

POLICY MEMO

Bwindi General Management – 2013 to 2023 planning process

September 2013

Uganda Poverty and Conservation Learning Group (U-PCLG) Consultations



Introduction

The Poverty and Conservation Learning Group (UPCLG) Uganda is a consortium of conservation and development-minded professionals that advocate for policies and practices to achieve conservation while at the same time eradicating poverty among communities who mostly bear the costs of biodiversity conservation. Uganda Wildlife Authority, a body responsible for the management of protected areas in Uganda is mandated to develop general management plans to guide the day to day management of protected areas. The general management plan for Bwindi, having expired in 2012, UWA embarked on a planning process to develop a 10 year management plan commencing 2013. The planning process entailed consultations of different stakeholders to the management of the Park. PCLG Uganda was identified as one of the stakeholder groups to be consulted. On the 30th September, PCLG Uganda got an opportunity to hold a consultation meeting to discuss the draft Bwindi general management plan 2013-2023. Below we highlight the key issues that were deliberated upon. Annex I gives more comments by members of PCLG outside Uganda, and annex II is a list of participants in this consultation process.

Overview and general comments

The plan is comprehensive and detailed to provide guidance to the management of Bwindi National Park. We appreciate the efforts of the planning team and management of UWA plus all those that contributed to its development thus far.

1. We appreciate that UWA underscores the importance of putting in place a multi-disciplinary planning team to benefit from the different skills and professions in discussing different aspects of planning and natural resources management. However looking at the table of the planning team, one cannot tell the different skills and profession of the team members because institutions are the only ones highlighted. We suggest that you include a column to indicate the

skills and professions of the team members. Also, in future planning processes, it would be a good practice to balance the team by including non-UWA staff with relevant natural resources management skills and professions.

2. The draft general management plan would be greatly improved if all the information and data used could be properly referenced. The Box with the Boundary Description/Boundary Plan and the table showing Bwindi's major visitor destinations by ranking should both be annexed. The cover photo of the Plan could be better enhanced with a front view photo of the gorilla.
3. Bwindi National Park is faced with anthropogenic threats. Since its gazettment in 1991, it has had management interventions that should have provided lessons upon which to build future management interventions especially those that related to neighboring people's issues. Also, Bwindi has greatly benefited from several researches including continuous research work under the Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC). This general management plan would greatly be strengthened if it reflected and was based on some of these key research findings. The GMP does not get down to the household level in order to reach those living within 0.5km of boundary. The link between community opportunities and HH level reach should be brought out as an objective though it may not be directly addressed with UWA.

The summary of the plan for those that live near the boundary is that patrols will increase, footpath access decrease (illegal), and multipurpose areas reduced as tourism increases. From the perspective of those in poverty, these actions have the potential to diminish their income (or subsistence). As we have seen, the community level and tourism projects often miss the poor who are not positioned to take advantage. Thus, the needs to more explicitly recognize and address the needs of the poor.

4. The legislative and policy framework plus international conventions draw attention to the need to consider local communities as partners to conservation. These instruments also encourage and support government of Uganda to consider poverty eradication as a way of promoting conservation of biodiversity. The draft Bwindi plan does not take advantage of these provisions but instead interprets the different clauses to emphasize biodiversity conservation.

Specific Comments

1. Under the executive summary, include the fact that Bwindi is a World Heritage Site and is an 'Important Bird Area' (IBA)
2. On page VI you highlight the main conservation values that were identified during the planning process. We suggest that you put these values into international, national and local values. We think that the local values are not captured in this table as opposed to technical values. We also propose that you re-state these values and even consider combining some. The important value that you should not miss is the fact that Bwindi '**protects a bigger proportion of the Albertine's endemic species**'. You also need to emphasize both monetary and non monetary values e.g. cultural values from the perspectives of the neighbouring communities.
3. Under summarised actions on pages vii-ix you need to clarify some of these actions, for example, instead of "conduct research for changing home range" clarify that the research is about changes in the gorilla home ranges. Under climate change actions, there is a need to link these activities with the national programs on climate change under other government institutions.

Under community conservation, consider a ***negotiated approach in construction and maintenance of animal barriers from the Park to the community land***. Missing activities are those related with ***cementing relations between communities*** and the ***park's management through strategic communications between the two, provision of livelihood support such as affirmative actions for employment opportunities*** and ***building capacity of local community institutions such as HuGo***.

Under tourism and revenue generation, emphasise the ***need for private partnership*** in developing tourism infrastructure and how best to benefit and keep busy the poorer members of the community that depend on the parks resources for their livelihood.

4. On page 17 where you talk about species richness, the importance of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is downgraded by merely considering plants, mammals, birds and butterflies yet there is abundant research on other groups such as reptiles and amphibians which should be mentioned as well!

5. On pages 22, you highlight the enabling legislation, policy and international conventions.

Referring to the National Environment Act (NEA) 1998, therein are provisions that you could use to guide the participation of local people in managing the environment. Under general principals of environment management 2 (a) the Act notes that it is important to assure all people living in the country the fundamental right to an environment adequate for their health and well-being. Some communities such as Batwa have values to which they attach their health, spirituality and heritage. Some of these are in the protected areas and therefore negotiated access is important to improve their well-being. Section 2 (b) calls for maximum participation by the people in the development of policies, plans and processes for the management of the environment.

Section 2 (d) of the NEA calls for conservation of the cultural heritage and use of the environment and natural resources for the benefit of both present and future generations. This can act as an avenue where the people can give their views and perspectives on how they visualise the park and the values they cherish there. A careful harmonisation of their interests with those of the Park management can create a harmonious environment through which biodiversity can thrive.

Section 49 (1) of the Act calls for conservation of objects and sites in the natural environment which are of cultural importance. Section 49 (2) calls for the documentation of objects and sites identified in (1). This calls for joint research between the PA management and communities to document what activities happen at the different sites which can be used for negotiating of use of such sites found in the park.

6. Article **8j** of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) 1992 provides for indigenous knowledge in the management of biodiversity, while preserving the rights and dignity of the local lifestyles of the communities. Article 10c provides for customary sustainable use while article 15 provides for access and sharing of benefits accruing from the management of the genetic resources.
7. Cultural heritage of the indigenous people on page 26. The Batwa cultural values project by ITFC has undertaken a comprehensive cultural analysis of the Batwa in Bwindi and the park is full of their identified cultural sacred sites as their heritage that could act as non-monetary incentives to interest the Batwa and enlist their support in managing the Park. This should be included in this section.

8. Under park management zone page 29, you indicate that the Ruhija area is zoned as a wilderness zone. However, the plan is silent about the proposed major road through this section of the Park that will have serious impacts during its construction and use. As a public road, UWA will not be in position to control its use. This part of the area being a gorilla home range, the use of the road will make it difficult for UWA to manage the viewing of these gorillas and could even make them change their home range and hence negatively impact on gorilla tourism. We recommend that the General management plan clearly articulates these concerns and make a strong case to divert the road through a more populous community to the east of Ruhija.
9. Resource conservation and management page 30. Based on the numerous reviews about this program, we suggest that the management actions and provisions are geared towards building capacity of the local CBOs to be given more responsibility to monitor and enforce negotiated understandings on the use of these resources. Most effort is needed in ensuring monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of these agreements.
10. On page 38 under boundaries management, you explain the issue of Mbwa tract that was erroneously gazetted and that needs to be rectified. In the management actions, you miss out an activity to address this issue. We think it is a long standing issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.
11. Under fire management on page 38, we suggest that you include a provision to appreciate and acknowledge the local people that actively participate in putting out forest fires. The current practice is that those who participate are never recognised and this creates negative attitudes of the people to the management of the Park.
12. Under ecological monitoring management action on page 46, there is a need to recognise the numerous researches that have been undertaken in and around Bwindi. We suggest that you include an activity that will review all the research so far undertaken and get research based management actions for implementation.
13. Under disease surveillance on page 47, we suggest that UWA with partners develops a standard protocol instead of relying on those developed by different researchers. The standard protocol will ensure that similar data are collected by different researchers and thus assist in monitoring and providing guidance in handling diseases.
14. On page 48, under management of disease outbreak, you plan to use waste bins to dispose waste. Considering that there are primates in the park, you need to ensure that the bins are primate proof and not destroyed or removed by primates.
15. On the same page under eradication of exotics, you bring out the eradication strategy after you have prescribed different management actions. We suggest that you start with the strategy at the top of the section.
16. On page 50 under park operations – with objective of improving park management effectiveness and efficiency, we suggest that this is the opportunity to seriously consider bringing on board among the UWA staff, socio-scientists to help think through how human factors can be addressed in the management of the Bwindi National park. Also, there is a need to consider, as a matter of policy and practice an affirmative action for employment

opportunities for the local communities especially those that are marginalized such as the Batwa.

17. On page 51, you talk about the HIV scourge and how the staff is vulnerable because of their working environment where it is hard to stay with their spouses. However, under the management actions, there is no provision to address this concern.
18. One of the management interventions for the climate change on page 58, you need to ensure that you are addressing the right audience that depend on the Bwindi forest for their forest product needs. The recent research under the conservation through poverty eradication, shades light on which communities depend on the forest. As we target these specific communities we need to understand that the tree planting programs have been on-going for a long time. We need to assess and evaluate the performance of these programs and how we can learn from our past mistakes.
19. On page 59 under the table, you have included an activity; 'carry out deliberate habitat manipulation to open the forest canopy in 5 selected pilot sites within the 5 habituated Gorilla ranges which sometimes range outside the park and enhance monitoring and research activities within those sites'. We think that this activity should be under the gorilla home range research. Furthermore, it should be undertaken by an independent reputable research institution such as ITFC to ensure that this is carried out as a component of a comprehensive research undertaking and avoid conflicts of interest.
20. On page 60 you deal with human wildlife conflicts under community conservation. PCLG puts emphasis on this issue and we believe that if not properly addressed, the conflict will result in irreparable damage to the national park and wildlife. It is this conflict that influences the attitudes and subsequently the behaviour of the local people. It is closely tied to the perceptions of benefits or lack of them. We therefore suggest that the management interventions are looked at in a more holistic manner and should involve other partners both private, non-governmental and government.

Including the above interventions in this management plan, will add value to the plan and assist in exploring other funding opportunities to put them into action. We strongly suggest that all interventions in managing human wildlife conflict should meaningfully engage with local communities and opportunities to sustainably benefit those that suffer from wildlife crop raids such as through changing land uses should be explored. The intervention of the private sector should be fully explored. For example, in Nkuringo, a private partner has worked with the people to plant more than 10 square kilometers of tea as a buffer zone. This will go a long way to address the gorilla human conflict and eradicate poverty. Importantly, the interventions should be well anchored within the existing legal framework. For example, the 'fluid' institution of HuGo should be institutionalised, its capacity strengthened properly facilitated, either under UWA or the local government. Also, the training of a stand-by problem animal squad needs to be considered for institutionalisation for effective operation.

21. Revenue sharing program is discussed on pages 63. One of the challenges underpinning revenue sharing based on recent research findings under the Darwin supported project is that ***the communities have a feeling that they are getting a raw deal under the revenue sharing program and that even the funds that are due to them are first diverted to benefit district and or UWA officials.*** There is therefore a need to create deliberate interventions that promote engagement, transparency and effective communication between the PA management and the communities to garner the trust and confidence of the local

communities. The different sources of funds to the communities such as 20% gate collection and the 5 dollar per sold gorilla permit should be well explained and efforts to explain to the communities the revenue management procedures and sharing mechanisms should be well articulated for a local person to understand.

22. Under the resource use it is important to learn from the past mistakes. The CTPA project gives insights about weaknesses in the current memoranda of understanding such as un-updated identification system that is becoming irrelevant to the local people. In addition we suggest that UWA makes deliberate provisions through its partners to build capacities of community based organisations that could assist to take on more responsibilities in monitoring the implementation of the negotiated agreements.
23. On page 70 under the awareness program we suggest you include actions that would promote more engagement and interactions between the lower level community structures and the management of the Park. For example the wardens community conservation could be members of the sub-county teams and a platform to exchange information could be created to ensure dialogue and information exchange at a parish level.
24. Under the Batwa cultural values, we appreciate the inclusion of this specific group as a marginalised minority group. We further suggest that deliberate actions be included to build the capacity of their institutions to enable them undertake important roles for themselves such as managing their earned revenues. More affirmative action to enable them secure employment in the park should also be included in the management actions.

Annex I: Additional Comments by other members of the Uganda PCLG

Page VI overall park management purpose

The overall purpose of park management contains a strong statement on conserving Bwindi forest 'for the benefit of the local, national and global community'. While this sets a good foundation for the management plan, there is no reference to the role of the national park in poverty alleviation, which could be a consideration. The Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on Migratory Species emphasises the role of protected areas in poverty reduction and the sustainable development of local communities. **Linking protected area management actions with poverty alleviation** in the overall park management purpose would enable the Government of Uganda to demonstrate its commitment to achieving the aims of CBD and CMS, and provide a clear agenda for the park-community initiatives that are detailed in the management plan.

Defining success

The management plan contains a series of objectives and management actions to achieve these objectives. While the plan is comprehensive, it would benefit from an **overarching strategy that defines successful park management**. This section could simply comprise clear statements on what successful park management of Bwindi 'looks like', what the current status of Bwindi is and what milestones are needed to achieve successful park management by linking together all the various management actions into one overall strategy.

To give an example - during the Research Workshop in March 2013 for the Conservation through Poverty Alleviation project (CTPA), the group session on 'establishing our Theory of Change for Integrated Conservation and Development (ICD) success' started by asking workshop participants to write their definition of ICD success at Bwindi. These definitions included: ***a growing population of Mountain gorillas and other endangered wildlife in the forest, a reduction in poverty of local communities and local community groups that are active in conservation and working in partnership with national park authorities.***

While this management plan 2012-2022 for Bwindi identifies the overall management purpose, objectives and actions, **establishing a definition of successful park management** (using the SMART principles) would set the foundation from which to monitor progress of all the different management actions within one overarching strategy.

Page 23 resource access program – it appears its implementation has its own weaknesses

Many villagers were registered for resource access although not all received identity cards (those without identity cards are unable to go to the forest to collect resources). The CTPA study showed that wealthier villagers with positions in their community were more likely to have received an identity card than poorer villagers and, consequently, poorer villagers are unable to benefit from resource access. **Priority management actions should be taken to ensure that all villagers registered for resource access have identity cards and identity cards are renewed in a timely manner.**

The CTPA study also showed that some villagers with identity cards were no longer active for various reasons that included old age; disability; they had moved away; they did not feel as though they were gaining the benefits that they wanted from the program or had been removed from the list because of being arrested for illegal activities. **Monitoring resource user activity on a yearly basis is recommended to ensure that individuals no longer active are not on the list and villagers who wish to benefit from the program are able to.**

Page 23 resource access program – the resource users sometimes abet illegal activities

This is an important issue to address yet no data on illegal activity by resource users is presented. A comprehensive review of illegal activity by resource users is required to identify and implement

appropriate management actions. **When rangers arrest villagers for illegal activity, a record should be made on whether the villagers are resource users or not (with validation from CCRs and ITFC) for analysis of these data to inform law enforcement and community conservation strategies, and be reported as part of law enforcement reports.**

Page 68, the issue of 'double booking' when two tourist groups are taken to the same gorilla group on the same day. While this is mentioned on page 68, the issue of double booking needs to be acknowledged in the park management plan with details of a process to prevent **double booking of the same gorilla group and, if for some reason it does occur, the actions to ensure that the same gorilla group only has one tourist group per day.** There is need for an action to address the issue mentioned in the plan that **"lack of gorilla booking information at protected area level has often led to loss of permit sales".**

Page 24 poaching has remained a challenge...and highest around Mpungu areas

UWA established poacher reformed associations, which are potentially a significant management tool to reduce poaching in the national park. However, there is no mention of poacher reformed associations in the management plan. **A clear strategy for effective poacher reformed associations in each district of Bwindi to reduce poaching by direct and positive engagement with bush meat hunters is recommended as a management priority, with actions,** however no strategy on these incentive mechanisms is given – what are the incentives? How will the incentives be administered and in which villages?

In addition, to be successful these mechanisms must be 1) designed and implemented based on social and economic status of villagers undertaking illegal activities and their motives for doing so, and 2) implemented in a fair, transparent and equitable manner.

Social and economic status of unauthorised resource users and motivations for illegal activities

A management action to reduce illegal activities is 'create and separate an investigation unit from law enforcement' for more intelligence gathering. To successfully combat illegal activities, this intelligence gathering must comprise data on the type and location of illegal activities (as gathered by RBMP) but also on the social and economic status of villagers undertaking illegal activities and their motives for doing so. For CTPA, ITFC worked with rangers of Bwindi for the systematic collection of socio-economic data on villagers arrested in the national park. This data provides a social counterpart to RBMP data giving a greater understanding of the different sectors of the community collecting different resources from the national park for different reasons – this enables strategic targeting of incentive mechanisms to reduce illegal activities.

For example, the research found that poorer villagers were collecting minor forest products such as firewood for subsistence needs whereas bush meat hunters (who pose a greater threat to mountain gorillas) were amongst the wealthier members of the communities and motivated by reasons beyond day-to-day subsistence needs. **Continuing socio-economic data collection of unauthorised resource users (in conjunction with ITFC and verification by CCRs) is recommended to ensure that community incentive mechanisms to reduce illegal activities target the right villagers with the right benefits.**

Implemented in a fair, transparent and equitable manner. The CTPA research demonstrated that park-community projects were most likely to be successful if communities were involved in the design and implementation of the programme. The research also showed that project decisions generally did not involve villagers (LC1 level), which limited the success of these projects, and that frontline villagers within 0.5km of the national park boundary were the poorest villagers neighbouring Bwindi. **For incentive mechanisms for communities to be successful, the management plan should detail that these mechanisms are undertaken in a fair, transparent and equitable manner, and that villagers at the LC1 level and frontline villagers will be involved in decision-making.**

Former pit sawyers and miners incurred the costs of conservation when Bwindi was gazetted as a national park, as these villagers lost jobs and a source of income. Yet no specific community conservation project for these villagers has been implemented, which limits the success of park-

community projects to compensate for those whose livelihoods were impacted by the national park. Engaging with former pit sawyers and miners of Bwindi to support these villagers to develop alternative livelihoods (possibly tourist cultural activities – see below) is recommended to reduce the risk that these villagers will undertake illegal activities.

Page 27: *From the fact that communities do not consider punishments from setting fires as deterrent, it becomes imperative to have the weak Wildlife Act. 2000 reviewed to reflect measures to stop wildfires.*

As noted above, acknowledging the limitation of the Wildlife Act 2000 in the management plan is a good foundation to take action to address this – by UWA with U-PCLG to start the **process to change the law**.

Page 29: *Changing home range of the habituated Gorilla groups inside the park. This is in form of expanding or reducing their home range beyond even the international boundaries and outside the protected area in community gardens. The reasons for this new trend are not clear and all interventions are based on speculations and have not therefore been effective*

The management action to undertake research to monitor gorilla home ranges is certainly supported. However, **the historical context of gorilla crop raiding should be considered**, as gorillas were recorded crop raiding in the 1930s (Box 1). Gorilla crop raiding is not a recent phenomenon and incorporating the historical account into the research will aid decision-making on interventions to reduce crop raiding.

The information below can inform the GMP:

Box 1. A history of Mountain gorilla crop raiding around at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

The first evidence of Mountain gorilla crop raiding around Bwindi is a letter, written during the 1930s, by a prospector working in the Impenetrable Forest to the Chief Game Warden. The prospector described his encounters with gorillas and made the following observation: “the gorillas sometimes raid nearby shambas, but I have never heard of them attacking the natives, and the natives leave them alone except to chase them away from their property” (Uganda Game Department Archives, 1923 1994:1933).

Further evidence comes from a report by a game warden of his visit to Bwindi, in 1933, which was then the newly established reserve of Kayonza. The warden described crop raiding by gorillas and noted that gorillas favoured abandoned cultivated patches: “the Kayonza gorilla, apparently, is not guilty of frequent shamba raiding, at least so the natives reassure me. It is true that the gorillas often feed in the vicinity of crops but the attraction is usually the occurrence of various nourishing weeds of exceptional growth which are found on the abandoned cultivated patches” (Uganda Game Department Archives, 1923

1994:1933).

The warden also noted conflict issues arising from the presence of gorillas on community land: “the local natives, who can blame them, very naturally object to the proximity of these fearsome beasts, and usually try and drive them away. I am reliably informed that the gorillas are most contemptuous of their efforts, the females and young having been sent off to safety, males only move when it suits them to do so” (Uganda Game Department Archives, 1923

1994:1933).

Annex II: List of PARTICIPANTS FOR THE UPCLG STRATEGIC MEETING ON THE BWINDI MANAGEMENT PLAN 30/09/2013 AT ACODE BOARDROOM

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