition. In the past, park-edge communities demeaned vegetables and thought of them as food for livestock and the poor, but today almost every homestead in Buhoma has a kitchen garden with vegetables. All our beneficiaries testify to improved incomes and nutrition, especially among the children.” Warren says.

Women Empowerment



Women have been involved and empowered to determine their own destiny

“I am rest assured of food and some money all year round from my kitchen garden, my children are healthy and happy. Our neighborhood is clean. We now have pit latrines too. Thanks to the training we got in hygiene in our homes. I am certain if we maintain this kind of hygiene the gorillas’ health and safety will be guaranteed too” says Musiimenta Elizabeth a group member.

According to the women, the program has empowered them financially enabling them to finally have a say in their households’ socioeconomic development and earn respect from some of their formally disrespectful spouses. Unity has been strengthened and conservation awareness created among the group and the community.

The group grows various vegetables and fruits e.g. celery, cucumbers, broccoli, spinach, carrots, green beans, onions, parsley, peppers, cabbages, lettuce, tomatoes, watermelon and passion fruits. The vegetables are sold to the surrounding lodges and markets, while some are freely distributed to

the community especially pregnant mothers, children, and needy homes. Although the group is challenged by limited market, lack of transport facilities and low prices for their bumper harvests, they have managed to make some good sales. And from this, members have been able to do so much e.g. pay school fees for their children, access better medical care, start-up other businesses like poultry, piggery, goat keeping, shops, tailoring etc, buy land and build houses.

Expansion and Growth

The group was able to acquire one more acre of land totaling to 3 acres for farming and to start up a savings and loan scheme to help the members meet their bigger financial needs and to most importantly finance the program in times of crisis. Sharing about the group’s future, Warren says “we want to start up a quality nutrition school where shall train members about food and nutrition, gardening, conservation, and healthy living”.



Women empowerment has fostered financial independence, reduced domestic violence and improved livelihoods

ONE COW, MULTIPLE BENEFITS



A happy Daniel Birungi with his cow

Who knew that one cow per household would change the lives of the locals in Buhoma Town Council. Buhoma Mukono Community Development Association (BMCDA) with financial support from IGCP started the “Give a Cow initiative” in 2019 with the overall purpose of boosting household nutrition and income.

Moses Musiimenta, BMCDA’s Secretariat Administrator says as a pilot, six heifer cows were given to individuals in six villages around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Fortunately, all the cows produced an additional six calves, which were then distributed to other community members. “Give a cow” is a revolving initiative where the first-born female calves are passed on to other group/community members until the last person in the select circle gets a cow too.

The cows serve as an alternative source of livelihood providing the beneficiaries with milk for food and income and dung for manure. Apparently, most of the first beneficiaries now have about 3 cows

from the very first ones they received, sparking an increase in their livestock, allowing for more milk, dung, and income.

Other members have even sold a cow or two to meet their domestic needs or even start up other income generating projects. Musimenta notes that the beneficiaries are enjoying increased income from selling milk in the community which enables them to support their families financially. He adds that several homes with cows now have healthy kids. “The availability of milk has contributed to a reduction in cases of malnutrition in this community” Musimenta says.

“I was thrilled the day I received this beautiful cow. My life has never remained the same” says Birungi. The Give a Cow initiative has completely changed Daniel’s life. Birungi explains that he used to toil growing coffee and bananas in the past unfortunately his family still didn’t have enough food nor income. He attributes this to lack of manure and professional guidance on how to maximize his land productivity.

But since he got a cow and the necessary training, Birungi is now able to kill many birds with one stone.

Birungi explains that he milks about 14 liters of milk daily out of which his family consumes 4 liters and he sells the rest at 2000 Uganda shillings per liter earning him 20,000 Uganda shillings per day (USD 5.50), translating to USD 165 per month from milk alone. This income from milk coupled with the income from sale of bananas and coffee beans from his fertilized farm, has greatly improved Birungi's socioeconomic status in his village.

Birungi further reveals that his children had never taken milk which explains why they were always sickly, but this has since changed. "We have enough milk to drink; the children look healthy and hardly fall sick anymore. And because I have more money from the milk that I sell, my children are studying well without any health or school fees disruptions" Birungi explains.

The dung on the other hand is making good manure on his farm, Birungi says his coffee and bananas look healthy and their harvests have tripled, and so

has the income and food security at home. "In the past I would harvest about 150 Kgs of coffee and 15 bunches of bananas but today I harvest more than 500 Kgs coffees and 25 bananas" Birungi notes. And because the matooke is healthy and bigger Birungi says he makes good sales from them which he had never done before, for instance he sells a bunch of matooke at UGX 15000 (USD 5).

"I have seen transformation in my life and the lives of my colleagues with cows. We owe it to IGCP and the mountain gorillas. I know that these benefits only come to us because we neighbor the park and as thus, we need to protect them from harm" says Birungi.

According to Musimenta the benefits from these cows are overwhelming and almost the same across the board. It is the hope of BMCDA that with more support a bigger number will be supported, and consequent livelihood improvement will be achieved in the community as well as reduced dependence on the park for survival by the community.



**Buhoma village bordering Bwindi
Impenetrable National Park**

VILLAGE SAVING AND LOAN SCHEME

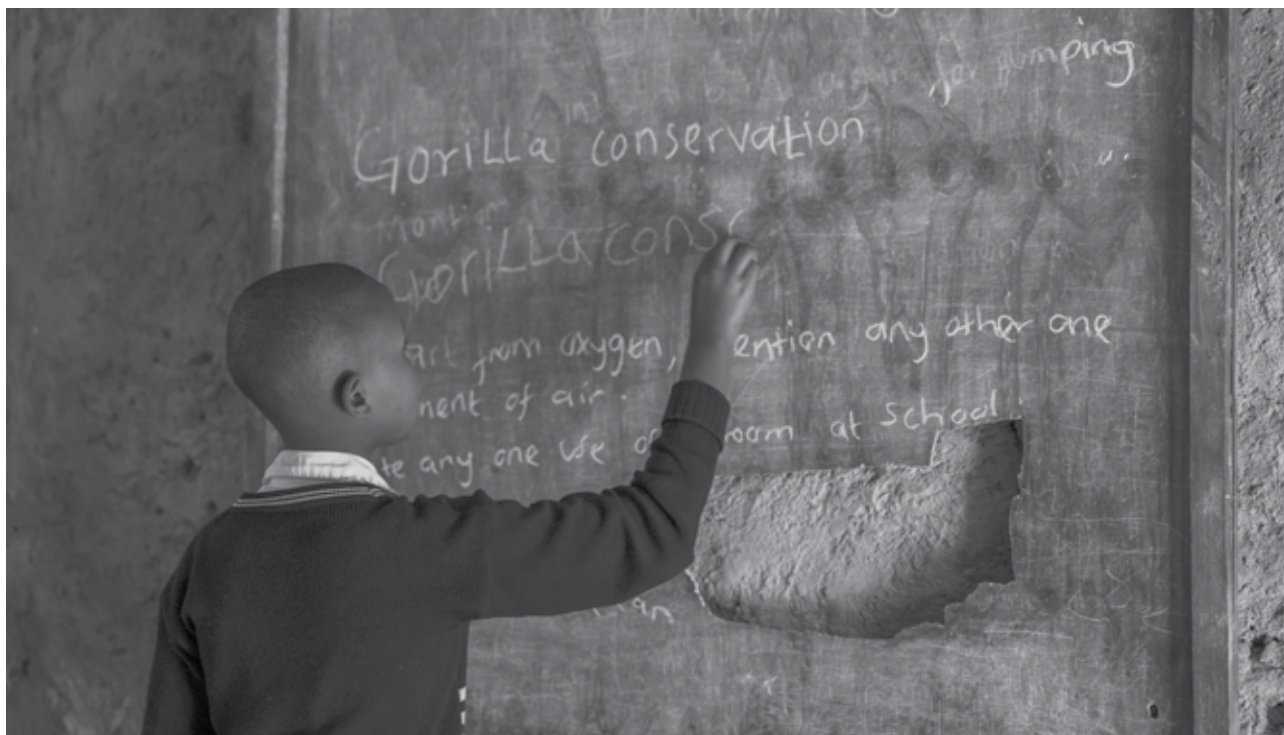
FACILITATES COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

“The money you make is a symbol of the value you create” Idowu Kovenikan.

True to this saying, Gitenderi Protect Environment Group (GPEG) is creating value in the village of Kabande at the foot of Mount Muhabura in Kisoro District. With the loans gotten from the Village Saving Scheme, the members are doing so much at both individual and community level, dreams are becoming a reality for most of the members.

Promotion of Education

In 2010, Duhimbaze Gad, a member of the Accumulated Savings and Credit Association (ASCA) and Village Local Council Chairperson for Kabande Village borrowed UGX 2,000,000 (USD 550) from the SACCO which he added onto his savings and bought off a nursery school that was at the verge of closing. Although he isn't highly learned Gad is passionate about education. Gad says it had always been his dream to start a school and help the children in his village .and, this was an opportunity he couldn't miss; not even inadequate funds could stop him!



Studying about mountain gorilla conservation empowers them to be great stewards of the apes and their habitat in future.

Gad explains that when he learned that the school was about to close, he felt pained for the children and for the future of the village. “I knew I had to do something. Thank God for the ASCA, it quickly bailed me out with money that I added onto my savings and acquired the school. Without the savings group, I would never have owned True Light Primary School.”

After acquiring the school, Gad renovated it and put up more structures. The school's enrollment is 236 pupils. The learners pay between UGX 65,000 (USD 18) UGX 90,000 (USD 25). Among other subjects the learners learn about the conservation of mountain gorillas and the surrounding environment, which Gad says is empowering them to be great custodians of the endangered species allowing for generational conservation.

According to the school's headteacher, Ms. Mbabazi Peace the school's school fees policy has enabled most children to stay in school. "We understand that most parents hardly have money, so we allow them to pay in installments while the children learn instead of staying home. Our goal is to end illiteracy in this says Mbabazi Peace.

Gad believes that one day he will put up permanent structures for the learners and advance the school. "

In a related development one Christopher Nambaje shares how the ASCA enabled him to pay tuition for his university going children at a time he had lost all hope of getting money. "If it wasn't for this SACCO perhaps my children wouldn't even be at University today" Christopher says.

Stuck with two university going children, one going to Makerere and the other to Kabale Universities, Christopher ran to the SACCO for a loan of UGX 1,000,000 and sent his children to school. He paid the loan off and continues to borrow more whenever he is stuck to meet their school expenses.

In 2017 GPEG conservation group received UGX 10,000,000 and another UGX 15,000,000 to boost their ASCA's portfolio, from 2,600,000 UGX to UGX 27,600,000 With the hope that members can easily borrow more money at very low-interest rates to invest in their different income generating projects/businesses. Economic empowerment of the communities improves livelihoods and reduces dependence on the park for survival by the park community.

Construction of Organization Offices

Since 2018, the group has received over UGX 33,000,000 from IGCP. From the profits made the ASCA members agreed to buy a plot of land and start construction of their office space. The 6-room building will have a hall for meetings, offices, and shops for hire. "We used our profits accrued over the years (UGX 7,000,000 (USD 1,890) to start the program and we hope to complete it next year 2024.

"Thanks to IGCP for boosting our financial base, most of our members are now financially independent and happy including women" remarked David Sebutozi – Chairperson of GPEG. Once the building is completed, the group will shift from the rented one roomed office to their own space.



Having a permanent home for the organization will enable stability and enhance visibility of the CBO.

Financial Independence

“Because the interest rate is very low 2.5% compared to other financial institutions which charge 10-15%. We have managed to easily access money and start up personal income generating projects” says Vanessa Nyirabaributsa. Vanessa borrowed UGX 200,000 (USD 55) and bought clothes that she hawked around the village. To her surprise she made a profit of UGX 300,000 (USD 83). She used the money to top up on her other savings and buy a cow at UGX 900,000 (USD 250). “I am happy, I finally got to start my cattle rearing program” an excited Vanessa remarks. Vanessa’s clothes business plus her cow are doing her well. She says that without the support from IGCP, she would never have made progress. “Previously, I

used to till people’s gardens and get little money but now I am self-employed, and I can take care of my kids” says Vanessa.

According to the ASCA Chairperson David, with the increased portfolio people can borrow substantial money which they are using to do so much. “I have witnessed a transformation among my members and in this village, people are able to pay fees with ease – hence reducing the number of idlers, meet medical bills, enlarge their farmlands, buy and construct houses as well as starting-up businesses among others. These benefits have increased appreciation for conservation and support towards mountain gorilla conservation” David says.

A woman wearing a colorful patterned shawl and a black headwrap is feeding a black and white cow with green grass. She is standing in front of a wall made of mud bricks with horizontal wooden poles. The cow is standing behind a wooden post.

Through her hard work and the loan scheme Nyirabaributsa Vans was able to buy a cow



ONIONS CONTROL PROBLEM ANIMALS AND FETCH BUMPER HARVEST FOR THE COMMUNITY!



Challenged by crop raids from problem animals especially buffalos, low crop yields and poverty, Gisozi Problem Animal Control Association (GPACA), felt defeated and stuck on what to farm next, let alone what to do to earn some money and improve their livelihoods. GPACA is a community-based organization in the park edge village of Gisozi parish, Muramba sub-county in Kisoro district operating at the foot of Mgahinga Gorilla National Park.

Answered Prayers

In 2018, the group was assessed and selected to participate in the SIDA-funded program, Leading the Change. IGCP supported the group with UGX 15 million (USD 4,054) to fund their household income enhancement and human wildlife management program through onion growing. Having tried several crops with little or no returns at all, the group agreed to venture into onion growing. Onions are crops that are non-palatable to most wild animals and have the potential to fetch high profits while contributing to the reduction in Human Wildlife Conflict around the park.

“It was time to try something new since all the other crops we had grown had ended up being eaten by buffalos. We were tired of the losses. So we agreed to grow onions since we were told they are non-palatable to wild animals and profitable as well” says Nyirarugwiro Hope, Vice Chairperson Gisozi Problem Animal Control Association.

The group invested about UGX 18,750,000 (USD 5150) of the money received. They planted 4 acres of onions hoping for better yields, unfortunately, the season was so bad - characterized by very hot sunshine. This coupled with inadequate knowledge and experience in onion growing the group lost everything.

Determined, the group prepared the farmland again for the next season and used the remaining money of the UGX 15 million to plant onions again. They planted 4 acres and devoted so much energy and time into the program. Lo and behold, a bumper harvest is what they have recorded this year! The group harvested 12 sacks of onions (100 Kg each) in June 2023, and sold each at UGX 240,000 (USD 66).

"We are excited at the harvest! I am so glad that we never gave up, our efforts have yielded. I am hopeful that we shall recover most of the money that we invested in. Thanks to IGCP for not giving up on us too!" exclaims Rwanyonga Raphael, a group member. The group leadership is optimistic that the sales/profits will benefit the members and help them meet their individual, household, and group needs.

Commenting on the group's bumper harvest, Henry Mutabaazi, IGCP's Uganda Country Coordinator explains that "Some of these other crops were previously experimented but they didn't work, it is good that the onions turned out to be effective, and the best part is that they have a high market value. This program was proposed by them, we accepted and supported them".

According to the members, incidences of crop raiding by wild animals from the park have reduced since they started growing onions. People have been able to harvest enough from their farms and they are no longer troubled by wild animals from the park anymore! Onions are twice profitable compared to other crops like Irish potatoes, they naturally fertilize the soil with their nitrogen components while deterring problem animals.



ACCESS TO SAFE AND CLEAN WATER CHANGES LIVES AROUND BWINDI

“We have seen great impact in the villages where IGCP in collaboration with local communities constructed water tanks. Household sanitation and hygiene has greatly improved as well as the health of individuals. There is a decline in the number of water borne related diseases”, notes Henry Mutabaazi, IGCP Uganda Country Coordinator.



Access to safe and clean water by the community minimizes the human frequency and presence in the park for water – hence protecting mountain gorillas.

IGCP through Buhoma Mukono Community Development Association (BMCD) constructed 5 rainwater harvesting tanks (30,000 liters each) in 5 park edge villages around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Buhoma Town Council, Kanungu district. In 2018 BMCD received UGX 66,500,000 (USD 17,900) to enable this action that has evidently solved a lot of challenges in the community. In Karuhura village for example, the 30,000 Litres water tank that serves over 20 households was a dream come true for the people especially the elderly who can no longer trek long distances for water.

According to 60-year-old Ezra Bwengye they used to trek about 2 kilometers to and from the valley to fetch water from the river. Apart from not being clean, the water was never enough, which meant that most things would go unwashed, or that people would bathe once a day or even not at all. Those that could afford would buy water at a 2000UGX (USD 0.5) a 20 liters jerrican. It's no wonder that when

IGCP offered to construct a tank, Mzee Ezra was quick to freely offer his land.

“I offered my land because I wanted to make a difference in people's lives and to also prepare for my latter days when I will be frail and unable to fetch my own water from afar” Ezra says.

Ezra shares that he saw how women and children suffered carrying water and struggled with disease after disease due to poor hygiene. Even though he wanted to help, he didn't know how until this program came up.

“Since we got this water tank, my life is peaceful and happy, water is at my doorsteps – I couldn't ask for more! I am grateful to IGCP, BMCD and to Ezra for their kindness! Says 80-year-old Jane Kanyamwabo.

According to Mr. Mutabazi Gideon, the Local Council 1 Chairman, the construction of the rainwater harvesting tank fostered unity among the community and has gradually reduced reports



Unity among the community members allowed for the successful construction of the water tank.

of human presence in the park frequenting for water. “I saw everyone come together for a common objective. Women and men together happily carried materials and water to construct the tank. It was a good thing” Mutabazi says.

Commenting on the program, Musiimenta Dorah says the availability of water in the community has been very helpful to women especially the pregnant mothers and those with toddlers. Dorah says finally her children can bathe twice a day, put on clean clothes and wash utensils daily without holding back as opposed to the past, when they had to prioritize water for only drinking and half baths occasionally. On the other hand, Royida Musinguzi notes that most children now can finally go to school early and clean without any disruptions. “My only prayer is that IGCP considers giving us a second tank in the near future” Royida appeals.

Moses Musiimenta, BMCD's Secretariat Administrator reveals that similar impact has been witnessed in the other five villages of Iraaro Rubona, Kyumbugushu, Nkwenda and Sarugyera-Buhoma. Moses explains that **the communities clearly appreciate and understand the link between conservation and the water tanks, the reduced human presence in the park is testament to this.**

John a beneficiary showing where they previously fetched water from deep down in the valley





Weaving and selling baskets has booted both individual and the group's income.

THE CHANGE

Overview about LTC in Rwanda



Benjamin Mugabukomeye
IGCP Rwanda Country Coordinator

Geared at securing the future for mountain gorillas, IGCP continues to work very closely with park edge communities around Volcanoes National Park, the park authorities, local government, and conservation partners in Rwanda. Through the various conservation interventions, a lot has been achieved including community empowerment, policy reviews, improved livelihoods, increased household incomes, improved park community relations and reduced human wildlife incidences among others.

In Rwanda, IGCP works with eight (8) cooperatives (COOPAV -Mararo , KAIKI , KOSUGIKA , KOHIKI, KOSUBU, KOUSHI ,UNICOPAV, Imbereheza Copavu Maroro Cooperative, Kouki Cooperative, and COSUGIKA) and one Local NGO Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) called SACCOLA. Although the cooperatives engage in various activities like handcrafts, apiary, wood curving, basketry, green agriculture, erosion control, Beekeeping, water adduction the groups are primarily farmers. Under the LTC Program IGCP supported the groups' farming initiatives including agroforestry, cattle keeping and vegetable growing. A lot of success stories were registered for example the 40 cows that IGCP gave out in 2018 have multiplied to 89 cows.

It is evident that the LTC supported initiatives have created impact among the target community.

Standards of living have improved, incomes have been boosted, appreciation and support towards conservation has increased, unity and good governance of the cooperatives have been registered. Key lessons learned; conservation approaches that are business-oriented are more meaningful and well embraced by the communities- because they aid in fixing their financial problems. Two, communities are aware of their development needs, and they are better placed to address them, they have the potential to also be instruments of their own development - all they need is guidance and some financial support. We are not worried about the sustainability of the initiatives we have started because the approach IGCP used empowered the beneficiaries to run the projects independently and this they are doing so well. They are now skilled and hungry for development.



*Members of
Kohiki together
with Alice from
IGCP*

GIVE A COW PROGRAM IMPROVES LIVELIHOOD

From 40 cows in 2018 to 89 cows now! The program is growing and impacting more people. Explaining how the program works Benjamin Mugabukomeye, IGCP Rwanda Country Coordinator says that the program is a revolving one - the first 40 beneficiaries were carefully selected through their cooperatives and entrusted with cows on condition that once it delivers a female, the calf is passed onto the next cooperative member or to a poor household (carefully selected) in the village till the last one gets.

Today 89 members from the cooperatives and poor households selected by the Community have so far received cows. “We continue to give a cow” Benjamin says.

The cows serve as an alternative livelihood option aimed at boosting household incomes while gradually reducing over dependence on the park for survival by the communities. Speaking to some of the beneficiaries, it is evident that the program is

living up to its objectives- the community testifies of improved livelihoods. The beneficiaries are happier and grateful to IGCP and to mountain gorilla conservation – One can say they have started to see that the benefits of mountain gorilla conservation outweigh the negatives.

Félicité Nyirabimana

Félicité a member of KOHIKI cooperative and previously a small-scale farmer of passion fruits got her cow in 2018 after several bad harvests. The cow was a relief and great option. She embraced it and through the years, Félicité reveals that it has changed her life. “I was tired of growing passion fruits without any returns, the cow surely came in handy! And truly my life has not remained the same” Félicité says.

According to Félicité the cow has so far given birth twice, she not only has 3 cows now, but she also has



The IGCP donated Cows continue to provide multiple benefits- milk, dung and income.

a reliable supply of milk – 5 liters a day! Félicité gives some to her children and also sells to her neighbors too, while the rest of the milk she uses to make various products like igivuguto (sour yogurt).

“I use the sales from the milk, yoghurt and ghee to meet my basic needs like school fees, medical bills and food” says Félicité. Félicité adds that the milk has helped her fight malnutrition among her children. “Just like other families around I struggled with malnutrition for long but since they started taking milk, my children and grandchildren all look healthy and much better compared to the other kids that do not take milk. I’m very grateful for this program” says Félicité

John Nzahorantuma

56-year-old John Nzahorantuma is a member of COOPV Cooperative. John shares that since he got the cow, he has been able to save money that he previously spent on buying manure for his farm. “I used to spend about Rwf 60,000 (USD 50) to buy manure for my farm but with the cow here now I have adequate and free manure for my farm. The manure has improved my potatoes farms. They are so healthy and flourishing, i expect great yields and sales in when they are ready, he said.

An excited Nzahorantuma reveals that his cow is two months pregnant, and, in a few months, it will put to bed, and he will start milking it too.

Nzahorantuma is grateful to IGCP for the cow and the various trainings that empowered him to be a better farmer.

“I thank IGCP for the various trainings - our minds have been opened, our knowledge and skills have increased, and we are definitely in charge of our own transformation” Nzahorantuma says.

Fredrick

Sixty-three-year-old Fredrick is a lucky beneficiary who got a cow even before he joined any cooperative. “I was given a cow because I was very a poor man then. They wanted to help me out of poverty, I guess. This cow has been everything good to me and I am happy. Thanks to IGCP for being accommodative enough to bless even non cooperative members” Fredrick says. In order to impact more people, the program also supports the very least advantaged people in the community and gives them an enterprise or two to enable them eradicate poverty and improve their livelihoods explains Benjamin Mugabukomeye.



IMBEREHEZA COOPERATIVE HARVESTS BIG FROM GREENHOUSE AGRICULTURE

Imbereheza cooperative in Burera park-edge district of Rwanda recently registered a bumper harvest of tomatoes grown in a greenhouse. The program worth USD 1400 was funded by IGCP through its SIDA-Leading the Change program with an aim of mitigating climate change through controlling climate change effects like heavy rains and sunshine that usually affect crops. Imbereheza cooperative harvested over 1050kgs worth RWF 1,575000 (USD 1500).

According to Imbereheza Cooperative members, greenhouse farming was cost effective, in a sense that it helped them utilize small space and did not require any fertilizers. “All we did was irrigate the tomatoes and remove weeds,” says Athanase Mukabizimungu, the Chairperson. “We had tried and failed at tomato farming three times because we lacked a greenhouse,” she adds. Talking about the profits made, Mukabizimungu says they invested about RWF 300000 (USD 300) in buying seedling



and have realized over RWF 1,575000 (USD 1500) from the sales. “The profits are unbelievable, we are excited and invested some of the money in an extra greenhouse to add to the ones IGCP donated to us, we also bought seedling for the new season,” she adds. Meanwhile, non-cooperative members also got tomatoes to eat from the cooperative members.

Commenting on the program, Benjamin Mugabukomeye, IGCP Country Coordinator for Rwanda says, “the program has a unique aspect of environmental conservation – it addresses climate change effects, Human Wildlife Conflict while boosting community livelihoods.”

MORE THAN JUST MONEY



“It is not about the money. We have gained a lot more than that from IGCP. We have been trained to plan, execute and manage different projects. The knowledge, skills and financial support have transformed our lives in many beautiful ways” Agnes Nyiramahoro, President Cooperative.

The 71 member based cooperative - Copavu... Cooperative has created an ever-growing platform that empowers artisans of all ages to create beautiful and sustainable crafts while protecting the environment. Raw materials are grown and harvested from their compounds,

limiting the community's frequency into the park. The group has established a crafts center that also doubles as a show room for their crafts.

According to the women they make good sales from the baskets. For example, a basket goes for Rwf 8500 (USD 7) out of which Rwf 1500 (USD 1.2) goes to the cooperative. In a month Nyiramariza says one makes an average of 6 -10 baskets depending on the size of basket.

Weaving and selling baskets has boosted both individual and the group's income. It has also kept members occupied and enabled them to meet their domestic needs with ease. Agnes explains that most of the women were unemployed before, but they have since been involved and they couldn't be any happier.

"We started working together with IGCP in 2022. We joined forces to do crafts and agriculture to improve our



lives and we have benefited a lot. Most of us are now able to pay fees for our children, buy them shoes and other scholastic materials without having to bother our spouses. This is something we had never done before" Nyiramahoro says.

In addition to the financial support towards the craft business, the group also received Rwf 6,800,000 (USD 5440) in 2022 to support their agriculture initiatives. They purchased cows and seedlings and distributed them among the members. These interventions have equally helped improve household incomes, food security and boosted nutrition in the community. The cows provide both manure and milk while the trees serve as a source of firewood and timber for making doors and windows for their houses.

Benjamin Mugabukomeye IGCP Rwanda's Country Coordinator is confident that IGCP has massively contributed to poverty eradication and improved household nutrition in Rwanda.

Benjamin adds that these interventions have also minimized human presence in and dependence on the park hence ensuring the safety and protection of mountain gorillas.

TAILOR MADE FOR SUCCESS: A CASE OF TURAMYUMUKIZA CHANTAL



From being a tenant to a landlord in less than 24 months! Chantal can't thank IGCP enough for supporting the grassroots communities.

Before joining the cooperative Chantal did all sorts of ordinary jobs including digging on peoples' farms for money and begging friends, family and even strangers to survive. With her family struggling through financial hardships and the fear that one day her husband will be arrested for poaching, Turamyumukiza decided to join the community cooperative upon a friend's advice. "This is the best decision I ever made. It has completely transformed my life and that of my family.

In 2019, the International Gorilla Conservation Program (IGCP) under its SIDA-funded program, Leading the Change, supported Koushi Cooperative in Terimbere, a village at the edge of Volcanoes National Park, with sewing machines and Rwf 4,000,000 (USD 3200). This was aimed at increasing the livelihood options of the members and their incomes.

30-year-old Chantal was among the beneficiaries of the sewing machines. She was trained how to sew with several others and off she started making school uniforms and sweaters. To her surprise she made so much money than she had ever imagined. "I unexpectedly got a lot of money. In just a year I had managed to save over Rwf 600,000 (USD 600) from just sewing and selling clothes. I also got a loan of 200,000 Rwf (USD 200) from the Cooperative. I added it to my husband's savings, and we immediately bought land and built our new home", says Chantal.

From being a tenant to a landlord in less than 24 months! Chantal can't thank IGCP enough for supporting the grassroots communities. She is also grateful to the cooperative for all the sensitization about the benefits of mountain gorilla conservation and the ills of poaching. She gained so much knowledge and managed to convince her husband to denounce

poaching. "We struggled to raise our monthly rent of Rwf 2000 (USD 2) for a very small old house, but today I own a house. After seeing how much the cooperative had impacted our lives coupled with the sensitization received, my husband denounced poaching" Chantal says.

Commenting on the Sida funded support Eliezar Twizerimana, the Chairman of the KOUSHI cooperative says the support has benefitted the community in so many ways including erection of a 2.6 KM stone fence around the park that stops problem animals from coming to the neighboring gardens, hence allowing for better harvests and household incomes. The sensitization has also led to a reduction in the frequency of people entering the park. "There has been so much impact among us and most especially the women because they have been empowered and they can now support their families" Eliezar remarks.



THE CHANGE

Overview about LTC in DRC



Altor Musema- IGCP DRC
Country Coordinator

While Leading the Change program has evidently impacted the park edge communities in Uganda and Rwanda, the same cannot be said for DRC. Implementation of the program has been frustrated by the political instability in the country. So many actions have been suspended, left incomplete or even cancelled. Projects initially started have since died out or stalled for lack of continued support, guidance, and monitoring. The beneficiary communities were also displaced leaving the projects to fate. Nonetheless, IGCP's Country Coordinator for DRC Altor Musema says a couple of strides had been made before the disruption.

Three community organizations - Mamans encadrées par Kacheche pour la protection des gorilles de montagne (MAEKAPGOM), Association des femmes des gardes de Rumangabo (AFEGARU), Union des Apiculteurs du secteur Mikenko et Nyamulagira (UDASEMINYA), one Civil Society organization Coordination Provinciale de la Société Civile and one regional network Great Lacs Advocacy Coalition for Conservation of Natural Resources (GLAC-NR) were selected and supported in DRC under the Sida funded Leading the Change Program.

Various livelihood-changing projects were supported to be implemented by the selected organizations including Apiary, Irish growing, Agroforestry, Advocacy, Pastry and Soap making. Both technical and financial support were extended to the organizations to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness in delivering the program goals. Training in program proposal writing, Human rights-based approach (HRBA), community-based planning and monitoring (CBPM), gender mainstreaming, mountain gorilla conservation, CBO management and governance among others were conducted.

These actions led to the realization of several outputs e.g. strengthened capacity of CSOs to develop proposals, to manage and implement projects, improved governance and management of the CSOs/CBOs, for example, two organizations (Mamans encadrées par Kacheche pour la

protection des gorilles de montagne (MAEKAPGOM), Association des femmes des gardes de Rumangabo (AFEGARU) that were operating illegally, were able to officially register their organizations, open bank accounts, develop strategic plans and operational budgets while others reinforced their structures, internal systems and procedures. AFEGARU was able to hold its general assembly meeting after a long time of difficulties, change their board of governance and recruit new members.

Implementation of the LTC program faced three major setbacks; Ebola and COVID-19 hit DRC at the onset of the program. This affected the smooth implementation of several actions because of the restrictions on movement and meetings. And two, the volatile security situation which did not allow the implementation and or completion of actions, then the war which practically erased all the achievements and results of the actions previously implemented.

One of the key lessons learned in all this is that the institutional development of CBOs requires long-term support. It requires a sustainable investment in financial and human resources, constant engagement, mentorship, and monitoring. Above all without peace it is impossible to achieve development let alone the safety, protection, and long-term survival of mountain gorillas.

Important to note also is that it's been two years without close monitoring of mountain gorillas inside the park, their future remains uncertain if peace and security are not restored.

BEE KEEPING

UDASEMINYA (Beekeepers Association) was supported to strengthen their bee keeping enterprises and honey value chains, entrepreneurial and governance capacity as well as market development. Members were trained in the management of modern bee hives and the production of quality honey. This was aimed at improving the quality and increasing the quantity of honey produced.

With the funds received from IGCP the Association renovated its beekeeping processing house in Kibumba, purchased modern bee hives, opened a show room/shop for their products in Goma and improved the packaging of the products. This added value to the products, increased visibility, and opened doors for better market/sales. According to the members the quantity of honey harvested also increased from and so were the sales.

Additionally, the Association was able to purchase a computer and printer. They developed a database of the members and the business products. This helped the members keep track of their sales, and membership base and in touch with the members.

“Had it not been for the disruption the group would be doing so much, certainly the members were going to benefit a lot from these interventions. It is unfortunate that such a wonderful program has been frustrated by insecurity, worsening the livelihoods of the members” says Mr Jean-Bosco Munyantwari, UDASEMINYA President.

Commenting on the twist of events, Altor Musema says “everything was disrupted. The bee keeping house was destroyed and is allegedly occupied by one of the rebel groups. While many beekeepers were displaced to Uganda and Goma”.

In a separate development UDASEMINYA was also supported to implement a socio-economic empowerment program among 120 households in Kibumba area bordering Virunga National Park – Mikenso sector. The purpose of this was to help the community diversify their livelihood options as a way of reducing their dependence on the park for resources. The beneficiaries were trained to make a variety of pastries, soap, and other detergents. They were also given soap and pastry kits. From the knowledge acquired many people started making and selling their products. They excitedly made some income and hoped to grow their businesses until insecurity hit the area displacing several. Commenting on the program, Ms. Beatrice Semahane, a beneficiary living in Kibumba says that “After the training I started making donuts and cupcakes that I sold to travelers along this route. Lots of customers also came from the surrounding villages of Rugari and Ruhunda. The business was taking off until insecurity abruptly stopped everything”.

“Regardless of the disruption we are grateful to IGCP for the knowledge and skills were acquired. Hopefully, when sanity is restored, we shall resume our businesses in peace” Beatrices adds.



IRISH GROWING

MAEKAPGOM was supported to produce Irish potatoes seedlings, with the aim of improving food security and household incomes. About USD 6225 out of USD 1037 had been advanced for Irish seedlings production before insecurity disrupted the farmers. According to Altor Musema, two hectares of potatoes were planted but never harvested.



“It is sad that we never got to harvest from our sweat. And that the hopes of the members to finally be better were shattered, leaving them in an even worse situation than they were before. We hope that IGCP and many others can still support us when insecurity is over” says Ms. Byibesho Baudouine, MAEKAPGOM president.

AGROFORESTRY

In Kubumba, UDASEMINYA was also supported to grow and distribute a total of 41,320 tree seedlings (Calliandra sp; Grevillea sp; Alnus sp, plum and eucalyptus) to farmers on Hehu hill and other localities such as Kalangala, Kibiriga, Rutovu, and Kiroje in Kibumba groupement. The Agroforestry program aimed at addressing the challenges of soil erosion which is rampant in the area and improving the forest/green cover in the area. The species of trees planted were specifically chosen because they are good at fertilizing the soil while providing timber for use on the farms – supporting bean stalks, for firewood and construction.



CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT TO ADDRESS THREATS IN VIRUNGA NATIONAL PARK

Civil Society Engagement with Local leaders in Addressing Virunga National Park Threats.

Following the disruption of activities and the threats facing Virunga National Park (ViNP), Coordination of Civil Society in North Kivu was supported to conduct advocacy sessions with the park authorities. The purpose of this was to address the deteriorating ecosystems during this period of security crisis. Three advocacy notes and a political orientation note were submitted to the country's high authorities and the park managers by the provincial coordination of civil society in North Kivu. Among others, these notes called for the activation of the Corps de Protection des Parcs Nationaux "Corps PPN" to track down the armed groups and the M23 located in the PNVI, so that this World Heritage site can live up to its intended purpose and integrity.

The civil society activists also outlined various ills plaguing Virunga National Park and gave recommendations that could be implemented according to the observations made. Virunga National Park (ViNP) was asked to set up sustainable and permanent communication mechanisms with the local population. The official advocacy session was held with the army officials, territorial managers, the governor's representative and ICCN representatives. Stakeholders committed to implementing the recommendations and address the threats to ViNP caused by insecurity in the area. It is the hope of IGCP that these actions will restore peace and order in the area and contribute to the continued safety of the community and protection of mountain gorillas.



Civil Society Organisation in North Kivu Meet to Seek Solutions for Virunga Threats



Securing the
future for
mountain
gorillas

Contact Us:

Head Office

International Gorilla Conservation Programme

Regional Office: 6AV No. 18 Taba Village, Rugando Cell, Kimihurura

P.O. Box: 931, Kigali, Rwanda

Email : info@igcp.org / Website: www.igcp.org

Field Offices: Musanze – Rwanda; Goma – DRC; Kabale - Uganda



International Gorilla
Conservation Programme



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