

Park action plans: increasing community engagement in tackling wildlife crime

Implementing UWA's Community-Based Wildlife Crime Prevention
Action Plan at Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda



In brief

IIED and partners have been working with the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) to develop park-level action plans that recognise the need for better community engagement in preventing wildlife crime. We are now working with UWA to pilot the implementation of one of these action plans at Murchison Falls National Park. Our approach includes supporting community-based wildlife scout initiatives to monitor human-wildlife conflict and to report on wildlife crime; establishing new enterprises as a source of income for the households that volunteer as wildlife scouts; and building the capacity of UWA's Community Conservation Unit to better engage with local people, more effectively target their interventions, and raise their profile as a key element of UWA's overall approach to tackling wildlife crime.



Why community engagement?

The central role of community engagement in reducing wildlife crime is often overlooked by national governments, which tend to focus efforts on strengthening law enforcement. IIED and partners have been working with UWA for several years to better understand who is involved in wildlife crime in its key national parks and why. Our research has shown that while poverty and lack of alternative income-generating opportunities are drivers of poaching and illegal wildlife trade (IWT), so is resentment about high levels of conflict between humans and animals. Results from our previous IWT Challenge Fund project 'Building capacity for pro-poor responses to wildlife crime in Uganda'

(www.iied.org/ugandawildlifecrime) suggested that the greatest reductions in wildlife crime will result from addressing these factors by:

- establishing 'wildlife-friendly' enterprises as a source of income,
- supporting community-based wildlife scouts, and
- mitigating human-wildlife conflict.



Context and approach

Murchison Falls National Park is Uganda's largest national park. Most species caught illegally at the park are destined for national and cross-border bushmeat markets, but there is emerging evidence of opportunistic poaching of high value species for international trade including elephants, lions and pangolins.

Wildlife crime is linked to poverty within communities, but also to high levels of human-wildlife conflict. UWA has a Community Conservation Unit to support community engagement around their national parks, but the unit is one of its most poorly resourced. This results in weak capacity that is further hampered by limited profile and voice within UWA headquarters. There is also limited coordination between UWA and NGOs that support community-based interventions to tackle IWT.

There are more than 400 voluntary, community-based wildlife scouts at Murchison Falls. Their aim is to help reduce conflict between animals

and the humans that live and farm near them, but only 120–160 scouts receive livelihood support in-kind for their efforts. Understandably this affects the scouts' motivation and effectiveness, and, in turn, this impacts upon communities' feelings of resentment towards wildlife.

Our four-year (2017–2021) project funded by the UK Government's IWT Challenge Fund will address these issues in three ways:

1. Support the implementation of the community engagement elements of UWA's Community-Based Wildlife Crime Prevention Action Plan at Murchison Falls.
2. Build the institutional capacity of UWA's Community Conservation Unit to better balance the focus on law enforcement with community engagement.
3. Convene a 'Coordination Forum' involving NGO, private sector and government actors with an interest in conservation at Murchison Falls.



Our plans

'Implementing park action plans for community engagement to tackle IWT' July 2017 to April 2021

1) Community engagement

Wildlife scouts

We will identify all the existing wildlife scout initiatives around Murchison Falls National Park, explore how these correspond to wildlife crime and human-wildlife conflict hotspots, and strengthen support at priority sites.

New enterprises

We will work with the households of the wildlife scouts to establish small enterprises that can generate income – as an incentive to remain in the wildlife scout programme. We will particularly focus on enterprises that can also help mitigate human-wildlife conflict, such as chilli production.

Impact assessment

We will collect data on past and present snaring activities, incidences of human-wildlife conflict, and changes in community attitudes to conservation, in order to assess the impact of our interventions. We will use the lessons generated to inform the further roll-out of park-level action plans to other sites in Uganda.

2) Institutional strengthening

Skills development and mentoring programme

We will train UWA Community Conservation Unit wardens in key skills, such as conflict resolution, community mobilisation and effective reporting. We will also work with them to improve coordination of their community-based activities with law enforcement activities.

UWA community of practice

We will establish a community of practice within UWA on community engagement, including annual meetings for Community Conservation Unit staff to share skills and experiences, build self-esteem, and increase voice and profile.

UWA Community Conservation Policy

We will assist UWA in revising its Community Conservation Policy to set a clear direction for the Community Conservation Unit within UWA's overall strategy on tackling wildlife crime.

Who's who

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), UK

IIED is leading the project, coordinating the different components, and managing monitoring and evaluation and reporting activities. IIED is working with Dr Henry Travers (Cambridge Conservation Solutions) on the field-based activities, and Dr Julia Baker (Balfour Beatty) on the UWA capacity-building elements of the project.

IIED is a policy and action research organisation. We promote sustainable development to improve livelihoods and protect the environments on which these livelihoods are built. We specialise in linking local priorities to global challenges. IIED works with some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them - from village councils to international conventions.

www.iied.org

Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)

UWA is a vital project partner, supporting all its elements. UWA conserves and manages Uganda's wildlife. As a government agency, it is mandated with the conservation and sustainable management of wildlife and protected areas in Uganda in partnership with neighbouring communities and other stakeholders for the benefit of the Ugandan people and the global community.

www.ugandawildlife.org

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Uganda

WCS is supporting the wildlife scout programme and collating data to assess the effectiveness of community engagement activities for reducing wildlife crime. WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action education and inspiring people to value nature. WCS was established in 1895 and has been supporting conservation in Uganda since 1957. Since 2000, WCS has had a permanent research

presence in Uganda and has been undertaking research, supporting protected area management and working to reduce people park conflicts by improving livelihoods.

www.wcsuganda.org

Village Enterprise, Uganda

Village Enterprise is responsible for supporting the establishment of new community enterprises, coordinating with the WCS-supported wildlife scout programme. Working in rural African villages, Village Enterprise's mission is to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through entrepreneurship and innovation. Village Enterprise has started over 39,000 businesses and trained over 156,000 east Africans through a one-year graduation program that provides seed capital, training and on-going mentoring by a local business mentor as well as support from business savings groups.

www.villageenterprise.org

Uganda Conservation Foundation (UCF)

UCF is establishing and leading the Murchison Falls Coordination Forum. It is the only UK-based charity to focus solely on Ugandan conservation and works as a support to Ugandan government and private bodies. The charity aims to focus on conservation issues that gain little or no attention from NGOs and provide practical support to conservation and revitalisation efforts as well as uniting the needs of Ugandan people with conservation and development objectives.

www.ugandacf.org

Uganda Poverty and Conservation Learning Group (U-PCLG)

U-PCLG brings together Ugandan conservation and development practitioners to share experience, generate information, and work together to inform policy and practice. It has a key role in the national dissemination of project findings.

www.povertyandconservation.info/uganda

Get involved

Visit our website

www.iied.org/park-action-plans

Here you will find links to written reports as we produce them.

Read the Murchison Falls Community-Based Wildlife Crime Prevention Action Plan

<http://pubs.iied.org/G04161/>

Join the Coordination Forum

The Murchison Falls Coordination Forum is for representatives of NGOs, government actors and community-based organisations working on community interventions at the park. It aims to ensure that elements of the park action plan are implemented by different actors in a coordinated way. Members of the forum will meet at least twice during the project to share experiences and lessons learned, and identify potential opportunities for collaboration.

If you are interested in being part of this forum, please contact Shivan Kamugisha:
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Contact us

For general queries about the project, please contact Dilys Roe:
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About our funders

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Project Materials

Biodiversity

Keywords:
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Photo credits:

Cover

Maize production enterprise
(Village Enterprise 2017)

Inside clockwise from left

Maize production enterprise
(Village Enterprise 2017)

Store enterprise
(Village Enterprise 2017)

Uganda Kob in MFNP
(Tiziana Zoccheddu 2010)

Sign at edge of MFNP
(mjmalley, Flickr 2012)