



International Gorilla
Conservation Programme

RESTORING THE VANISHING TREASURES

JULY 2024



**Communities appreciate the critical need to protect and
conserve the natural treasures in their community**

Securing the future for mountain gorillas



THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG





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OVERVIEW ABOUT THE PROJECT



“We are grateful to the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the funding that has evidently transformed the target community. It is our hope that these results will be sustained by the community, and that the future will provide more funds to consolidate these efforts and scale up to other areas in the landscape” Wellard Makambo, IGCP director.

Vanishing Treasures Project is a global project funded by the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg through UNEP/GRASP. The project aims at enhancing climate resilience of mountain communities, species, and ecosystems by applying climate-smart conservation and ecosystem-based adaptation approaches in support of sustainable livelihoods and land-use. The Vanishing Treasures project is designed to respond to human-wildlife conflict, promote alternative livelihoods and mitigate the impacts caused by climate change and socio-economic pressures.

UNEP/GRASP in partnership with IGCP launched the Vanishing Treasures project as a pilot project in the Nkuringo buffer zone of Bwindi National Park in October 2020. The project run from October 2020- December 2023 although it was disrupted by COVID-19.

The total project funding was USD 199,414. 120 households were selected from the eight villages of Nombe in Rubuguri Town Council and Mutugunda, Ntungamo, Kirenjeri, Murole, Kikobero, Kakoka and Nyarusunzu in Nkuringo Town Council along the Bwindi landscape to participate in the two years pilot project.

The pilot project sought to address two objectives/components;

project specifically looked at boosting food security and productivity through climate smart agriculture, promoting use of domestic energy saving stoves, increasing access to safe and clean water and integrated water resources management.

Two approaches were used to ensure the successful implementation of the project: Collaborative partnerships and stakeholder participation and the PIP approach. PIP is an approach that brings household members together to assess their current situation and identify various activities that can help them to develop or achieve household set goals. The approach enables household members to define their status, develop the household vision, make a family inventory, a SWOT analysis and develop a 5-year household development plan. According to Sarah Kigongo the Vanishing Treasures project officer), at least 95% of PIP households had developed a 5-year development plan by the end of the Pilot project in June 2023.

Several actions were implemented including training of 120 households in sustainable household planning and visioning, climate smart agriculture – (Integrated farmer plan - PIP approach) and conservation; development of a new Buffer Zone Management

Buffer zone management - this included evaluation of the old Nkuringo Buffer Zone management plan (2015-2019) and the development of a new one to address Human Wildlife Conflict. And two, Support community livelihoods. Under this component the



Women have been empowered to steer individual and household development.



Sarah Kigongo
Vanishing Treasures Project
Officer



The provision of water tanks in the community has reduced human presence in the park hence improving the safety of mountain gorillas.

Plan 2022 – 2026, construction of 314 domestic energy cooking stoves through the farmer-to-farmer knowledge transfer system, construction of 05 rainwater harvesting tanks and institutional governance of the water tank management among others.

Commenting on the overall purpose and impact of the project, Sarah Kigongo says that the project is wholistic by design. It addresses several challenges that the park edge communities struggle with everyday ranging from food insecurity, poor health and hygiene, malnutrition, low farm productivity, poverty, lack of conservation knowledge to human wildlife conflict and under development.

Sarah reveals that the project has not only created impact at the local level but at the global level too. Apparently, most of the interventions addressed the sustainable development goals – 1,2,3,5,6,13,15 and 17.

“I am proud to say that our interventions in the one and half years have contributed to a reduction in hunger among the target community, improved individual and community wellbeing, increased access to safe and clean water, boosted individual and household incomes, promoted gender equality, promoted adaptation of climate smart practices and ensured partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders involved in the project” Sarah notes.

Testimonies from the community showcase an empowered, transformed, and resilient community – thanks to the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg through UNEP/GRASP.

“The Vanishing Treasures project has transformed our livelihoods and taught us proper household planning which is facilitating development in several homes. The 5-year household plans individuals developed, and the mindset trainings have guided and changed our prioritization of actions and influenced a lifestyle change says Nyasio Byamukama, a member of the Batwa (a historically marginalized) Community. “I have personally been able to purchase two acres of land which I am currently using for smart agriculture. Something I had never thought I could do” Nyasio adds.

Commenting on the impact of the project, Dickson Katana, Warden In-charge southern sector in Bwindi, says the project was timely and much needed.

“Working with IGCP on this pilot project has been beneficial to the park and the surrounding community in many ways. Conservation awareness has been registered among the community. This is certainly going to increase their support towards mountain gorilla conservation and the protection of the habitat. Together with the New Buffer Zone Management Plan (2022 – 2026) the safety of the gorillas and other wildlife is guaranteed” Dickson notes.

ENTEGURA YEKAYE ENOCK NA PENINA NA BAMA
KURUGA 2022-2027

INTEGO	E BYO KU KORA	EBYOKUKORESH	SEANTE	NO HA ORABIKIRA	AKAHI	RYARI
1. ITAKA RUKUNSI	KUFUMBIRA-EMIFUREGE	EFUKA-ESURURU-EBITI NO-OMUPAAGA	EBIYO GA-EBITIKYE-AMATUNGO	ENOCK- PENINA- NA ABAMA	NYAMA BUYE- RUSHEBEYA	2022
2. OBWE GESE	KURUMBA FEES- UMI FOMU	EBITABO- EKAKA MU- EGEITO	KABEJI- ENTABA- ENKOKO	PENINA- ENOCK	HISHOME RO- NYA NOMBE- P/S- RUBUGU @ P/S	2023 2028
3. ENTE 1	KUHINSA ORUBINGO- EKYIBADA- EFAMU	EMUSUMARI- EBITYEMBO- AMABATI	EKYIBARA	FAMILY YONA	IMUKYIBADE- NOMBE-U	2022 2026
4. KOMBE YA POKO 2	KURAMA EKYIBAJA	AMATAFABY- SI METI- EMBAH- AMABATI	IMUBI HABA	ORUMUFUJI- NA FAMILY	MUKAYE- ENOCK	2022 2027
5. ENIAMS	KUKORA EKYIBANDA- KUZITIRA	AMABATI- EMUSUMARI- EMBAHO	LOAN LOPN	ENOCK- ENOCK	MUKAYE- ENOKA- MURI NOMBE	2022 2027
6. ENIAMS	KOMBE NA EKYIBANDA	AMATAFABY- AMAKOKO- AMABATI	MURUKYARI	PENINA NA BAMA	MUKAYE ENOCK NA PENINA YA KYIBADE	2022 2025

**Nkuringo Buffer Zone
MANAGEMENT PLAN
2022-2026**

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SUMMARY OF VANISHING TREASURES

RESTORED

Treasure	Challenge Before	Effect	Action Taken
Land/soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil erosion and water run offs. • Low productivity and yields. • Soil infertility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food insecurity • Poor nutrition & health • Poor human productivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building in climate smart agricultural practices e.g. integrated water management and soil erosion control measures – digging water retention trenches. • Making organic compost manure to restore soil fertility. • Making & use of organic pesticides to address pests & diseases in an environmentally friendly way.
National Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poaching • Illegal Park entry by the community for water, herbs, timber, firewood, food, and other raw materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk of disease transmission to mountain gorillas. • Habitat loss. • Increased human wildlife conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on the importance of mountain gorilla conservation and the need for co-existence with the park. • Introduction of energy saving cooking stoves
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor disposal of wastes, plastics etc • Deforestation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on ecosystem management • Tree planting
Bees	Use of chemicals/ pesticides on farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Killings and reduction of bees. • Poor crop yields due to low pollination. • Low honey extraction which affects household incomes. 	Introduction to and training on the use of organic pesticides/repellents
Human Well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor nutrition. • Frequent diseases • Poverty and hunger. • Ignorance • Drunkenness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low work productivity • Domestic violence • Under development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in mindset change, smart agricultural practices that fetch higher crop yields and income. • Development of 5-year household plans to guide resilient development.

Treasure	Challenge Before	Effect	Action Taken
Water Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water scarcity • Use of dirty/unsafe water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent sicknesses and diseases • Poor hygiene and sanitation. • Increased water burden on women 	Construction of 05 Rainwater Harvesting Tanks of 30m ³ with a roof catchment
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased heat. • Change of farming seasons. • Long droughts • Heavy rainfall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor agricultural yields. • Increased hunger, food insecurity. • Poor livelihoods and household incomes. 	Introduction of drought resistant and fast yielding crops.
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of adequate food • Lack of quality food • Poor storage of food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food theft • Starvation • Low work productivity • Poor health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of kitchen gardens • Distribution of fruit trees • Introduction of smart agriculture practices



Internet Pic

Bees pollinate plants which helps them to reproduce and yield better.



STORIES OF CHANGE



Henry Mutabaazi - IGCP
Uganda Programme
Management Advisor

Several success stories have been registered from the various interventions undertaken. Men and women, young and old share excitedly about the transformation in their lives, households, and community. It is exciting to see positive change among the target community. It is not every day that a pilot project creates so much impact and demonstrates potential of transforming a community and restoring lost treasure!

Henry Mutabaazi, IGCP Uganda Programme Management Advisor attributes this uptake and success to the project's clear-cut objectives and approaches.

“The fact that the project addresses real life challenges with practical and less costly nature-based solutions is enough! People find it relevant and worth embracing” Henry explains.

HOME-MADE ORGANIC PESTICIDES BOOST AGRICULTURAL HARVEST



William show casing the ingredients used for making organic pesticides and the process involved.

“Our seasonal harvest has enormously improved! Using home-made organic pesticides has restored hope to our farms. We have seen good results and even increased on the farmland for our vegetables,” says William Byamugisha, a farmer from Nombe Village, adjacent to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

For so long, Nombe Village residents in Rubuguri Town council experienced minimal yields from their farms mainly because of pests and poor farming practices. Regardless of how much farmers toiled, the yields were always low or nothing at all, which meant inadequate food and income at the end of the day. “Thinking of a bumper harvest was farfetched! Plants, especially maize and vegetables were always attacked by pests yet most of us were unable to afford the synthetic pesticides at the market. Farming had become frustrating” narrates Byamugisha.

Thanks to the Vanishing Treasures project that came in and introduced the farmers to climate smart and environmentally friendly farming practices. Farmers were trained to make and use organic pesticides. According to Sarah



A proud farmer showing off his healthy maize garden.

Kigongo organic pesticides are more like repellants. They repel pests instead of killing them. This way, useful insects like bees which were facing a big decline due to use of harmful chemicals are preserved to continue serving their purpose.

According to the farmers the use of organic pesticides coupled with other smart agriculture practices like the use of organic manure and digging trenches to control water run-offs, agricultural produce has greatly improved and so are the household incomes and livelihoods.

One William Byamugisha reveals that after the application of the above knowledge he was able to grow and make more money from his cabbage garden. From about UGX 200,000 (\$51) a season to a UGX 1,700,000 (\$437) a season. "In the past, my cabbages would be small, and pest infested. The best I could sell a cabbage for was UGX 200 (\$0.053) but one year now into using organic pesticides, my cabbages are bigger and

healthier. Each cabbage now costs minimally GX 1000 (0.26)" says Byamugisha.

Farmers have embraced the use of organic pesticides on their farms for several reasons including being affordable, effective, accessible, and environmentally friendly. "The organic pesticides are easy to make. We use local plants that are readily available in our gardens, meaning that one can make enough for their farms at a time. They are also time saving" says Juliet Marinette. Juliet explains that previously one would spend about UGX 40,000 (\$ 10.5) on pesticides that were never enough and trek for at least 3 hours to and from the market to purchase them, but not anymore! This time is now used to do other domestic chores.

On the other hand, Karibu Dian, another beneficiary credits home-made organic pesticides for saving his farm. "I had totally stopped maize farming because of pests. It was so frustrating watching my efforts go down the

drain just halfway their growth span. Thanks to the Vanishing Treasures initiative, my maize harvest has doubled." Says Karibu.

Stanley Bizimana, LC1 Chairman for Nombe Village can't praise organic pesticides enough for preserving the environment and the vanishing treasures. "The fact that these pesticides do not kill insects is a good thing especially for the useful insects like bees which help with pollination. Without bees then we are doomed. Our farming entirely depends on their existence!" Stanely says bees are a treasure we cannot afford to lose.



Stanley Bizimana,
LC1 Chairman for
Nombe Village

"With the soil being conserved, bees preserved, and other harmful insects repelled, I am optimistic that better days are here" Stanely adds.

Over 120 households and 600 individuals have been skilled in making organic pesticides and are applying this knowledge on their farms. All the farmers testify to better yields, increased food for consumption and sale, increased incomes and more.

HOUSEHOLD PLANS – SHAPING THE FUTURE

Peninah Mushabe – a mother of five found life and marriage so challenging! Her household faced financial and domestic challenges that often resulted into endless fights between her and her spouse. She attests to living 10 miserable years in a marriage that only drained her until her involvement in Vanishing Treasures Project. “My turning point came when my home was selected and taught how to make a five-year household plan. This plan helped us lay a foundation for our development journey as a family and devise means to achieve our goals,” says Peninah.

120 households were skilled in developing household plans and by the end of the project 95% of the households had developed and started to implement and achieve the plans.

Households testify to the relevance and importance of these plans and how they are gradually impacting their lives. A lot of positive change is evident among the beneficiary community including lifestyle change - from drunkenness to being responsible fathers

and husbands, improved saving culture, reduced gossip among women to proper use of time towards achieving their targets, increased incomes, reduced domestic violence cases, stronger marriages, acquisition of property e.g. land, among others. “Words can’t express my gratitude towards this household plan education. We now have a family savings bank account and I no longer recklessly spend our earnings on alcohol” says Enock Niyonteze, Peninah’s husband. “I am grateful that the approach is wholistic.



Peninah says that their household plan has provided a clear road map to achieve their goals as a family.

Household plans are a component of the Vanishing Treasures Project under the PIP approach. The approach enables household members to define their status, develop the household vision, make a family inventory, a SWOT analysis and develop a 5-year household development plan.

According to Sarah Kigongo the Vanishing Treasures Project Officer, the approach promotes unity and collaboration as the family collectively works together to plan and achieve set goals, hence addressing marital gaps on one hand and generating a pool of ideas on the other.

embrace domestic hygiene and sanitation which was previously the source of all our fights,” Enock adds.

For Peninnah and Enock, PIP was an eye opener. They were made to appreciate a lot of things including the importance of family planning, saving, joint planning and execution of duties. “I have 5 children that I could barely take care of because of my little income, but after the training we realized that it’s important to have few children whom you can ably support and right away we decided to stop producing and focus on development and securing the future for the 5 children that we already have,” says Peninah.



Esau and wife reveal that with guidance from their 5 years household plan they have managed to move from their mud house on the left to a newly constructed permanent house on the right.

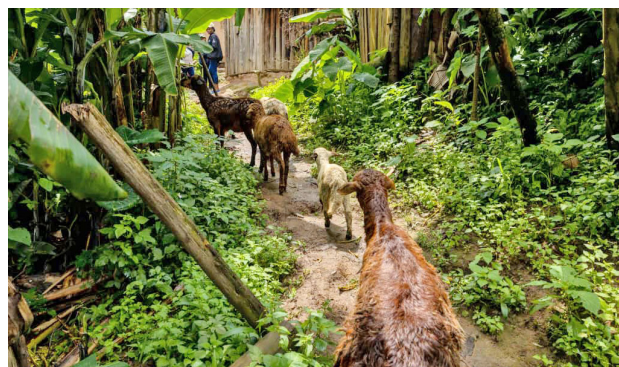
Guided by their 5-year household plan, the couple has been able to construct a 3 roomed residential house, purchase land worth UGX 2,000,000 (600\$) for vegetable farming and purchase 5 sheep to ensure constant supply of organic manure for their gardens. Enock reveals that they recently made a profit of UGX 1,300,000 (350\$) from their vegetable garden. He attributes this bumper harvest and sales to the application of organic pesticides and manure that they immediately embraced after the training.

Speaking about the importance of household plans, Esau Turyazayo, also a resident of Nombe village says household plans are the trigger that he needed to achieve his life's goals. Esau says that the plan provided better guidance and with that he was able to visualize the future of his household and achieve his five-year plan in just one year.

“I had plans but wasn't sure on how to execute them, however after the PIP training everything became clearer. Together with my wife we embarked on every action planned and in a couple of months we had realized so much.”

Esau is grateful to the PIP approach because it has taught him and many other men in the community the importance of planning and working as a couple on everything which he says has lessened the burden on many wives, enhanced family stability and development.

According to Stanley Bizimana, the LCI Chairman of Nombe village household plans are causing impact at both household and community levels. “I have seen good practices start, for example over 240 households have constructed good pit latrines. This is going to go a long way in improving the hygiene and health of a lot of people in the community, which has been a challenge for a very long time” Stanley says.



Sheep provide manure that is used on the farms. They also serve as a source of meat and income.



An excited Mrs. Byamugisha says that the new energy saving cook stoves are ultimate solution to their cooking problems.

DOMESTIC ENERGY SAVING COOK STOVES – SAVING FORESTS AND LIVES!

Most park-edge communities around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park use wood for cooking. Alternative fuel sources are either inaccessible or unaffordable. Traditionally, homes have open fireplaces/cooking stones which are extremely inefficient and hazardous to life and health. Individuals buy firewood or harvest it from their farms while some of the community members illegally collect firewood from the park.

In its climate smart interventions, the Vanishing treasures project introduced households to the use of domestic energy saving cook stoves. The stoves are smarter. They use very little wood and cook faster. Tereza Tukahirwa a mother of 5 shares that in the past one would spend about 3 hours

collecting a bundle of firewood that would only last a day. Cooking took 5-6 hours at most.

However, with the new cook stoves, one uses the same amount of firewood for a week or so, and about an hour or two to have food ready. Tukahirwa adds that the new method is time saving, it allows one to do many other home errands at the same time.

“The introduction of energy saving cook stoves has reduced deforestation because of the small amount of firewood used, it has also provided an income for the rural woman especially those that have mastered the skill of constructing the cook stoves and turned it into a business opportunity.



Energy cook stoves are smart. They use very little wood and cook faster. They also cook 2-3 meals at ago.

If more people adopt their use and plant trees in their compounds for fuel, then the park and its wildlife therein will be safe and secure” says Dickson Katana, Warden in-charge, Southern Sector Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

For Peninah Mushabe the cook stove is not only her cooking solution but also a business opportunity. Peninah constructs cook stoves for community members who need them at a friendly fee. One cook stove goes for UGX 20,000 (5 \$) and takes about 3 hours to get done. Peninah uses the money from the stoves to take care of her domestic needs. In the past Peninah dug people’s gardens for a living.

She earned about UGX 5000 (1\$) from a day’s job however all that has changed. “I am grateful to IGCP and particularly to this project for empowering me with practical knowledge and life skills. I am glad that I quickly mastered the art of constructing the energy saving cook stoves. Since the training I have been able to construct 15 stoves for free for the members and over 10 stoves too for money” says Peninah.

According to Peninah people are quickly adopting the use of domestic energy cook stoves making the demand for her services high and allowing her a continued source of income.

Commenting on the innovation, Prisca Nshemererwe, a resident of Ntungamo village says the energy saving cook stoves are not only a great cooking solution and but also a good way to conserve the environment. Prisca says besides cooking faster with a few pieces of wood, the stoves allow for one to cook 2-3 different meals at the same time because of its nature. Meals are now eaten hot and on time. “Because less wood is used deforestation will gradually go down” Prisca notes.

According to, Kenneth Kabebasiza, the Vanishing Treasure’s Project Assistant the beneficiary community was also taught about the dangers of deforestation and the importance of conserving the natural resources around us especially forests. Participants were encouraged to plant trees on their farms to meet their various fuel, timber, and fruit needs. Prisca reveals that she has been able to plant 100 trees on her farm, while Emmanuel Byamukama from Nombe village says he has planted over 1000 trees and Jackson Karuhije planted over 1000 trees while Felesta Tumwine planted about 300 trees. The Vanishing treasures project supplied about 1,296 fruit trees to the community.



Apart from providing fruits for eating and boosting household income, the trees provide fuel for cooking.

NYARUSUNZU: A COMMUNITY THAT STOPPED AT NOTHING TO ACCESS SAFE AND CLEAN WATER



“When IGCP informed us that they wanted to construct for us a community rainwater harvesting tank we were overjoyed and puzzled at the same time because we did not have community land where the tank would be constructed. And no community member was willing to donate their land for this cause” says Twinomugisha David, a resident of Nyarusunzu Village.

Most park-edge villages around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park are challenged by the lack of water. Nyarusunzu village in Nkuringo town council was no exception until the Vanishing Treasures project came in and supported them to construct a rainwater harvesting tank.

After IGCP’s engagement with the village members, the Chairman LCI Mr. Sinaribonye Joseph called for an urgent village meeting for all the 3 clans living in Nyarusunzu village to brainstorm on how to urgently acquire land for the tank. As luck could have it, one member had a piece of land for sale at UGX 5 million (1300\$). Each of the 75 households in the cell was tasked to contribute at least UGX 31000 (8.2\$), a call they all heed to. And in about 3 months the required funds had been collected. The piece of land was secured and construction of a 30,000 liters rainwater harvesting tank with a roof catchment was constructed.

Nothing beats such unity – seeing a community come together for a common cause speaks a lot! It explains how tough and challenging it has been for the community to access water in this village. And this was

not an opportunity they would lose. “We used to walk long distances to fetch water from the park. Averagely one would spend 4 hours to and from. It was tiring and risky, but we had no choice” says Twinomugisha David. Twinomugisha adds that the 10 km journey was worsened by the bad terrain that often exposed them to injuries and fractures from sliding and falling.

Nyarusunzu community is grateful for the support to improve the water situation in the village. Mothers testify to improved hygiene and sanitation in their homes, peace of mind and improved health. “Having safe and clean water close by is so relieving. I get to dash there and still be able to accomplish a



Members of Nyarusunzu community meet periodically to share about their community, project plans and milestones.

lot for the day as opposed to the past when I would spend 4 plus hours fetching just one jerrycan or two of water that was never enough,” says Scovia Mugabirwe

One Girivaziyo Kyorimpa adds that, “We had suffered for so long. Nothing was going to stop us from working with IGCP to get safe and clean water especially when all we needed to provide was just land.” Girivaziyo adds that “because our piece of land is big enough, we intend to build a 3-4 roomed commercial building, one for each clan and the other for our office. Clans will use these rooms for businesses of their choice”.

In a related development, IGCP constructed 4 other rainwater harvesting tanks of 30m³ with a roof catchment in the villages of Mutugunda, Kirenjeri, Murole, Kikobero and Nyarusunzu.

Construction of water tanks was aimed at improving access to safe and clean water in the water constrained park edge communities in Nkuringo area around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The overall purpose of this action was to reduce human presence in the park in search for water because it increases the risk of disease transmission to the mountain gorillas and compromises the integrity of the park. Through various trainings the beneficiary communities were sensitized on the dangers of illegal park entry and on the importance of conserving the habitat and its wildlife. Members appreciated the contribution of the park to their community and the benefits derived from conservation including the acquisition of the water tanks and the larger Vanishing Treasures project.

An excited Magdalena Utibuka, resident of Mutugunda village says, “Access to safe and clean water has improved domestic hygiene and



A 30m³ rainwater harvesting tank with a roof catchment in Nyarusuzu.

sanitation. Our homes and utensils are clean. Our children can now go to school early and have enough time to play after school instead of trekking long distances for water.” While Fausta Nyiramugisha, says it is a win – win for both the community and the park. “We are now safe from the dangerous wildlife in the park. I am sure they are safe too because frequent human presence is not good for their health and behavior.”

According to Enock Rwerekana, Chairman Mutugunda Water user committee, human presence in the park for water has tremendously reduced, and park – community relations have improved too.

To ensure sustainability, proper utilization and routine maintenance of the water tanks the community established water user committees comprising of 9 members each. The committees were trained on their post construction operation and maintenance roles and responsibilities.



Women fetching water from the rain water harvesting tank in Mutugunda.



Community members previously fetched water from dirty water sources in and around the community.

COMPOST MANURE: THE MAGICAL KEY TO NTAWARUHUNGA'S WEALTH



Simeon Ntawaruhunga explaining the process of making compost manure and how it has impacted his farming.

Speaking of quality education brings Simeon Ntawaruhunga mixed feelings. He vividly recalls a day, four years ago when his son came home with great high school results, but Ntawaruhunga could barely afford his university education! “I had promised my children that I would educate them until University but here I was financially unable to deliver on my promise,” says 65-year-old Ntawaruhunga, a resident of Kahurire Village, Nkuringo town council in Kisoro district.

Ntawaruhunga’s story magically changed a year ago when he was selected as a beneficiary in the Vanishing treasures project. For a historical farmer like Simeon, the project’s smart agriculture interventions were an exciting thing although he picked particular interest in making compost manure. “I had heard so much about the benefits of compost manure, but I did not know how it is made. And so, year in and year out my crop yields kept getting worse” Ntawaruhunga says. Even though he owns a big chunk of land it could not produce enough food to cater for his family let alone income.

After the training in compost manure making, Ntawaruhunga took a leap of faith. “I knew that if I did it right this would be my breakthrough

to financial freedom” says Ntawaruhunga. And true to his hopes, making and applying compost manure on his farm has changed everything for him. Ntawaruhunga is now a model farmer and a rich man in his village.

Making compost manure requires three pits of 3ft each, plus raw materials (used banana leaves and stems, animal urine, dung, and ash) readily available on his farm. Since he didn’t have to buy anything to make the manure, Ntawaruhunga devoted all his time to making enough manure and applying it in his gardens.

And just a year into making and using compost manure, Ntawaruhunga’s crop harvest, family income and welfare have skyrocketed. From earning UGX 40,000 (10.5\$) monthly to UGX 150,000 (39.56\$) bi-weekly. “Every two weeks, I sell bananas worth UGX 150,000 (39.56\$). I owe this to the compost manure that has made the soils fertile and increased the sizes of my bananas,” says Ntawaruhunga. Ntawaruhunga explains that previously the bunches would be small and cost about UGX 6000 (1.58\$) but now that their sizes are bigger, a bunch goes for about UGX 30,000 - 40,000 (10.5\$).

In addition to the banana plantation Ntawaruhunga also grows and sells cabbages. The compost manure has equally done the vegetable garden well. The yields have increased and so has the demand and the income. Ntawaruhunga supplies nearby schools with cabbages and other leafy vegetables. He also sells them in surrounding village markets. Last season alone (November 2023) Ntawaruhunga made UGX 1000,000 (300\$) from his vegetables, thanks to compost manure!

With improved earnings, Ntawaruhunga has been able to do a lot but paying his children's school fees is his biggest achievement. "I was able to finally enroll my son at University and I effortlessly pay his tuition and related requirements, about UGX3,500,000 (923.11\$) a semester," says Ntawaruhunga. In addition to this, he also pays school fees for his other 5 children in both secondary and primary schools.

"Vanishing treasures has magically transformed my life for the best. My farms are green and healthy.

We have enough food. My children are healthy and in school. We have savings and a good life that I had never imagined would be possible," Says Ntawaruhunga.

Because sharing is caring, Ntawaruhunga is teaching his neighbors and friends about compost manure. He reveals that several of them have started to realize benefits from using it.

Compost manure fertilizes the soil, allowing it to produce more and better crops. Most of the beneficiaries using the compost manure in their gardens testify to improved crop yields, food security and income. Sarah Kigongo the Project Officer says soil as a treasure is continuously being restored through the various smart agricultural interventions and the integrated water resources management (IWRM) practices like compost manure, organic pesticides, trenches, and planting climate- resilient crops.

INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES

MANAGEMENT (IWRM)

The Vanishing Treasures project through a study visit to Kabande village along the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park introduced the beneficiaries to various participatory integrated planning approaches including harvesting and storing water underground for the dry spell. This water is expected to help the farmers irrigate their farms allowing for a stable season and adequate harvest. Simeon Ntawaruhunga is the only farmer in this pilot project that adopted this initiative. He constructed an underground tank of 5ft x 8ft x 4ft depth sealed it on top and connected it to the roof to collect water when it rains.

"First of all, I learnt that roofs collect and release a lot of water which contributes to soil erosion. Previously, this untapped rainwater from the roof would find its way to my garden and spoil the crops contributing to erosion and washing away of the soil nutrients. So, this learning was eye opening and are a solution to this problem" says Simeon. "I am able to save water and also control soil erosion" Simeon adds.

Simeon says this is a very good initiative. With it he is able to store enough water for his gardens. "I am not bothered by the dry season because I have a

back up plan. Last season I fetched water from here and irrigated my cabbages daily. And the harvest was amazing. I hope other farmers can embrace this too" Simeon notes.

This action falls under the community livelihood component of the vanishing treasures Project which aims at improving food security through climate smart agriculture.



Simeon's underground water tank helps him to keep the gardens irrigated during the dry season, allowing for a good harvest.

KITCHEN GARDENS BOOST NUTRITION AND HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

About two years ago IGCP sensitized over 120 park-edge households on the importance of kitchen gardens and how to establish them. This was aimed at improving domestic nutrition and income. Kitchen gardens are usually simple gardens around the homestead that grow vegetables like cabbages, carrots, spinach, dodo, onions, and other green leafy vegetables.

Testimonies from the community reveal that kitchen gardens are not only improving health and nutrition but incomes too. An excited and healthy-looking Amina says that with the availability of vegetables, her children now enjoy a balanced diet daily. This

has kept them healthy and free from frequent illnesses like it was in the past.

For many people around the park, vegetables were a reserve for the tourists who come to the lodges in the area. It is no wonder that those who farmed them always sold all of them to the lodges leaving little or nothing at all for themselves or if they did, they never thought of them as a great delicacy.

Through the PIP approach, communities were sensitized and made to appreciate the contribution of kitchen gardens in improving food security, health, and nutrition as well as household incomes.

“Since I ventured into vegetable farming, I make at least UGX 1,000,000 (263.75\$) from selling cabbages, egg plants and other leafy vegetables to surrounding schools and markets each season,” says Simeon Ntawaruhunga. Amina also reveals that she earns about UGX 700,000 (184.62\$) from the sale of cabbages and mushrooms monthly. Amina reveals that she supplies vegetables to her private

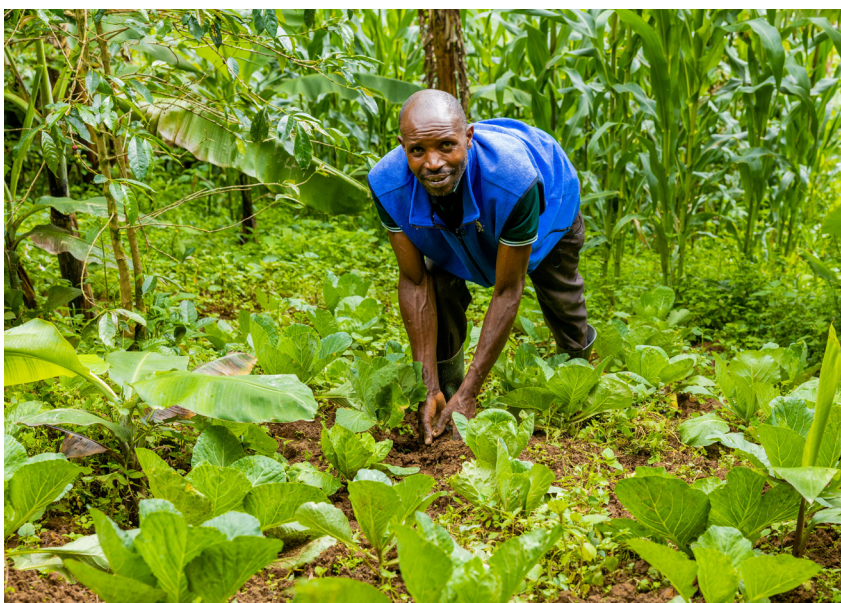
school in the area, an initiative she says has greatly cut costs and boosted the health of her learners.

Many residents attest to benefiting from the kitchen gardens. Most of the people especially women have found a source of income in this initiative. “Selling vegetables has enabled most of us to afford household needs like school fees, scholastic

materials, clothes, oil, shoes, food, medication among others” says Agnes Natukunda.

Scovia Nyiraneza, another resident of Nyarusunzu credits kitchen gardens for addressing malnutrition in the village. “Malnutrition has become rare lately, our children feed well, and we owe their improved health to kitchen gardens.”

Commenting on the contribution of kitchen gardens, Sarah Kigongo the Project Officer says, “the kitchen gardens initiative aimed at improving household nutrition and household incomes, and this has been achieved. Women majorly participated in this initiative and their lives as well as households have evidently transformed.”



Kitchen gardens have ensured constant supply of vegetables for homes hence boosting nutrition and household incomes.



“I thank Vanishing Treasures for introducing us to Kitchen gardens. Since I started one, I have never run out of food. We always have something to cook” says Amina Nahabwe, a resident of Nyarusunzu village.

NIYONZIMA BECOMES UNSTOPPABLE AFTER HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH VANISHING TREASURES PROJECT

Rejected multiple times for a casual job at Clouds Mountain Gorilla lodge, Dennis Niyonzima became irresistible after his involvement with the Vanishing Treasures project. “I was excited about the new knowledge I had acquired, and I couldn’t wait to implement it as well as transfer it to everyone,” says Niyonzima.

One rainy morning Niyonzima went to Clouds Mountain Gorilla lodge and assured them that he could help improve their vegetable gardens. He demonstrated his skills in the garden by putting trenches, shared about the use of compost manure and organic pesticides and by the end of his visit, Niyonzima had been offered a job as head gardener.

“I showed them how they could dig trenches, use compost manure to improve the soils and how they could plant climate resistant, yet fast yielding crops and they were excited about the idea. They acknowledged that they were struggling with pests, soil erosion and low yields and they were glad that I could help on this” says Niyonzima. Today the hotel harvests vegetables from its own garden. They no longer shop from Kisoro town.

Nine months down the road, Niyonzima is still working with Clouds Mountain Gorilla lodge, earning UGX 200,000 (52.75\$) per month, an amount he had never dreamt of! According to Niyonzima management has promised to increase his salary by 6% after one year. With these earnings, Niyonzima has invested more in domestic farming specifically vegetables. Last season alone (November 2023) Niyonzima earned about UGX 1,200,000 (316.50\$) from his agricultural produce. Niyonzima has also bought 3 sheep worth UGX 150,000 (39.56 \$) to produce organic manure for his farm.

Animal rearing is a key component of the PIP approach, farmers are encouraged to rear animals to ensure a constant supply of manure for their gardens. While also providing other benefits to the farmer like milk, meat, and income.

“Once the mindset changes, everything else changes too. I owe my success to the Vanishing Treasures project which transformed my thinking and taught me skills that led me to employment. I am responsible and in a better place” says Niyonzima. Apparently Niyonzima used to spend all his time loitering and idling in the trading center, playing pool, and drinking alcohol from every coin he got but now he has a job to do and household PIP plan to achieve.

Just like many residents of Ntungamo village, Niyonzima lived an average life with no idea on how to elevate it. The 34-year-old farmer barely harvested enough for his household’s consumption partly because of crop raiding by problem animals from the park and poor climate as well as poor farming practices. Niyonzima says so many times he resented living adjacent to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) because he had earned nothing apart from pain and losses from problem animals that often raided their farms.

“I was frustrated and stuck. Not sure what to do next to earn a living. I did not even know of any better ways to improve my soils and agricultural productivity until the Vanishing Treasures Project was launched in my area” says Niyonzima. Through smart agriculture and climate change adaptive trainings Niyonzima learnt a lot including how to make compost manure, organic pesticides, and trenches to control soil erosion among others. Niyonzima immediately applied the knowledge on his farm and started teaching his neighbors and friends too.

Niyonzima says that life is better now. He can easily afford basic needs for his two children. “I no longer struggle to pay school fees or medical care for my children” says Niyonzima. “Vanishing treasures was an eye opener that wealth creation is more about having the right knowledge and guidance other than having solid money to invest.” Says Niyonzima.

MINDSET TRAINING TRANSFORMS NOTORIOUS POACHERS AND SOLICITS SUPPORT TOWARDS CONSERVATION



120 households received capacity building trainings on PIP approach and mindset change

Harmonious living between park edge communities and the park can be very challenging especially if the community has not been sensitized on the importance of conservation and co-existence. The situation is worse if the community does not realize benefits from the natural resource. Fifty-nine-year-old Matayo Byabajurizi, a resident of Mutugunda village around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park says until recently they felt that the negatives outweighed the benefits from the park, so there was no reason for them to love, let alone protect the wildlife.

Times without number problem animals raided neighboring farms and destroyed crops leaving the communities with little to no food to harvest. This increased hunger, poverty and frustration among the farmers and forced people to resort to the park for survival. They poached wildlife for meat and money, while others frequented the park for water,

herbs, fruits, raw materials, firewood, and timber among others.

“I have lived around the park for 30 years and I have always considered wildlife as our number



Kenneth Kabebasiza

one enemy because of the damage and loss they cause us every season. What puzzled me even more is why the government and many conservationists treated wildlife so highly than us humans” says Matayo. According to Matayo most government efforts seemed to be directed

towards the park and not the community, citing the lengthy and non-effective compensation process in case of crop raiding coupled with the long process of getting the compensation.

Thanks to the Vanishing Treasures Project which conducted a mindset training and educated the community about the importance of conservation and co-existence with the protected area.

Kenneth Kabebasiza, the Vanishing Treasure’s Project Assistant says the training took the participants through the benefits of living adjacent to the park, the Vanishing treasures in their community, the benefits of embracing and practically participating in protected area conservation and livelihood diversification through devising alternative income generating means.

“We could tell that the training opened the minds of the participants. Many hardly knew a thing about conservation, but after the training they appreciated this resource and pledged to support its conservation” Kenneth adds.

“The training was very helpful. I learnt that forests and wildlife are among the key resources that we need to safeguard jealously and that it is possible to live in harmony with the park and its wildlife” says Matayo. Philemon Kirenzi, a resident of Nyarusunzu cell adds that “I learned the value of our vanishing treasures like the

protected area which is a key driver to tourism. I have resorted to planting trees on my farm that I will henceforth use for fuel instead of illegally going to the park for firewood”.

Philemon revealed that he has so far planted 400 trees and hopes to plant even more. Just like Philemon, several community members have resorted to planting trees in their homes and gardens. This practice will go a long way in restoring forest cover, improving climate, and providing fuel, timber, and income for the community.

IGCP distributed over 1,296 fruit tree seedlings to the community to boost this initiative. The trees included guavas, oranges, apples, strawberries, lemons, grafted avocados, grapes to mention but a few.

Following the training, renown poachers like Mandela denounced poaching and pledged their full support towards conserving wildlife.

Mandela a notorious poacher survived on poaching. He used to poach from one national park to another e.g. Bwindi NP to Queen Elizabeth NP hunting for bush meat. “Poaching was my way of life. I learned

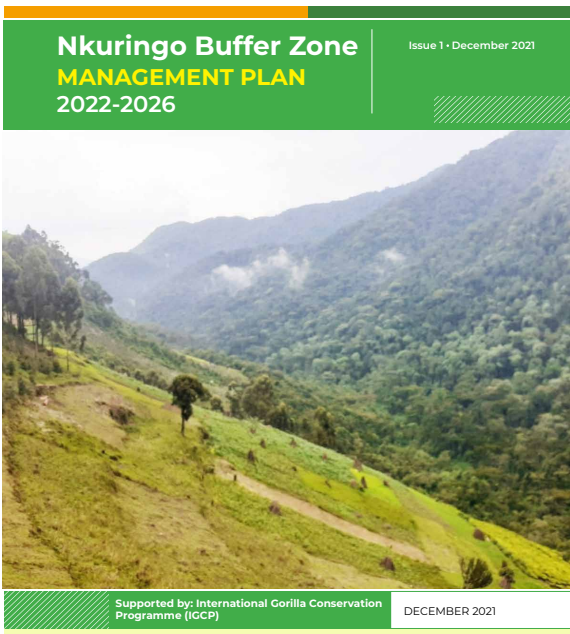
this from my father and grandfather. I lived for it” Mandela says. Because I knew how risky it was coming face to face with wild animals and the park’s patrol teams, I was always ready to kill anyone before I am killed” Mandela adds. Mandela who had never sat with anyone to learn about the natural, economic, and environmental benefits of conservation was this time lucky to be a participant in the vanishing treasures training. He learned so much, confessed his wrongs, denounced poaching, and pledged to be an anti-poaching advocate. Today Mandela is a responsible man, PIP farmer and a dependable anti-poaching advocate in his community of Nyarusuzu.

Commenting on the training, Dickson Katana, Warden in Charge of Southern Sector Bwindi Impenetrable National Park says the training was much needed and helpful. It transformed mindsets and solicited support towards conservation. “The training saw to the transformation of the most notorious poachers like Mandela who had become a big threat and challenge to the park. Mandela is now a very collaborative citizen who tips the Park’s anti-poaching team about planned poaching activities within the protected area” Katana remarks.

NEW BUFFER ZONE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO IMPROVE HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT

“The Nkuringo Buffer Zone plays an important role in managing Human - Gorilla Conflict and providing vital ecosystem services to support the livelihood of surrounding communities. The new five-year Buffer Zone Management plan is timely for it is tailored to address emerging threats to mountain gorillas through sustainably managing the buffer zone,” says Nelson Guma, the Chairman of the Joint Buffer Zone Management Board and Chief Park Warden Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Area.

Through the Vanishing Treasures project, IGCP funded the review of the 2014 - 2019 Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan and developed a new management plan for the period 2022 -2026. The buffer zone is a 12km stretch of land covered by tea plantation. It was established in 2004 by IGCP and Uganda Wildlife Authority with the aim of reducing Human Wildlife Conflict caused by wildlife



that could often escape Bwindi Impenetrable National Park into Community gardens.

Since its establishment the buffer zone has played a major role in keeping problem animals from community land and provided an alternative livelihood solution to locals who work in the tea plantations. Tea is a non-palatable crop to the gorillas. It serves as a deterrent to the problem animals and as source of income to the farmers too.

Wildlife especially mountain gorillas are seen ranging in the buffer zone from time to time and back to the park. Previously, gorillas ranged in neighboring gardens, frequently exposing them to human presence which increased the risk of disease transmission but also posed a threat to the crops in case of raiding. This created conflict between the farmers and the park.

To ensure proper management of the Buffer zone a plan was developed - Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan 2014 – 2019. Unfortunately, the plan expired leaving the park stuck with the old one which could no longer address the current dynamics of the Human Wildlife Conflict and the Buffer zone. Thanks to the Vanishing Treasures project that funded the development of a new Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan - 2022 -2026. The new management plan stipulates activities that should be done in the buffer zone. It also has various costed interventions that the joint management board can use to solicit for funding to improve park-edge livelihoods.

“The new management plan is a living guide towards addressing human wildlife conflict, improving community-wildlife health and community livelihoods in Southern Bwindi, thanks to the Vanishing Treasures project that purposed to create this document,” says Dickson Katana, Warden of Bwindi Southern Sector.

According to Dickson Katana, implementation of the new management plan started in 2022 and good strides have been made.

Because the plan provides clear guidelines and protocol on how to safely guide wildlife back to the park, human Wildlife conflict incidences’ severity and frequency have reduced.

Commenting on the contribution of the New Buffer Zone Management Plan Henry Mutabaazi, IGCP - Uganda Programme Advisor says, “A lot has already improved on ground, thanks to the management plan. For example, hygiene within the buffer zone has improved, stakeholders are strictly required to have a disposal plan for their litter other than the tea plantations. Also illegally constructed latrines that would put both gorilla and human populations at risk of contamination have been demolished”.

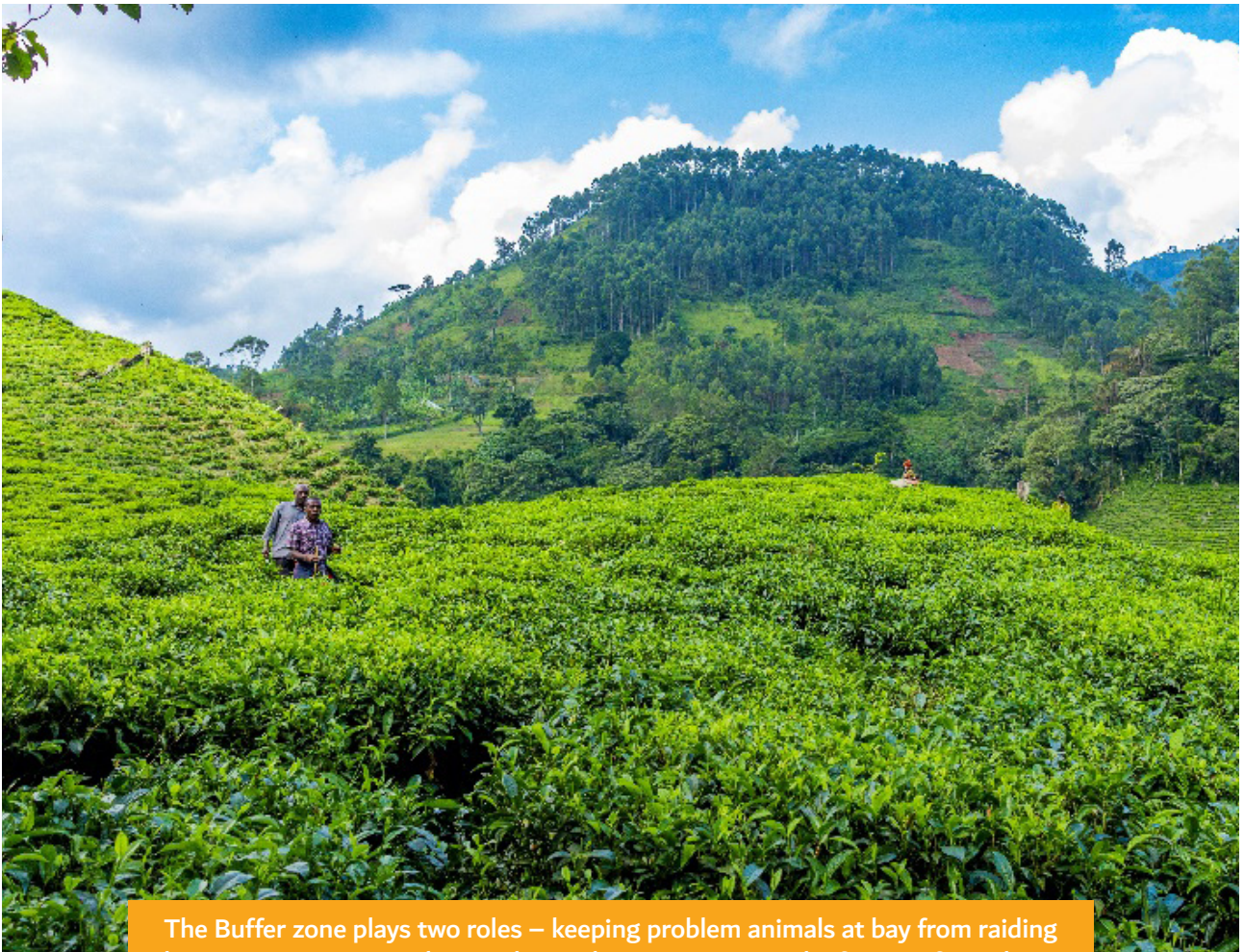
“Because of its effective management, the 12 km buffer zone has become an exemplary tool on co-existence with wildlife,” Dickson Katana revealed that in December 2023 a team from Ajayi (Murchison Falls area) whose rhinos went extinct visited Nkuringo to learn how a buffer can be used to protect both wildlife and communities.

It is the hope of Uganda Wildlife Authority and IGCP that the management plan will address the emerging issues related to increased agricultural activities, tourism development and effects of climate change.

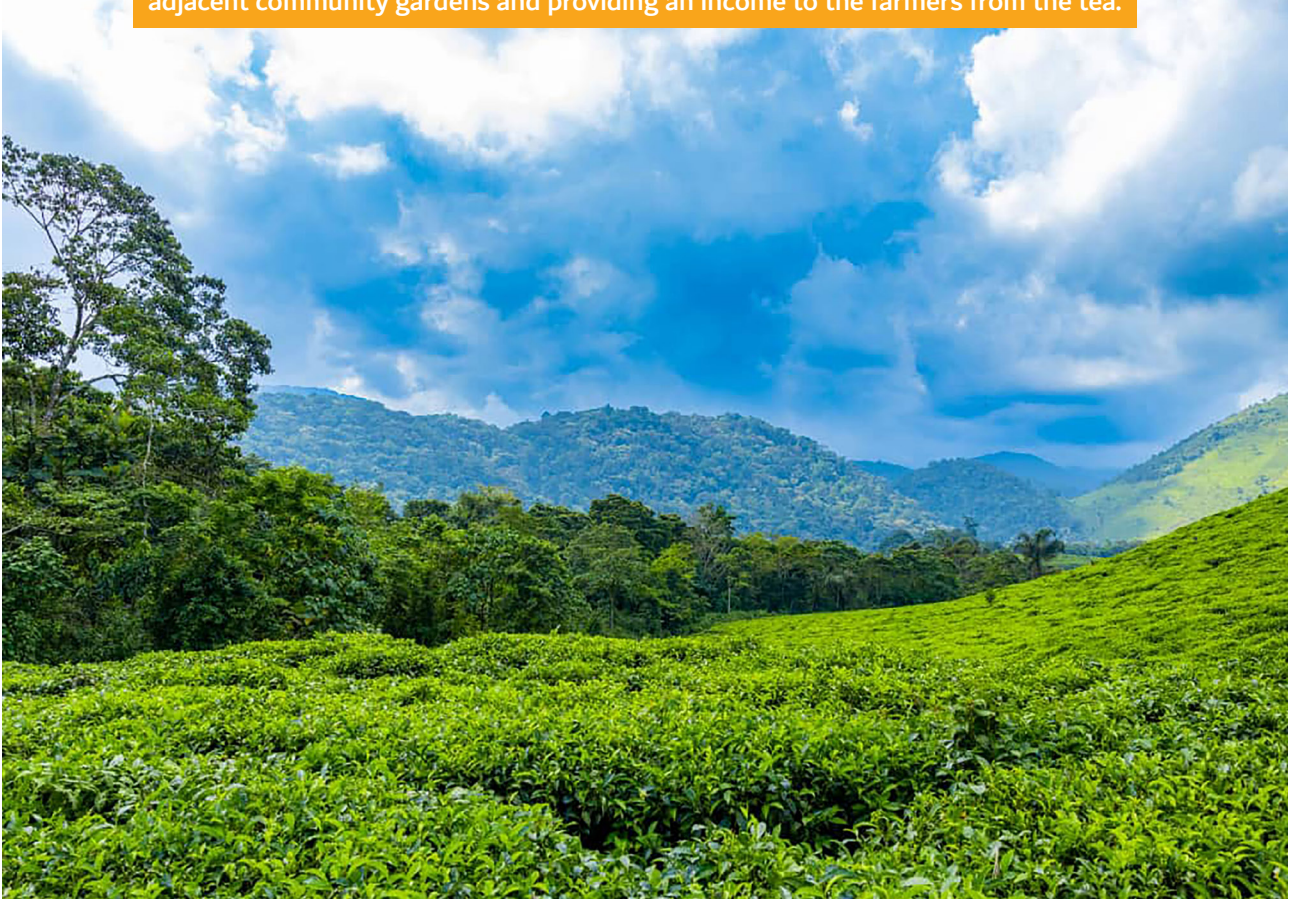
At the end of the five years, the plan is expected to have realized strengthened awareness and community sensitization on conservation, improved community hygiene and sanitation, improved conservation which results into reduced illegal activities and reduced contagious human gorilla diseases. Among others, is livelihood improvement and climate change adaptation measures.



Dickson Katana, Warden In-charge,
Southern Sector BINP.



The Buffer zone plays two roles – keeping problem animals at bay from raiding adjacent community gardens and providing an income to the farmers from the tea.



GARDEN TRENCHES RESTORE HOPE TO FARMERS IN NKURINGO



Garden trenches help in reducing water run offs and controlling soil erosion. They collect the water, retain soil nutrients while restoring soil fertility. Trenches alongside other smart agricultural practices like the use of compost manure and organic pesticides have boosted agricultural yields among the beneficiary community in Nkuringo. Over 120 households testify to increased harvest, improved food security and increased household incomes.

Just when he thought of quitting agriculture to pursue a part-time casual job, things eventually got better! Emmanuel Byamukama,

resident of Nombe Village, had practiced farming for over 25 years. Save for getting food for domestic consumption Byamukama was disappointed in farming. Fast forward IGCP launched the Vanishing Treasures Project in Byamukama's village and Byamukama was selected as a beneficiary. He was taken through various trainings including training in climate smart agricultural practices, PIP, conservation to mention but a few where he gained vast knowledge and skills that he applied straight away—and that was the start of his transformation!



Emmanuel Byamugisha says the use of trenches and manure on his farm has greatly improved his crop yields and income.

The use of garden trenches and compost manure stood out for Byamukama during the training. He embraced it and in no time, he started to see a difference in his crops and eventually his harvest. "I realized that I had been farming the wrong way! I had made just one trench below my kraal to take the animal waste away from my garden. Little did I know that I was giving organic fertilizer to the neighboring forests while my garden and plants starved," says Byamukama.

Byamukama adds that he had always considered animal dung and urine as dirt little knowing that it was the plug that he needed to manure his garden and better his yields.

"Last year I planted 4 kgs of maize and harvested 300kgs something that had never happened. In the past I would plant 15kgs and harvest 80kgs of maize. The size of the grains has also increased in size. They are much bigger now compared to the past. Thanks to the training and guidance in proper planting methods, says Byamukama.

David Twinomugisha, a resident of Nyarusunzu village also shares about his struggle with running water. David says he had tried so many times in the past to stop water run offs and soil erosion in his garden but failed "My house and gardens are on a slope. Many times, I had tried to figure out ways to at least stop soil erosion but failed. At some point I wanted to go and hire land for farming somewhere in the valley, but I couldn't afford" says David. I am grateful to IGCP for introducing me to garden trenches. They have solved all my problems. My gardens are doing well. I couldn't be any happier" David adds.

According to David, his hope in farming has been restored. He has embarked on planting trees to improve the forest cover and create a source for fuel, timber, and income. David has so far planted 2000 trees and plans to plant even more.



International Gorilla
Conservation Programme

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A Coalition of Conservation International, Fauna & Flora International and WWF

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