

Project Report, March 2017

# What do wildlife scout programmes need to succeed?

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A review of wildlife scout programmes in  
Uganda

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## About the project

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## Introduction

In Africa, many wildlife protected areas border communal or private land with no physical barrier separating the two. Consequently, wildlife can move freely over community land to graze crops or predate livestock. For poor rural communities, the cost of wildlife predation and grazing is significant: they lose crops and livestock which they depend on for subsistence, suffer the economic and social costs of days and nights spent guarding their farms, and can be injured when scaring away wild animals (Muruthi, 2005). Crop and livestock raiding by wildlife is a significant cause of conflict between local people and conservation authorities, and can threaten conservation efforts. For example, in Laikipi County, Kenya communities resorted to killing elephants in order to protect their crops after a herd devastated their farmland (Graham *et al.*, 2015).

Many initiatives exist to address human-wildlife conflict (HWC). Some initiatives aim to contribute towards the economic development of local communities in order to compensate for crop/livestock losses – an approach that has proven successful. For example, in Amoboseli National Park, Kenya the elephant population doubled between the early 1970s and late 1980s after schemes where local communities benefitted from the park were introduced. In comparison, no such schemes were introduced in nearby Tsavo National Park where the elephant population decreased from 167,000 to 19,000 during the same period (Western *et al.*, 2015). Other case studies show, however, that contributing towards local economic development is not enough to secure positive conservation outcomes and that preventing or reducing crop/livestock raiding by wild animals is essential.

Often, addressing HWC requires extensive costs and resources, for example erecting and maintaining barriers (such as elephant trenches) over several kilometres (Muruthi, 2005). Governments and NGOs in many African countries do not have the funds or manpower required, so addressing HWC by sustainable means is essential. In comparison, wildlife scout<sup>1</sup> programmes have emerged as a potentially effective and financially sustainable option. These programmes enlist local community members as volunteers to guard crops and livestock or maintain barriers to prevent wildlife raids and many now exist across Africa. However, while individual case studies have been published, there have been few assessments of the factors that influence the success of wildlife scout programmes in the long term.

## Project findings

The '[Building capacity for pro-poor responses to wildlife crime in Uganda project](#)' is a three-year project funded by the UK government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. The project included research to better understand why people undertake wildlife crime in two of Uganda's oldest and largest national parks: Queen Elizabeth and Murchison Falls. The research showed that local people were angry about the lack of support they received from conservation authorities when wildlife raided their crops and livestock, and that this resentment was one of the significant drivers of wildlife crime (Travers *et al.*, 2016). Based on this finding, recommendations to reduce HWC include strengthening existing wildlife scout programmes and establishing new ones (Roe, 2016).

This review identifies the factors that are critical for wildlife scout programmes in Uganda to succeed. It is intended to help the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and its NGO partners implement recommendations from the research around Uganda's protected areas to generate sustainable benefits for both wildlife and local communities. The review draws from interviews with key individuals implementing, or involved with, wildlife scout programmes in Uganda, as well as case studies from around the world.

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<sup>1</sup> In this review, the term 'wildlife scouts' refers to community members who have formed a group to voluntarily participate in addressing HWC. Group formation is usually initiated by an external organisation, for example local government, NGOs, a private company or a community institution.

## Types of wildlife scout programmes

Wildlife scout programmes exist across Africa, although the reasons for implementing specific programmes differ. Some are established to generate benefits for those living near to protected areas, others to raise awareness within local communities of the need for (and benefits from) protected areas, and others to address HWC or collect basic monitoring data on wildlife and their habitats. Wildlife scouts can support local communities to participate in protected area conservation and facilitate information sharing between conservation managers and stakeholders, such as those running nature conservancies. Furthermore, involving wildlife scouts in resource management can result in greater appreciation of the need for protected areas by communities (UNEP, 2009).

Wildlife scout programmes have been implemented in two broad contexts (King *et al.*, 2015):

- **Conservancies** - Wildlife populations reside in conservancies, which are community or private protected areas (outside state protected areas).
- **Protected areas** - Wildlife populations reside in protected areas managed by state agencies or government departments.

### Wildlife scout programmes in conservancies

According to IUCN, the definition of a conservancy is:

*“A natural area that conserves ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems, where low level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.”*

The Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association defines conservancies as “private or community land registered and managed for purposes of sustainable wildlife conservation and compatible land uses for better livelihoods.” For conservancies of this definition, local people are often given additional rights regarding resource access compared with state-managed protected areas.

In conservancies, the aim of wildlife scout programmes is to enhance nature conservation and to increase the benefits of conservation to local people. Thus, scouts’ main activities include protecting wildlife from poaching, responding to HWC incidents, participating in ecological monitoring and supporting environmental awareness (for example, the South Rift Association of Land Owners community game scout programme, see <http://soralo.org/game-scouts/>). The role of wildlife scouts to protect wildlife is often significant as state agencies do not operate in conservancies. Where conservancies are well developed and managed, wildlife scouts often receive similar levels of training, equipment, weapons and uniform to state-employed rangers in national parks.



Figure 1. Naibunga Conservancy Scouts examining an elephant carcass (NRT)

While scouts working in conservancies can be authorised to execute conservation activities, the state wildlife agency often maintains ultimate control and decision-making powers over critical wildlife resources (IUCN SULi *et al.*, 2015). For example, at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya, the government mandates armed rangers from Kenya Police Reserve Force to respond to and investigate incidences of insecurity, despite working with the conservancy's community scouts (see [www.lewa.org/wildlife-conservation/security/](http://www.lewa.org/wildlife-conservation/security/)). The state agency also determines the training and weapons that scouts receive, as well as the activities they can undertake. The scouts report directly to the Council of Elders, which was established when the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy was formed.

Within conservancies, wildlife scout programmes operate in relatively well-organised, coordinated and supported environments. Typically they receive donor funding for wildlife conservation, as well as various forms of support from governments and NGOs. There are also 'umbrella' bodies like the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) in Kenya who take the place of government wildlife authorities in providing technical and material support to scouts.





Figure 2. Northern Rangelands Trust Rapid Reaction Team (NRT)

Within conservancies where wildlife is highly valued, wildlife scout programmes are backed by government legislation that sets out their institutional structures, management systems and community rights. For instance, creation of the NRT was aided by Kenya's Wildlife and Conservation Management Act (2013) which established the necessary management systems (Wilkie *et al.*, 2016). The act was especially important in Kenya because of the vast extent of land under conservancies where wildlife reside. Similarly, in Namibia the creation of community conservancies has been supported by the Nature Conservation Amendment Act (1996).

To date, there are many examples of successful wildlife scout programmes in conservancy settings. One of the main reasons for this is that conservancies invest in their programmes, providing equipment and tools that scouts need for their work and remunerating scouts regularly. Furthermore, because of the value of wildlife in conservancies, many governments support scouts in protecting and conserving wildlife.

## Wildlife scout programmes in state protected areas

Most wildlife scout programmes around state protected areas are established to mitigate the costs that people face living next to these areas, especially costs from HWC. HWC affects substantial numbers of people, particularly in countries like Namibia where 43 per cent of its land is state protected (see [www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-highest-percentage-of-protected-reserve-lands](http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-highest-percentage-of-protected-reserve-lands)) and in community areas where wildlife roam. For example, it is estimated that 80 per cent of Africa's elephants range outside protected areas (Muruthi, 2005). The local costs of HWC have escalated as a result of increasing human populations and demand for agricultural land which has degraded buffer zones around protected areas, bringing people in closer contact with wildlife. Communities living or farming adjacent to protected areas are often poor, so a practical and economically sustainable solution is needed.

To address HWC around state protected areas, local people sometimes establish cooperative arrangements amongst themselves to guard crops and livestock, and to create 'standby groups' who can respond by chasing wild animals back to the protected area. These community members agree either to take turns guarding against raiding wildlife, or pay money to individuals to guard their farm. For example, in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia communities independently built watch towers near the boundaries of protected areas where they can look out for wild animals and then call the community

if needed. When an animal is spotted, the community deploys noise-making chattels and cowbells to scare them away (FAO 2009).



Figure 3. A family guarding their crops metres from the boundary of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda (Harrison, 2014)

There are also state and non-state led wildlife scout programmes which alleviate the costs of HWC to people living near protected areas. These programmes are usually established to address retaliatory killing of wild animals and overcome conflicts between local communities and conservation authorities. Government and NGO efforts involve mobilising wildlife scouts to control crop/livestock raiding animals and, in some situations, contributing towards conservation activities. When setting up wildlife scout programmes, conservation agencies work with communities to identify volunteers to serve as wildlife scouts. The agencies train scouts in HWC management, provide tools and equipment and, in some cases, establish enterprises to support the scouts' livelihoods. As described in the following section, wildlife scout programmes in Uganda fall under this category.



## Wildlife scout programmes in Uganda

Wildlife conservation in Uganda is largely achieved through the protected area system managed by UWA. Unlike Kenya and other African countries, there are no nature conservancies: most wildlife reside within protected areas and there is growing pressure to use unprotected land for agriculture.

### The Human Gorilla Organisation programme

The Human Gorilla Organisation programme (HUGO) is one of the oldest and most successful wildlife scout programmes in Uganda. It was established in response to human-gorilla conflict caused by Mountain gorillas straying onto community land (especially banana plantations) and grazing crops. The conflict severely damaged relations between conservation authorities and local people. The HUGO programme was established in 1998 by the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP), operating within eight parishes neighbouring Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP). HUGO members' (wildlife scouts') responsibilities include: monitoring all 'problem' animals; moving them on (by chasing, herding, ringing bells and using red chilli); and collecting data on the timing, location and number of animals roaming outside of BINP and the damage caused.

Whilst IGCP initiated the HUGO programme, other partners have given the support needed to keep HUGO members functional. UWA took responsibility for providing HUGO members with food rations when they are guarding crops. UWA also collaborated (and continues to collaborate) with IGCP and Conservation Through Public Health to train and equip HUGO members so that they can perform their duties.

The HUGO programme has remained un-institutionalised, relying on support from UWA and NGOs. HUGO members do not receive a salary and work purely on a voluntary basis, which puts at risk the sustainability of the programme. To motivate HUGO members, IGCP supported them to establish Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) to start income generation activities. IGCP also provided HUGO members with equipment including bicycles, wet-weather clothing, boots, back packs, and tarpaulins. A few local governments like Ikumba Subcounty also provided support. However, the lack of an institutional home has put HUGO members, as well as their supporting organisations, in a precarious situation regarding who takes the risks and liabilities associated with gorilla protection. When discussions escalated, as a means to quell the 'blame game', HUGO members were encouraged to register with their respective districts as community-based organisations (CBOs). This not only gives them an identity as independent institutions, but also an opportunity to fundraise for engaging in integrated conservation and development activities around BINP.

Elsewhere in Uganda, wildlife scout programmes have recently been established at Murchison Falls and Kidepo Valley National Parks, each with over 200 wildlife scout volunteers. Like the HUGO programme, these wildlife scout programmes were established to address HWC. However, scouts in Kidepo have been reported to [unofficially] support the park's anti-poaching activities. While UWA provides the scouts with basic equipment and training, support from NGOs has been vital to facilitate and motivate the scouts to continue their work. For example, the African Wildlife Foundation supports over 100 scouts, building their capacity to manage HWC as well as enhancing their livelihoods through income generating activities like chilli growing.

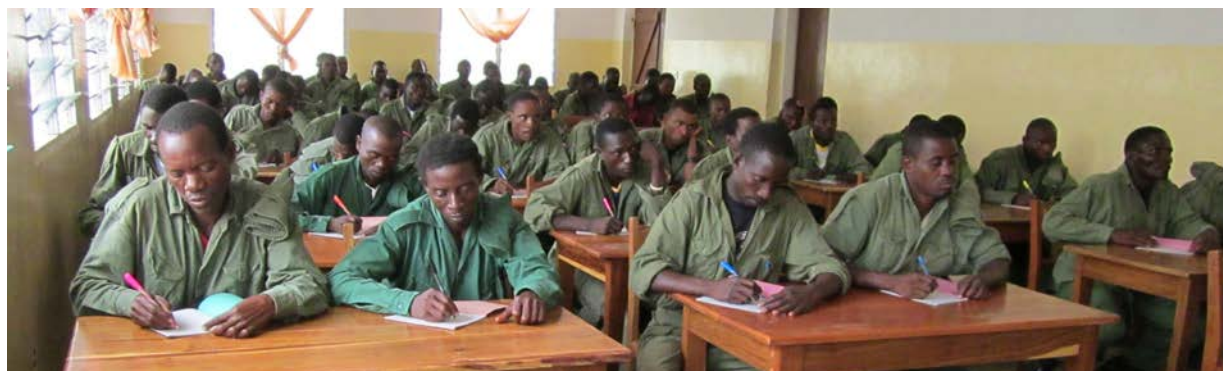


Figure 4. Scouts in training (PAMS Foundation)

## Lessons from Uganda

Most wildlife scout programmes in Uganda have not been institutionalised, with individuals undertaking the work on a voluntary basis. This means that facilitation and incentives are vital to motivate individuals to continue as scouts for the long term. Direct payment is the highest motivation, however this is often not viable because of uncertainties surrounding donor-funded projects, the lack of institutional mechanisms of the scouts themselves and the lack of long term donor financing. Nonetheless, paying scouts a salary is an important consideration to ensure these programmes sustain over the long term. Through interviews conducted for this review for instance, a payment 'of appreciation' at the end of every month was described as a key motivator for wildlife scouts, as well as food allowances or refunds for transport expenses during training. This review identified several factors that are critical for wildlife scout programmes in Uganda to succeed, and these are summarised below.

### Starting viable income generating activities

Income-generating activities are one of the most valued incentives besides direct payment. Preferences for enterprises differ between communities but generally, once identified, they are a significant motivator for individuals to continue volunteering as wildlife scouts. Enterprises used by wildlife scout programmes in Uganda include growing chilli around Murchison Falls National Parks and goat projects for HUGO members at BINP. In implementing these, UWA and other organisations help the scouts to identify suitable enterprises, build the capacity of scouts to execute the enterprises and link them to sustainable markets.

To date, enterprises have been implemented without conditions regarding scout activity. For UWA and NGOs, this lack of conditionality risks losing influence over the actions of scouts. It is possible that scouts lose interest in the scout programme once their enterprise generates income, however the principle of attaching conditions to enterprises must be carefully thought through. Attaching conditions enables UWA and NGO to sustain the wildlife scout programme, especially to continue working with experienced individuals rather than having to start afresh and train new individuals every few years. But conditions must avoid scouts becoming dependent on external agencies and ensure the enterprises build scouts' capacity to be self-reliant.

### Establishing savings schemes

A great success of the HUGO programme has been the group savings arrangement, known as the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA). Globally, the VSLA is a well-documented and tested methodology for enhancing community members' socioeconomic standards. It has been successfully implemented elsewhere in Uganda outside of wildlife scout programmes, which adds to the credibility of VSLAs as motivators for wildlife scouts. For example, a VSLA was established amongst private forest owner associations in the Kyenjojo District as part of a project by the NGO Environmental Alert eight years ago. Despite closure of the project, many of the VSLA still thrive today. One reason why VSLA is suitable for wildlife scout programmes is that they allow external agencies to inject 'seed' money at any stage and this seed money could be conditional on scout activity.

### Providing training and equipment

It clear that wildlife scouts value training highly from the interviews that we conducted with people from various organisations involved with wildlife scout programmes in Uganda. Scouts value training that helps them do their work better and builds their skills and abilities in enterprise initiatives. Some of the key informants interviewed for this project described how scouts become valuable resources to their communities, as they develop expertise and pass on these skills to other members in their community. While scouts value training, providing equipment and food supplies for their work in addressing HWC is essential. Thus, adequate and appropriate equipment and supplies are fundamental to establish a wildlife scout programme.

### Enhancing community status

Wildlife scouts obtain a higher social status as a result of being part of a programme established by UWA, and this is a vital (although perhaps less obvious) factor underpinning the success of Uganda's wildlife scout programmes. The training that wildlife scouts receive elevates their social status in the

community and earns them respect. HUGO members, for example, are reported to feel proud to have badges indicating that they are affiliated to UWA. For this reason, wildlife scouts at Murchison Falls National Park have demanded formal documentation (appointment letters and identity cards) from UWA. When establishing wildlife scout programmes, having some kind of formal identification is critical.

## Registering wildlife scouts at community-based organisations

As wildlife scouts in Uganda are volunteers, many regard their position as uncertain. With no institutional home, scouts are at risk of being engaged and disengaged as NGOs (and their donor funds) come and go. Scouts rely on support from UWA and external agencies to keep going and, in some cases, have been ridiculed by other community members who feel they should be dedicating their time to earning an income rather than 'giving a service' to UWA. The lack of a formal institutional structure makes arrangements difficult for scouts, leaving them vulnerable. Conversely, registering a scout group as a CBO provides stability, recognition within their community and with external organisations, and places them in a better position to lobby for support from government programmes like the National Agricultural Advisory Services.

## Providing health insurance

Wildlife scouts risk personal injury when chasing wild animals back towards protected areas. Despite the importance of providing them with health insurance, in Uganda this issue has not been dealt with appropriately, if at all. The situation is made worse when scouts are simply volunteers and not part of a formal institution. Wildlife scouts in other protected areas in Uganda have demanded health insurance cover for some time but, to date, none has been implemented. Registering scout groups as CBOs can help solve the issue because, as a formal organisation, they can approach donors to access medical insurance. Ensuring that scouts are supported if injured is not only ethically important, but also fundamental for the long term success of wildlife scout programmes.

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Wildlife scout programmes are being implemented across Africa to address human-wildlife conflict. These programmes enlist local community members as volunteers to guard crops and livestock or maintain barriers to prevent wildlife raids. Based on the results of a literature review and informant interviews, this study identifies key factors that help wildlife scout programmes in Uganda to succeed.



## Project Materials

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### Biodiversity

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*Keywords:*

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