

Conserving
CHIMPANZEES in Uganda:
Experiences using **CULTURAL** and
COMMUNITY Resources



The Cross-Cultural
Foundation of Uganda

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Table of contents

	Page
Summary	1
1. Introduction	2
2. The conservation of chimpanzees in Uganda	4
3. Conservation efforts motivated by community cultural identity and resources	7
4. Chimpanzee conservation and the initiatives of private forest owners	11
5. Interventions for the conservation of chimpanzees and forests by development partners.....	14
6. Engaging the youth in conservation	17
7. Cooperation and coordination of efforts to conserve chimpanzees and their habitat	20
8. Culture and conservation - conclusions and opportunities	22
9. Recommendations.....	24
References	26



Summary

This publication stems from a 2-year project, supported by the Arcus Foundation, to harness positive cultural resources and strengthen the collaborative conservation of chimpanzees and their habitat in the Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions.

Uganda is home to about 5,000 chimpanzees, mainly found in these regions. Since the colonial period, these chimpanzees have, to a large extent, resided in protected areas with limited contact with communities. In the past few decades however, rapid population growth and severe deforestation have resulted in their exposure and contact with humans, resulting in human-chimpanzee conflicts, mostly due to crop raiding and competition for water sources. The chimpanzees have now been registered on the IUCN 2016 Red List as an endangered species, and many now reside outside protected areas. Several state and non-state conservationists have employed various strategies to address this situation.

This publication attempts to present the experiences of state and non-state actors in conserving the chimpanzees and their habitat, illustrated by case studies of clans, families, private forest owners and development partners. It aims at triggering discussion on appropriate chimpanzee conservation interventions and the use of cultural and community resources, within and beyond the conservation sector.

These experiences show that on the one hand, communities and private forest owners in Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions draw on their cultural attachment to conserve nature by protecting private forests as sources of traditional knowledge, traditional medicine and food, and as sources of spirituality and hosts of totemic animals. Their interventions include acquiring and maintaining private forests, planting indigenous trees, cultural education about the value of nature and totems, and promoting the chimpanzee as a symbol of clan identity. On the other hand, development partners and state agencies driven by biodiversity conservation, have intervened through community sensitisation and education, forest monitoring, tree planting, financial and non-financial incentives, such as Payment for

Ecosystems and livelihood support, restoration of water systems management, carbon trading and ecotourism. All these interventions shared a common ultimate goal to conserve forests and chimpanzees, with most targeting the youth. Although not always well coordinated, all partners recognised the value of collaboration at district and national levels.

This report notes that most interventions are project driven and their short-lifespans were identified as a challenge to sustained results, giving rise to the need to formalise partnerships to conserve the chimpanzees and their habitat in the long run. In spite of the fair number of interventions, there is limited documentation on their impact or evaluation of the outcomes, which is necessary to address future interventions. Operationalising the legal instruments for conservation of endangered species and wildlife outside protected areas was also highlighted as an issue of urgent concern. It was found that in most interventions limited attention was paid to the drawing on cultural and community resilience and resources which are essential for sustained outcomes given that harnessing indigenous knowledge, traditional responsibility for conservation and traditional structures such as clans, pave the way for a deeper understanding and commitment to conservation. Interventions by development partners that provided financial and non-financial incentives have increased community awareness and capacity to value their natural heritage, but more needs to be done to contextualise and achieve the long-term goal of conserving chimpanzees and their habitat. While strategies to engage the youth through formal and non-formal spaces also need to be consistent, community and culturally-situated interventions, with regular assessment to gauge attitudinal change, are needed. Collaboration amongst conservationists has proved to be valuable for exchange of knowledge and experiences on the value and viability of forest conservation, as well as presenting the potential to advocate for district and national level conservation agenda, including combating large-scale deforestation. Thus, forging and formalising partnerships at district and national level are also recommended.



1. Introduction

This publication has been produced to document experiences in conserving the chimpanzees and their habitat in Uganda, drawing on cultural and community knowledge and other resources. It is anticipated that the lessons and insights drawn from these experiences will enhance practice relevant to the conservation of chimpanzees in the country.

In Uganda, both tangible and intangible cultural heritage are closely associated with nature. Most communities attach cultural significance to forests, trees and water bodies, caves, hills, rocks and rock formations that are considered sacred. The flora and fauna found in these locations provide important resources for cultural identity, worship and thanksgiving, other cultural and social practices, spiritual beliefs and healing systems, as well as materials for food, crafts and housing.

In 2014, with support from the Arcus Foundation, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) carried out a desk study, with particular focus on the great apes, which confirmed a significant nexus between culture and conservation in several countries. It highlighted cultural resources linked to ancestry, genealogy, identity, spirituality, social practices, legends and folklore and traditional medicine. It was concluded that such cultural and social attachments contribute to communities' motivation to conserve nature, and the great apes in particular.

In 2018, building on the findings of this study, CCFU carried out action research to establish the extent to which positive cultural resources can contribute to the conservation of the great apes, specifically in Uganda. The findings revealed that the two cultural institutions of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom and Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu have cultural values and principles associated with conservation, as well as clan and traditional governance structures that provide stewardship over their natural heritage. The research findings indicated no cultural attachment to the mountain gorilla but confirmed that two clans, the Batangyi (in the Rwenzori) and the Bayanja (in Bunyoro) identify with the chimpanzee as their totem. By virtue of this attachment, members of these clans are responsible to conserve and protect their totem from harassment and any other form of harm, and are potentially key allies in the conservation of chimpanzees.

The study also noted that, while the Uganda Wildlife Policy 2014 protects wildlife in protected areas, there are chimpanzees residing outside the gazetted areas due to the depletion of forest cover along the boundaries of the national parks, which need to be conserved. In some instances, this had resulted in high human-chimpanzee conflict due to crop raiding and attacks although, in some cases, there had been a degree of peaceful co-existence between the communities and chimpanzees. According to conservationists in the region, there are over 500 private forest owners in Bunyoro, some of whom deliberately host chimpanzees, was also recognised as an opportunity to protect and enhance the chimpanzees' habitat.

In this light, and with the continued support of the Arcus Foundation, CCFU embarked on the implementation of a 2-year project to harness positive cultural resources and thus strengthen collaborative conservation of chimpanzees (between State and non-State actors) in the Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions. The project targets cultural institutions, clans (particularly the Bayanja and Batangyi), private forest owners, the youth, as well as other stakeholders whose practices and experiences contribute to the conservation of chimpanzees and forests in Bunyoro and Rwenzori.

This publication attempts to document learning points from interventions that can serve as points of reference for future conservation efforts. These interventions range from the establishment of community-based organisations, collaborative monitoring of forests and removal of snares, to community sensitisation on cultural and conservation values, using the chimpanzee as a logo on clan identity cards and letterhead to heighten publicity.

Similarly, while private forest owners are not necessarily members of the clans that identify with the chimpanzee as a totem, they are motivated by their cultural value and association with nature. As a result, some have created spaces for chimpanzees to occupy, carried out community sensitisation, and have created music and drama on conservation of the chimpanzee to raise awareness. A number of NGOs have also been involved in carbon trading, ecotourism, youth and community sensitisation and tree planting, from which lessons can be drawn. Efforts by some development partners

to integrate cultural resources in their interventions to strengthen community engagement have also been documented.

The information was generated through interviews with respondents from organisations and institutions involved in conservation in general, and/or conservation of the chimpanzees in Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions specifically.

The aim of this publication is thus to trigger discussion and support appropriate chimpanzee conservation interventions and the use of cultural resources, within and beyond the conservation sector. The target audiences therefore are conservation-focused state and non-state actors including cultural institutions,

private forest owners, conservation organisations (CBOs, NGOs), and international organisations and development partners.

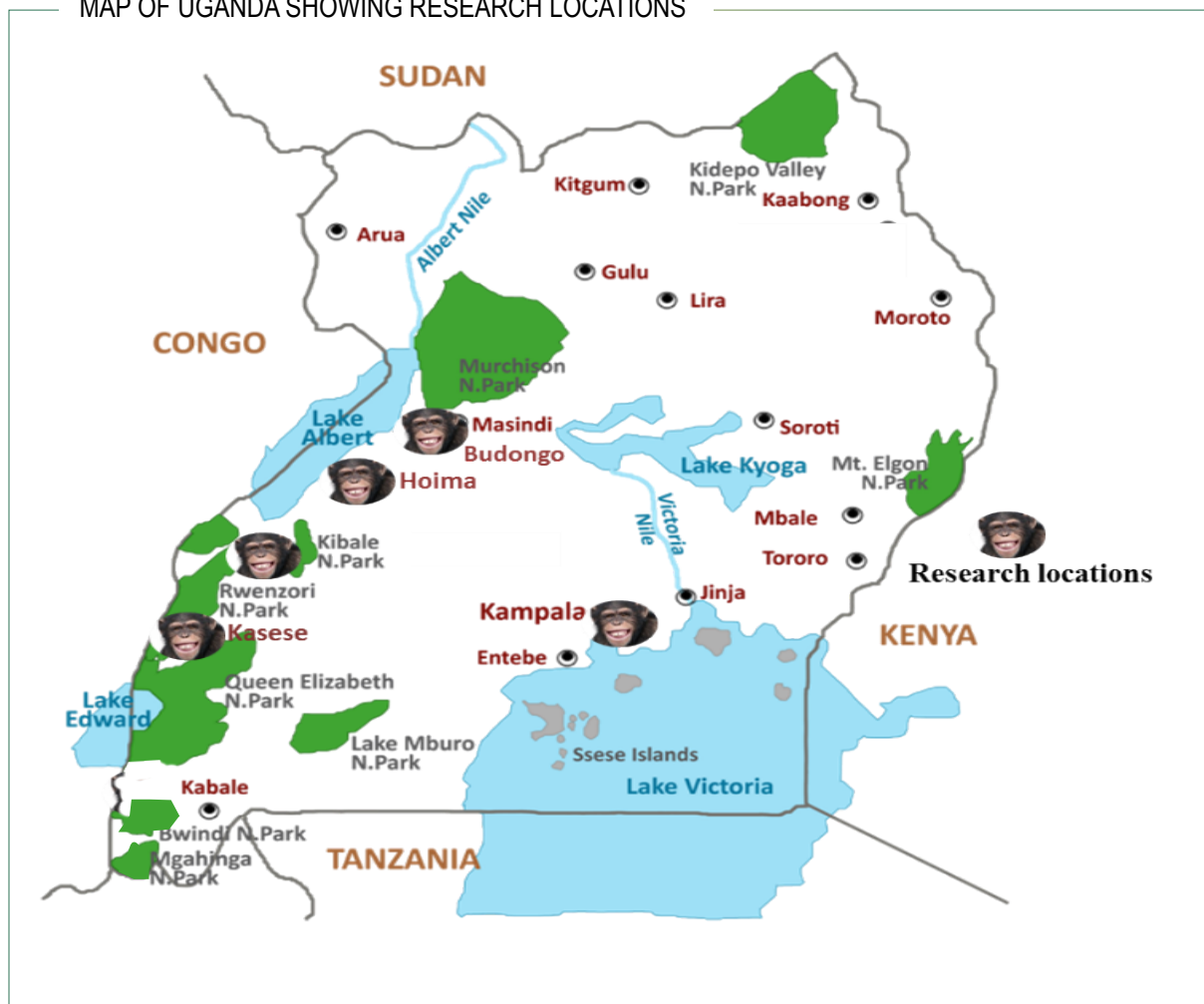
The next chapters provide an overview of state structures and the legal provisions for the conservation of natural resources in Uganda; of conservation efforts motivated by community cultural identity and resources; and of initiatives taken by private forest owners and development partners with varying degrees of success. Chapter Six presents effective ways to engage the youth in conservation, while Chapter 7 outlines different forms of cooperation and coordination of conservation efforts. The final chapters, Eight and Nine, present conclusions, opportunities and recommendations.

2. The conservation of chimpanzees in Uganda

Uganda is home to the highest number of pan-troglodytes, sub-species schweinfurthii chimpanzees in Africa, most of which are found in Kibale National Park, in and around Bugoma and Budongo forests and in the Rwenzori Mountains National Park. The available statistical information on chimpanzees in Uganda is fragmented and not up to date, and has mainly been produced by development and research organisations, which tend to generate project specific information, whose scope may be limited. In 2001, a census in all

the main forests within the chimpanzee range estimated their population at 5,000 (Plumptre et al, 2010). In 2003, 2011 and 2018, several studies indicated the presence of chimpanzees in fragmented forest blocks ranging from 560 to 260 animals in specific locations (in Budongo, Bugoma, Nsenyi, Katebwa and Bundibugyo, among others (CCFU, 2018)). A chimpanzee census planned for 2020 by the Uganda Wildlife Authority, was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

MAP OF UGANDA SHOWING RESEARCH LOCATIONS



During the colonial era (between the 1920s and 1960s) large tracts of land were gazetted as “Protected Areas” designated for the conservation of wildlife with strict prohibition of any human activity and settlement. The interface between humans and chimpanzees was not common, as the latter occupied forests in these areas and were rarely seen on community land or farms.

Between 1970 and 1986 - a period of political instability - the country experienced a breakdown in State authority, which led to disregard for national regulations, neglect, and encroachment of many of the country's protected areas and nature reserves. With the return of political stability after 1986, the 1995 Constitution of Uganda obligated the State to protect important natural

resources, including land, water, wetlands, minerals, oil, fauna and flora on behalf of the people. In 1996, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) was established and mandated to provide this protection.

The Authority employed an iron-fisted, fortress mentality, mirroring the colonial approach to conservation, which included harsh treatment and expulsion of community members attempting to access their cultural resources and material interests in the protected areas. While this approach resulted in the restoration and protection of natural resources in the national parks and the protection of the chimpanzees (among other wildlife), the relationship with communities deteriorated into resentment, hostility and conflict over access to cultural and economic resources.

More recently, UWA has however employed different strategies to ensure community awareness, participation and benefit from its conservation interventions, moving away from its initial, more militaristic approach. Revenue sharing, community-based conservation, resource access, participatory forest monitoring and capacity building are some of the strategies currently employed by UWA. The Authority has also established community conservation offices and zones for effective and rapid responses to conservation concerns. These interventions have improved community relations with UWA and increased

community interest and cooperation in conservation-related work, while diffusing the initial tensions that existed with communities around protected areas.

Subsequently, the Uganda Wildlife Act (2000) included general provisions (in Articles 2(d) and 19(c)) which stipulated the protection of rare, endangered and endemic species of wild plants and animals. While Article 5(f) stipulated the establishment of management plans for wildlife conservation areas and for wildlife populations outside these areas, these provisions have however not been elaborated in national policies, bye-laws or regulations. As a result, the conservation of chimpanzees outside protected areas has been left largely to non-state conservationists whose experience this publication is meant to capture. It is nevertheless anticipated that the recently developed guidelines on the conservation of chimpanzees outside protected areas and the guidelines on endangered species will be publicised and operationalised by UWA soon.

Besides challenges associated with hosting chimpanzees in communities, their habitat – the forest – is also at risk of depletion. Rapid population growth, demand for fuel and increasing demand for land for cultivation, settlement and commercial agricultural (especially sugar cane) has intensified the pressure on public and private forests, especially in areas near Bugoma forest.



CCFU supports the #SaveBugomaCampaign aimed at controlling the destruction of Bugoma Forest



An area in the vicinity of Bugoma Forest being cleared for a sugar cane plantation

The National Forest Authority (NFA) has noted with concern the rapid depletion of forest cover in Uganda over the past four decades. With increased deforestation, the habitat of the chimpanzees is rapidly shrinking. This has not only disrupted forest corridors that permit easy movement and access to food by the chimpanzees but has also heightened human-animal contact and conflict. In the past, chimpanzees rarely interacted with humans, even as totemic animals; loose groups of chimpanzees can now be found outside protected areas living near and on community land, farms and privately owned forests. In some instances people, especially children, have been injured by chimpanzees, stoking community hostility and leading to further deforestation of private forests to eliminate their habitat so that the chimpanzees are forced to move away. Further, while the chimpanzees are not a direct target for hunters, in some unfortunate instances, they get accidentally caught in snares set up for larger animals in private forests, resulting in injury and sometimes death. Chimpanzees are now included on the IUCN 2016 Red List as an endangered species.

In an effort to restore effective forest management, the National Forest Authority (NFA) has however extended technical assistance in forest management to communities, established regional plant nurseries providing free tree seedlings, and organises capacity building and community sensitisation activities to promote reforestation and agroforestry.

The state agencies responsible for conservation have laws and policies on conservation that provide the required framework to protect and promote the nation's natural heritage. The recognition and involvement of communities by state conservation agencies illustrates the need for cooperation and collective responsibility for conservation. Besides demands for economic gain, addressing the lack of current statistics, limited public awareness about endangered species and wildlife outside protected areas, and how to deal with them, as well as the need to restore forest corridors, remain significant challenges.

3. Conservation efforts motivated by community cultural identity and resources

For many years, prior to the establishment of State conservation laws and policies, the custodians of natural heritage were the cultural communities and institutions who assigned specific individuals or clans to protect and oversee the conservation of their natural heritage. With time, individuals, families and clans also acquired private forests by inheritance, donation or purchase, which they too conserved for posterity. With the introduction of laws and state agencies mandated to conserve nature and wildlife, the traditional responsibility for conservation has however reduced, as custodians have limited authority over public (State-run) and privately-owned forests they would have been traditionally responsible for.

Communities across Uganda are culturally and socially organised in clans that often identify with a particular animal or plant as a totem, many of which are found in forests. Through legends, songs, proverbs and stories, the younger generation are taught about their cultural identity, including their totems. Forests are sacred places where ancestral spirits reside and provide a source of traditional food, medicine and materials. This cultural association informs different communities' relationship with nature for its cultural, social and

economic value, and explains their constant desire to access the forests leading to conflicts when such access is restricted.

Besides UWA and NFA, the State agencies mandated to conserve wildlife, forests and the natural environment, some non-state actors make direct and indirect contributions to conservation. Their efforts to utilise cultural values and resources, and to harness collective efforts to conserve and promote the chimpanzees are illustrated below.

Several clans identify with various primates, but only two clans in western Uganda, the Abayanja (Banyoro) and Abatangyi (Bakonzos) identify with the chimpanzees as their totem. Other communities perceive the chimpanzees as "people who ran away from the community to evade taxes" or "wild people" but also as "brothers or sisters" or "relatives who should be respected" because they share human characteristics. Among the Bakonzos, the belief in a god of wild animals and of the forest contributes to the protection of these animals and their habitat. As a result, hunters from these communities refrain from hunting the chimpanzee because of its likeness to humans.

Clan-based forest conservation



An inter-clan meeting at Kabwoya to develop a joint communique for the conservation of their totems

Individuals, families and clans, especially in Bunyoro, own forests they have acquired through inheritance or purchased out of a passion for conservation. With exposure to education and capacity-building by development partners, some of these owners have enhanced their knowledge and appreciation of forests, to include their importance as water catchment areas and their ultimate contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change. Ownership of a forest by a clan offers it opportunities to collectively contribute to conservation, protect its totem, nurture the youth as future custodians, and rally and plan for a common agenda. Here is an example:

Sustaining a clan's legacy of conservation

CASE STUDY

Kwonga clan members inherited a forest from their great grandfather in the 1920s and have conserved it since then. The Kwonga clan, whose totem is a bushbuck, are one of large families out of about 20 within Kitole village who own private forests that host wildlife that are sometimes hunted and killed. In the past, this forest was part of a chimpanzee migration corridor, but since the 1980s when the forest corridor along Rutoma was cut off, chimpanzees no longer visit. Clan members say that their main motivation to preserve the forest is their traditional attachment to it, although some have cut portions because they do not share this conviction and do not see any use for it.

In the past, the clan did not have a structured way of engaging members to resolve common concerns, but in the 1970s it took the initiative to organise itself to discuss the protection of the forest, among other issues. Following sensitisation by the Chimpanzee Trust and other development partners, the clan began to hold regular meetings to discuss the conservation of their forest. They also use this opportunity to orient the youth about the importance of the forest and the need to conserve it. As a clan, they decided to preserve 66 Acres as a contribution to the environment. This has a diversity of medicinal plants, food and natural trees, such as *Prunus Africana*, incense trees, as well as large mushrooms.

All around the Kwonga forest, farmers have cut down their forests for cultivation and in some cases to rid themselves of wildlife that raid their farms. In some places, encroachers have cut trees to cure tobacco, obtain poles for hoe handles, while others come in to hunt. Some of the youth in the area insist on accessing the forest for timber because they see the forest as a generally untapped resource.

Mobilising clan members and youth to monitor and conserve the forest has however been effective. Clan members patrol to ensure that it is not encroached and involve the youth who are vigilant because they have learnt to value the forest. Clan members who are in the neighbourhood also send alerts if they learn of any activity in the forest. The same community members who previously cut down their forests now come to the Kwonga forest to collect firewood, medicinal plants and mushrooms which they access free of charge.

Currently the main benefits from the clan's conservation efforts include the protection of the environment, and a sustainable source of materials (timber) for house construction. The restoration of the forest corridors will provide opportunities for the chimpanzees to return to the forests and away from community gardens where the potential of human – chimpanzee conflict is high, as evidenced in neighbouring communities. The Kwonga clan was recently featured in the New Vision newspaper for their exemplary conservation initiative.



The Kwonga clan, featured in the New Vision newspaper on 12th October 2020, for their exemplary conservation initiative.

In the clan's management plan, the establishment of an apiary project and ecotourism targeting cultural resources, caves, and traditional brewing are some of the future ideas for developing the forest. The clan plans to develop and submit a proposal to conservation NGOs for technical and financial assistance.

This example indicates that, while the state conservation agencies may have taken over the roles and responsibilities of conservation from traditional leaders, the cultural values, beliefs, attachment, knowledge and skills associated with nature remain. The desire to conserve reflected in the experiences of the clans, families, and individuals demonstrates their resilience in spite of the challenges outlined above, and these offer opportunities for sustained conservation interventions. The ability to take on new knowledge to improve on the value of the forests also point to opportunities for learning and for developing solutions to conservation concerns appropriate to the cultural context.

Women clan members inspired to conserve chimpanzees

In most communities in Uganda, women's rights to land are traditionally restricted to user rights and to being custodians of land for their male children. In Bunyoro, however, some women came into possession of forests by inheritance, which they have conserved, while being passionate for chimpanzee protection.



CASE STUDY

Agnes Mukooto, whose family acquired land in 1978, is a forest owner in Kabwoya (Bunyoro). She is from the Basiita clan, who have a special attachment to the chimpanzee which is perceived as a relative. Agnes's love for nature conservation and chimpanzees stems from her father's stories about their relationship with humans, which she has shared with her children. Legend has it that the chimpanzees were once members of the Basiita who escaped to the forest to evade paying taxes and therefore are considered their

brothers and sisters.

Over the years, Agnes and her family noticed 2 chimpanzees frequenting the family forest. They decided to plant sugarcane especially for the chimpanzees, as well as fruits and indigenous trees to enrich their plantation. Agnes' neighbours often visit her forest to access traditional medicine, mushrooms, wood fuel, and fruits, which makes them value it. The challenge Agnes faces, however, is the presence of baboons which, unlike chimpanzees, are destructive and raid her neighbours' gardens. This has caused tension with them, some of whom are farmers and hunters involved in burning forests – an activity that also threatens her forest.

Evas Muhumuza also belongs to the Basiita clan, lives in Kabwoya and coexists with the chimpanzees. As a private forest owner with about 15 acres of a natural forest, Evas cares for the chimpanzees because she considers them clan mates. She narrates the story of the clan's relationship with the chimpanzee which was told to her as a child and which she has passed onto her children so that they too will care for the forest and the chimpanzees.

Such women drawing on their clan identity to conserve their forests and the chimpanzee belong to a category of actors who have not been deliberately targeted in conservation efforts by development partners. Women are often responsible for transmitting cultural values to children, not only about their cultural identity through storytelling, songs, proverbs, taboos, but also through their actions and management of nature. The non-confrontational approach to accommodating and feeding chimpanzees on private forest land and sharing this attitude with their children contributes to a foundation for self-motivated and lasting conservation, rather than responding to the fear of penalties or the drive for monetary gains.

Clan-founded CBO promoting conservation

CASE STUDY

In Bunyangabo (Rwenzori region), the Abatangyi clan identifies with the chimpanzee as their totem. The clan founded and registered a community-based organisation in 2011 with the aim of conserving their cultural heritage, with a particular focus on their totem. The Kinyampanika Chimpanzee Conservation and Development Association (KICHIDA) currently has

174 members including women, men and youth. Its mission is to promote the conservation and welfare of chimpanzees in the Rwenzori region. Recognising the need for collective efforts and responsibility, its membership is open to other clans.

In collaboration with UWA and with support from the World Wildlife Fund, KICHIDA has carried out community sensitisation, participated in chimpanzee patrols to minimise encroachment; organised meetings and radio talk shows to raise awareness; organised sports for the youth and participated in chimpanzee football tournaments in the neighbouring towns of Bunyangabo and Kilembe.

Being founded by members of the community and addressing its concerns regarding cultural identity and conservation, the Association has been well placed to influence community practice and monitor change. From its inception, it targeted ex-hunters to surrender their trade and tools, offering them an occupation as agents of conservation. 25 converted ex-hunters are now volunteers involved in sensitising communities, carrying out forest monitoring alongside UWA, and removing snares and traps from the forest to safeguard to chimpanzees. So far over 200 wire traps, 45 metallic traps, and numerous log snares have been removed and destroyed. KICHIDA believes that most of the forests on Mt Rwenzori are now free of poachers and snares.

In partnership with UWA, KICHIDA has also participated in chimpanzee surveys and monitoring for habituation. It estimates the number of chimpanzees around the Rwimi River, along the border between Kasese District and Bunyangabo District at about 300, a significant population requiring protection.

With support from UWA, KICHIDA has established a 4 km cultural and chimpanzee tracking trail, although publicity and marketing are still required. The trail has cultural features such as a traditional shrine, medicinal plants, besides the chimpanzees and other wildlife. With support from the World Wildlife Fund and UWA, the Association now has 22 trained scouts in basic chimpanzee habituation and 9 in tour

guiding. The sustainable use of traditional medicinal plants is promoted and cultural knowledge about such resources transmitted to the youth.

Within the region, KICHIDA spearheaded by the Batangyi clan, is considered exemplary in conservation and in protecting their totem – the chimpanzee. Julius Kaganda, the Association Chairperson however notes that information on conservation and the need to protect the chimpanzee needs to be constantly passed from one generation to the next, if conservation efforts are to be sustained. There is an urgent need to carry out a census of the chimpanzees and establish the impact of interventions made in the region so far.



KICHIDA members removing snares from forests neighbouring the Rwenzori Mountains National Park

The promotion of one's culture and cultural identity supports individual and community motivation and ability to mobilise around common concerns. The initiatives taken by clans whose totem is the chimpanzee have been particularly successful, in spite of limited resources, because the implementers are driven by a desire to conserve their heritage. This presents an opportunity to collaborate and strengthen conservation work. Recognising the need to partner with other clans and organisations has also strengthened their efforts and given them opportunities to diversify their conservation activities and extend their reach.

4. Chimpanzee conservation and the initiatives of private forest owners

Private forest owners (PFOs) are individual, families, clans or groups who intentionally secure and conserve forests for various reasons. As already noted, in Bunyoro, where over 500 private forest owners are located, there is an immense demand for land for cultivation and fuel, due to the rapidly increasing population, as well as due to the introduction of commercial agricultural enterprises.

Collaboration amongst PFOs

CASE STUDY

Robert Rukahemura is the founder of the Kiryanga Private Forests Conservationists Association, a community-based organisation that brings together about 200 private forest owners whose aim is to conserve and preserve degraded natural resources in Bunyoro. The Association has been instrumental in maintaining and expanding their forests. With support from CCFU in 2014, these PFOs identified and planted indigenous trees to enrich diversity in their individual

forests. The Empaako forest owners were also supported to establish apiary projects as side income.

To illustrate the importance of conserving trees, the PFOs named their forests after their founding members, using their traditional names (in the naming tradition of the Banyoro, individuals are given pet names – empaako - that are an important part of their cultural identity and kinship). The PFOs in Kiryanga and the greater Kibaale thus rebranded their forests as a way to sensitise the communities about the value of indigenous trees and their cultural significance. Some of these PFOs host chimpanzees although they do not identify with them as a totem.

Rukahemura has also identified medicinal plants and has acquired the skills to process some of them. For the past ten years, he has been actively publicising the importance of forest conservation and the value of indigenous knowledge through radio talk shows, engaging the youth, making presentations in workshops and he has provided the youth a source of authentic information about culture and conservation.



Robert Rukahemura (middle) guides visitors in his Apuuli forest in Kiryanga

Reforestation and chimpanzee conservation

In Bunyoro, many migrant and local communities cut down their natural forests to create space for crop cultivation, but soon realised the value of indigenous trees and now are engaged in replanting these to restore the natural environment. With sensitisation from the Chimpanzee Trust, which provided 30,000 tree seedlings, some farmers in the Kirizanzumbi community, in Kikuube District have replanted their forests as a source of fire wood, medicinal plants and poles for construction. Out of the 30,000 seedlings planted at least 20,000 seedlings survived, illustrating the potential to establish woodlots for cultural and economic purposes.

Conservation by a community leader

CASE STUDY

*In 1987, Omuhereza Julius Kiiza, a Local Council 1 Chairman in Kisindi Village, acquired a forest at the boundary of Bugoma Forest. He notes that the boundary is clearly marked and together with his family, he monitors the forest to guard against encroachment. With sensitisation from the Chimpanzee Trust, Julius has maintained his forest which has a variety of medicinal plants and trees, including the highly valued medicinal tree, *Prunus Africana*. His forest is also a source of food such as mushrooms, and hosts wildlife from Bugoma forest. Julius allows community members to access the forest to collect traditional medicine and has involved his children in planting trees, thus ensuring that they will not cut down the trees in future, especially the indigenous ones.*

Julius has come to appreciate the chimpanzees; his forest hosts about 80, from 3 families. These are friends because they are not destructive and only take the ripe sugar cane, jack fruit and passion fruits that they need. Fortunately, the community has plenty of jack fruit and are willing to share with the animals, which are also appreciated for propagating trees and plants such as coffee and cocoa, the seeds of which the community collect from the forest. Community members have also noticed the growth of some natural trees in their gardens and attribute this to the chimpanzees' presence and propagation. Julius has

cautioned farmers against planting eucalyptus near the forest because the chimpanzees will eat their bark, affecting their growth.

Family driven conservation efforts

CASE STUDY

The family of Rubanga Iddi Kaahwa, a private forest owner in Muhooro, Kagadi district believe that chimpanzees are spiritually connected to humans and that there is no need to kill them to acquire their spirits and strength, as some people believe. His son, Kuteesa Swaleh Kadoma, also a spiritualist in Muhooro, supports his father to care for the forest, which he says is secure because Rubanga has left strict instructions in his will to ensure that his children protect and nurture it. Following interactions with development partners such as CCFU, Swaleh was inspired to start a community-based organisation to protect chimpanzees called Friends of Chimpanzee (FoC).

The organisation has 69 members, most of whom are PFOs at Muhooro. It has established a troupe to sensitise communities through music, dance and drama. Initially, this proved difficult because the forest was perceived as a haven for vermin - including the chimpanzees. Nevertheless, with perseverance, Swaleh Kadoma and his team sensitised the community to appreciate the non-destructive nature of chimpanzees and to try and live in harmony with them. Through meetings and other community engagement, FoC underscores the mutual benefits of coexistence, the need to understand chimpanzee behaviour, and to employ avoidance where possible. They also explain the benefits and potential sources of materials, firewood and medicinal plants, as well as potential sources of tourism and employment as forest /tour guide if the chimpanzees and forests are conserved. FoC insists on the use of indigenous trees to restore the forests rather than exotic species. They have also been called upon to rescue children kidnapped by chimpanzees. FoC has noted a gradual attitudinal change by communities in Muhooro towards the chimpanzees, although managing community expectations with regard to good education facilities, hospitals and employment remains a challenge.

As locally-rooted and practising what they preach, the members are able to engage communities effectively. Initially FoC operated in Muhooro only, but in 2019 UWA invited it to sensitise communities in other neighbouring districts as well. Their main challenge is

the capacity to reach communities that host or are in contact with chimpanzees.

Private Forest Owners (PFOs) are important players in conservation, not only because they are custodians of forest but because many are motivated to sustain their forests for conservation's sake, which is essential for sustainability. Their forests offer grounds

for research and learning about traditional values, principles and practices associated with conservation and offer opportunities to create hybrid conservation approaches that are suited to the local context. More however needs to be done to sustainably increase the viability of their forests so that they are able to resist the pressure from neighbouring communities and the demand for quick economic benefit.



Iddi Kuteesa Swaleh, son of Iddi Kadoma at their family forest, harbouring chimpanzees in Muhooro, Kagadi.



5. Interventions for the conservation of chimpanzees and forests by development partners

The adverse consequences of rapid population growth and commercial agricultural enterprises make for a critical situation that has resulted in the emergence of conservation-focused community-based organisations and non-governmental (national and international) organisations that aim at supporting the restoration and management of forests, as well as the protection of selected wildlife, such as the chimpanzee. Some of the strategies employed include community sensitisation and training in conservation, use of alternative sources of fuel, promoting indigenous knowledge, and adopting new ways of engaging communities in conservation using music, dance and drama, as well as sports and games.

Several conservation-focused development organisations in Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions have implemented projects to raise awareness, supply technical and material support, and provide incentives to reduce human animal conflict and restore and sustain forests. Some of these initiatives drew on the indigenous knowledge of the communities. Most development partners organised community sensitisation campaigns and, in some cases, publicised the 7-year prison or UGX 7 million penalty for killing a chimpanzee, which successfully reduced incidents of chimpanzee pet trading.

Payment for Ecosystems (PES) and other incentives

In 2015, a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Fund was launched to provide cash payments as an incentive for local communities to promote the conservation and restoration of natural resources. This was launched along with 2 other conservations funds; the carbon fund, and the Eco-Trust Endowment Fund, all of which aimed at curbing environmental challenges, such as land degradation and the effects

of climate change, through economic means to encourage communities value their environment.

Financial incentives for conservation

CASE STUDY

The Chimpanzee Trust, a national conservation organisation has been conserving chimpanzees for the past 15 years in Kabwoya, Kaseeta, Bugoigo, Kiziranfumbi and Bulindi. The Trust's objective is to care for the chimpanzees and the wellbeing of communities by implementing 3 main programmes on Education, Livelihoods and Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). Several communities in Bunyoro consider the Trust the face of the chimpanzees because it has been instrumental in resolving human-chimpanzee conflicts in Hoima, Kikuube and Kagadi, in partnership with different organisations.

In 2005, the Trust trained PFOs on carbon trading under a pilot project with 14 associations in Greater Hoima at parish level – each with 80 members - and introduced the PES in its area of operation as an incentive to preserve the habitat of the chimpanzee. This initially worked well, but the PFOs, including Kwonga Forest, a beneficiary of the PES, noted that payment of UGX.70,000 per hectare per year was a small financial benefit compared to what a private forest owner and farmer could earn from the same area in a year. Some PFOs cut down their forests in spite of the financial incentive offered. Nevertheless, according to a representative from Chimpanzee Trust, the PES project is the most successful conservation intervention in spite of the challenges, including funding cuts that led to deforestation by some PFOs, hence limiting the progress made. The Kwonga clan that benefited from the PES for preserving 66 Acres of natural forest, used the money to develop a forest management plan and to facilitate clan meetings.

Material and livelihood support for conservation

The Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) has aimed at improving the livelihood of communities near and around forest areas as a way to reduce the interface between communities and chimpanzees and their habitat in Bunyoro since 2012. Through group formation, communities were sensitised on hygiene and sanitation and alternative income generating activities, such as apiary and tree planting. JGI also supported goat farmers to pay school fees by encouraging them to graze their goats in the forest where they would collect firewood but not cut down the trees for timber. These farmers would also monitor the forests and report any illegal activities. This model has worked well in the communities where it was implemented.

The Chimpanzee Trust also provided material support to communities for conserving forests or rivers by offering incentives of UGX.130,000 per ha per year, distributing 4,501 water tanks and providing 128 families with solar panels. The Trust continued to regularly monitor the farmers who participated in the project and noted changes in attitude and practice, reflected in their choice of the crops grown near the forest, choosing those that are non-palatable to chimpanzees, such as onions, and thus reducing crop raiding and conflict. In recent years, the Chimpanzee Trust has trained 24 youth as forest monitors alongside technical backstopping, and has provided a motorbike and gear to selected youth to sensitise communities and generate income from providing public transport services.

Restoration of watershed and riverside vegetation

One of the triggers of human – chimpanzee conflicts stems from the use of a common water source. Most of the communities in the Bunyoro region, especially where the chimpanzees are found, do not have access to piped water and therefore collect it from rivers, springs and other natural sources. These are also used by the chimpanzees living outside the national park. Conflicts result, especially in communities that have not been sensitised on ways to respond to the presence of chimpanzees.

The Jane Goodall Institute has been involved in intense community engagement, mainly in Kikuube and Hoima districts, to educate people about the need to conserve chimpanzees and how to respond to them. JGI thus embarked on a project to restore the forest and watershed along River Kanywamarogo in Kikagaga village. The forest cover in these areas had been degraded by farmers who cut down natural forests, replacing indigenous trees with eucalyptus which is fast growing and considered more profitable in the short term than indigenous trees. With severe deforestation, the river had become blocked by silt, forcing the community to seek other sources of water, resulting in conflict with the chimpanzees. JGI, in partnership with the communities along these river banks, worked to restore the vegetation and clear the silted banks. After three years of engaging the farmers in planting indigenous trees about 10 meters off the banks, the river was restored and the communities now have access to clear water. Five years later, the trees created a canopy which allowed vervet and colobus monkeys as well as chimpanzees to return to the river bank.

This initiative registered success in restoring the river bank, a spring, and the forest corridor between Bugoma Forest and Wambabya Forest in Kikuube District. Although some farmers have since cut down about a number of trees that had been planted, setting back the progress made, it is hoped that chimpanzees will re-use this corridor in a few years. Having witnessed the benefits of tree planting and clearing the banks, community members are likely to continue maintaining the river bank to ensure access to clear water.

To reduce human-chimpanzee conflicts, the Chimpanzee Trust similarly implemented a 4-year project (2015 - 2019) to restore the watershed on River Roturoa, around Bugoma, to provide an alternative source of clean water for the communities. The Trust restored 311 hectares of water shed, with communities contributing labour, and established a peer to peer monitoring system with technical backstopping. The project was eventually owned by the community, which is now responsible for maintaining the watershed.

Providing incentives as opposed to emphasising penalties appears to have produced a positive response and cooperation from farmers and PFOs alike. Measuring the responsibility for conservation in monetary terms proved to be successful in the short term but was not sustainable or considered sufficient by the PFOs after a while, as this was not seen as equivalent to the real economic benefit that could be

earned. Non-monetary incentives such as apiary, tree planting, water tanks, solar panels, etc. provide longer term and diverse conservation-friendly solutions. Involving the community in watershed management and riverside vegetation restoration provides knowledge and skills that can be utilised in managing water sources in the long run.

Seedlings, tree planting and forest restoration

The National Forest Authority (NFA) has extended technical assistance in forest management to communities, including PFOs. The Authority has also established regional plant nurseries; it offers free tree seedlings to communities and provides training and community sensitisation to promote reforestation and agroforestry. Other development partners have contributed too, although their scope may be project specific.

In consultation with the PFOs and community members, the Chimpanzee Trust provided seedlings of indigenous trees such as *musisi*, mahogany, *cordia*, *muwule*, and *makanya*. The Trust, in partnership with farmers in Kakumiro and Kagadi, targeted the restoration of 1,500 hectares and managed to

conserve and replant 1,680 ha of private forest land - out of 124 farmers, 123 fully restored their forest. The Trust drew on the traditional knowledge of the elders to identify and explain the use of indigenous trees that grow well in the local environment. The elders also identified species that are endemic to their locations and those that are endangered. Elders such as Ssezi Mugisa (at Munteme) were recognised as being very knowledgeable about cultural resources in the forest (such as indigenous trees and sites) and for being potential allies in conservation. Over the years, the Trust has learnt that changes in community attitudes and conservation practice require long term engagement. By drawing on indigenous knowledge and through the practical involvement of communities in conservation work, this helps to trigger their interest, gain their confidence and enhance their ownership of the conservation efforts. The Trust plans to repeat this exercise after the project evaluation.

While many PFOs own natural forests, some have planted indigenous trees to enrich the diversity of their forests. Most PFOs have conserved their forests using knowledge passed down from one generation to the next, but welcome the provision of technical assistance as an addition to their traditional knowledge. Their knowledge about medicinal trees and plants also provides a welcome source of information for development partners, foresters and researchers.

6. Engaging the youth in conservation

The youth constitute over 66% of Uganda's population and are the inheritors of land, which in this case, could include forests and their resources. They are the future custodians of heritage, as well as the future decision makers and leaders. A study carried out by CCFU in 2018 revealed that youth who are not aware of the value attached to forests are likely to cut down trees for quick monetary gains. The involvement of the youth in conservation discussions and practice is therefore essential. Below are examples of interventions that target the youth, in some instances drawing on their culture as a motivating factor.

Traditionally, cultural leaders such as kings, chiefs, clan leaders, and family heads are responsible for promoting cultural values, cultural identity, traditional norms and taboos, as well as caring for, protecting and transmitting knowledge about cultural and natural heritage. Through observation, practice and participation, the youth are then exposed to traditional knowledge and skills and learn to be responsible for their natural heritage.

In the Rwenzori region, for instance, ridge leaders, (*Isemalambo*) are responsible for protecting and cleansing mountain ridges – a practice known and witnessed by the entire community. In Bunyoro Kitara, the *omuramansi* is a custodian of sacred sites including those found in forests. His role is

hereditary and the responsibility to protect these sites against encroachment, for spiritual cleansing and for connecting people with ancestral spirits is passed from one generation to the next.

Though undocumented, these traditional systems prescribe values, principles, sanctions, taboos and related penalties, and contribute to the conservation of medicinal plants, totemic animals and plants, forests and water bodies. Over the years, this knowledge and responsibility have been transmitted by the family, clan and community which provided spaces for the youth to learn. The influence of some religions and formal education have however weakened these transmission mechanisms, calling for diverse ways to reconnect with the youth and stimulate an interest in conservation that is founded on their heritage.

Most conservation focused organisations and institutions include community sensitisation as an important part of their interventions, mainly through community meetings, radio talk shows, film shows, and the use of publicity materials such as posters and banners. Through clan meetings, the youth have access to spaces where they can learn about culture, about their cultural identity (which includes their clan and totem), as well as about their responsibility towards conservation.



A pre-football match activity organised by CCFU: Discussing conservation of totems

Education

CASE STUDY

The Jane Goodall Institute has carried out conservation education programmes for schools near forests. JGI started by sensitising 10 schools but have since expanded to 25 schools in Kiziranfumbi in Bunyoro. The Chimpanzee Trust also considers education as an important and constant aspect of conservation and for 4 years the Trust engaged the youth in outreach activities, radio drama, radio mentions and programmes, thus raising awareness about the need to conserve the chimpanzees.

Initially, the conversation about protecting the chimpanzees was not well received. The communities were so aggrieved by the injuries caused by the chimpanzees (especially between 2004 and 2006) and would point at the graves of children killed or whose injuries caused by chimpanzees resulted in death. With time, consistent sensitisation, coupled with efforts to address some of the communities' livelihood needs, the attitudes of the communities towards chimpanzees

began to change. This intervention contributed to behavioural change among children and their parents in Kiziranfumbi. Today, it is difficult to find someone who will chase away or kill a chimpanzee. The chimpanzees are known to take only what they need and they tend to pick fruits from community gardens where they are not harassed.

Inter-generational dialogues

CASE STUDY

For the past 14 years, CCFU has worked with communities across the country to promote cultural heritage. The disconnection between the youth and their heritage; and the gap between them and elders was continuously noted with concern. The Foundation has since sought opportunities to create spaces for the youth to interface with elders. Thus, one of the main objectives of CCFU's project on conserving chimpanzees using cultural resources in Uganda, focuses on engaging the youth and exposing them to cultural and conservation knowledge.

Through inter-generational dialogues, the youth have been given an opportunity to discuss the link between



Intergenerational dialogues in Muhooro, Kagadi

culture and conservation; cultural and clan identity; the role of elders and cultural leaders in conservation; and their own contribution to conservation. The importance of totems such as chimpanzees and the need to conserve them, as well as the value of indigenous knowledge and plants of cultural and medicinal value are also discussed. The inter-generational dialogues involve carefully selected cultural resource persons (female and male) and youth whose conversation trigger a debate moderated

in the local language. The 2-3-hour inter-generational dialogues are often held prior to football tournaments (see below) to enhance the youth's understanding of the conservation messages. The youth's enthusiasm and demand for knowledge has resulted in suggestions to establish regular inter-generational dialogues, dubbed 'akasaka' (cultural education space for youth) in Bunyoro, through which they can be further nurtured as agents for conservation.

Clan based football tournaments

CASE STUDY

CCFU has also employed clan-based football tournaments amongst the various clans of the Banyoro and Bakonzo. Clan-based football teams are supported by CCFU to prepare for the semi-finals and finals. The youth are involved in planning the tournaments, developing the guidelines and criteria for selection of football teams, participating in the games and eventually reporting the results on radio. The prior inter-generational dialogues provide a firm foundation for learning about conservation, culture and protection of the chimpanzees. The football commentators are guided to convey information about clans, totems and the importance of conservation throughout the games, accompanied by music with a cultural message. Because the tournaments are clan based, they do not only attract the youth but all community members who identify with the participating clans. In 2019, the tournaments registered an average of 200 people on the pitch at each of the 6 matches held in each region.

The winners received a chimpanzee trophy (Ekiteera Cup in Bunyoro and Ekibandu Cup in Rwenzori), airtime on local radio stations to sensitise communities on conservation, football sports-wear, medals and cash prizes. Some communities attested to the effective engagement of the community, especially the youth, through these tournaments. The female youth however demanded to be more involved by playing clan-based games, such as netball or volleyball, in the future. Other organisations such as JGI and the Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project (in Bunyoro) and KICHIDA (in the Rwenzori region) have employed a similar strategy to convey conservation messages through football tournaments, music, dance and drama. JGI offers the winners of their football tournaments start-up funds for piggery or goat rearing in the primary schools.

Most of the interventions implemented to engage the youth have been successful in raising awareness. Interventions that used cultural identity, cultural values, and other resources enhanced community responsibility to promote their cultural heritage. It was however noted that there is a need for multiple interventions to reach different audiences and consistent advocacy and awareness raising, if positive and lasting changes are to be realised to conserve the chimpanzees and their habitat.



Pictures from the inter-clans chimpanzee football tournament in Bunyoro and Rwenzori



7. Cooperation and coordination of efforts to conserve chimpanzees and their habitat

Several conservation initiatives in Bunyoro and in the Rwenzori region work in isolation, but those that have been successful tend to work in collaboration with others. While clan- and community-based organisations interact more with partners at district and regional levels, forging alliances with national and international organisations provides opportunities to gain exposure and access technical and financial assistance. Conversely, through community-based initiatives, national and international organisations learn about the local context, the value attached to nature and the chimpanzee, community dynamics and resources, as well as indigenous conservation practices.

In Rwenzori, Kinyampanika Chimpanzee Development Association (KICHIDA) associates with a range of conservation organisations such as UWA, the World Wildlife Fund, CCFU and the Rare Species Fund. Through this collaboration, KICHIDA has received technical advice, human resources for forest patrols and security, personal protective equipment, a public address system, and a camera for documentation, among others. KICHIDA currently has a three-year renewable agreement with UWA for joint conservation activities, including managing their chimpanzee tracking trail. The Association has also worked in collaboration with the community in Bunyagabo to collect traditional artefacts with the intention of enriching its community museum.

In Bunyoro, the Friends of Chimpanzees (FoC), works closely with the Bunyoro Tourism and Environmental Conservation Programme, Kagadi-Kibale Community Radio and UWA in Muhooro which have supported community sensitisation activities, as well as covered the medical expenses of victims of chimpanzee attacks. By interacting with CCFU, FoC gained exposure to a network of private forest owners, training on culture and conservation and participated in clan football tournaments. FoC have also interacted with the NFA and now have access to technical assistance and indigenous tree seedlings for fruits, as well as trees such as *musisa*, and *musizi* that provide good shelter for the chimpanzees.

The Jane Goodall Institute works in partnerships with the NFA, cultural institutions, and local government with whom they have Memoranda of Understanding. JGI noted that the involvement of cultural leaders in conservation interventions, especially at local levels, is valuable because communities are aware of and appreciate their traditional responsibility towards conservation. In the Bunyoro region, the apex cultural institution (Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom) along with other cultural leaders has encouraged communities to get involved in tree planting and other conservation activities.

The Chimpanzee Trust collaborates with authorities in Bunyoro at parish, sub-county and district levels in their project areas; and with the NFA, UWA, and the National Environment Management Authority at national level, in some cases guided by Memoranda of Understanding. The Trust has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom, which provides for capacity-building for kingdom officials, environment representatives, and involves cultural leaders (*abatongole*) in sharing their cultural perspective on conservation and influencing community engagement. The Trust is a member of the North Albertine Rift Conservation Group (a regional consortium of conservation NGOs) and has benefited from interfacing with national and international conservation organisations such as JGI, the Wildlife Conservation Society, EcoTrust, Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project, and Flora and Fauna International. This consortium provides opportunities for knowledge and experience sharing, as well as advocacy support for a common conservation agenda.

Efforts to forge partnerships and collaboration are however not without challenges. For instance, while working with cultural leaders is valuable, some perceive externally driven conservation efforts as undermining their authority. Most cultural leaders are key players in mobilising and influence communities, but it is sometimes difficult to secure their full commitment and action, even after participating in conservation workshops. They can be slow to take concrete action for conservation. Politicians, especially in Bunyoro,

have been known to interfere with the titling processes of private forests, which hinders their development, due to the PFOs' insecurity. In some instances, organisations with similar objectives, target groups and

geographical location may compete for donor funding, thus weakening collaboration, yet joint efforts are needed to tackle critical gaps in conservation thinking and practice.



Officials from the Uganda Wildlife Authority officiating at the Chimpanzee inter-clans football tournament



8. Culture and conservation - conclusions and opportunities

The good practices shared in this publication indicate that several conservation strategies have been employed, with varying levels of success. In most cases, however, their outcomes have not been documented or evaluated to allow for their impact to be gauged, especially on the numbers and quality of life of the chimpanzees, their habitat and the traditional responsibility for conservation. Documenting these experiences for purposes of replication and future learning would enrich the body of knowledge on conservation in Uganda. Nevertheless, below are some conclusions and opportunities derived from the experiences shared:

Conducive legal framework for conservation

The policies and guidelines to conserve endangered species and wildlife outside protected areas are not sufficiently publicised or operationalised and this results in an ambiguous handling of conservation of chimpanzees outside protected areas. There are however strategies employed by UWA that recognise and integrate community participation and benefit, which enhance community ownership, a sense of responsibility and contribution towards resolving conservation challenges and enhances their capacity to conserve the chimpanzees. Drawing on cultural and community resources can motivate private forest owners and conservationists to restore and maintain their forests as they benefit from their cultural and economic value.

A legacy of national conservation

Although the colonial and later the post-colonial conservation approaches (adopted by UWA) to conserve protected areas were “militaristic”, this has resulted in the protection of Uganda’s natural resources. The dynamic systems and policies that respond to the needs of the communities, as evidenced in the different strategies subsequently adopted by UWA, create opportunities for designing conservation approaches that are appropriate for the local context.

Resilient cultural communities

The different experiences and practices shared in these pages indicate that individuals, families, clans and PFOs are self-motivated by their cultural values and attachment to nature. If well-coordinated, these actors can provide opportunities for conserving the chimpanzees outside protected areas, creating sustainable habitats for them and taking measures to restore the forest corridors.

Sensitisation of the community is however essential to increase awareness of the value the chimpanzees and the need to conserve them and their habitat. Past interventions have resulted, in some cases, in a gradual attitude change of communities and varying degrees of tolerance and co-existence with the chimpanzees. The presence of communities that have already received basic sensitisation on conservation, culture and protection of the chimpanzees, could on the one hand become a resource, providing fertile ground to engage other concerned communities in reflection on what works, build on their experiences and engage them in meaningful participation. Depending on the level of success of the interventions, communities may on the other hand be fatigued, disappointed by short term interventions, unfulfilled promises, and discouraged by intangible benefits in the face of poverty and material needs.

Harnessing indigenous knowledge

PFOs provide sources of indigenous knowledge associated with forest animals and plants that has been passed down generations. With effective coordination, PFOs could provide valuable information about the cultural resources that are suitable for the survival of chimpanzees and offer spaces for pilot projects. Most importantly, however, the existence of over 500 PFOs presents an opportunity for collaboration with the NFA, for them to access technical assistance and appropriate seedlings.

Clan-based forest conservation

The Bayanja (Banyoro) and Batangyi (Bakonzo), as well as “pal clans” such as the Basiita, have a strong attachment to the chimpanzees, making them long-term partners in the drive to conserve chimpanzees and their habitat. The establishment of community-based organisations and other initiatives, in particular with the collaboration of UWA, has proved effective as clan members provide additional vigilance in efforts to conserve the chimpanzees and their habitat.

Payment for Ecosystems (PES)

PES provides an alternative motivation for conservation and introduces the holistic concept of ecosystems. While this intervention worked in the short term, conservation however demands a long-term commitment. Examining enabling factors in other contexts where the PES has been successful would be useful, as well as domesticating this initiative using the principle of payment for care, to sustainably engage communities and PFOs in protection and nurturing ecosystems.

Livelihood support projects

These interventions, introduced with technical assistance, have the advantage of enhancing knowledge and skills within the communities. An evaluation of the extent to which these incentives have contributed to a better understanding of conservation, and of the need to protect the chimpanzees and personal or collective responsibility in this regard, would however be useful. Communities that have participated in pilot and long-term projects have resource persons who can serve as community / cultural and conservation agents, offering advice to development partners on what works well, to avoid repetition of approaches that have not been successful.

Engaging the youth

The youth have demonstrated interest and ability to mobilise and organise conservation-related events and this positive energy should be strengthened. Involving the youth in clan and community meetings and forest monitoring consolidates their sense of responsibility for conservation, as well as leading by example (for parents and elders). Most of the interventions that sought to engage the youth have proved successful but were short lived, calling for longer term, community and culturally-situated interventions.

Collaboration and coordination

Harnessing the experiences and expertise of all conservators is necessary to address practical concerns at local levels and engage with policy issues at national level. Actors in both regions of Bunyoro and the Rwenzori have demonstrated commitment and varying degrees of expertise that can contribute to developing conservation strategies that are aligned to their cultural context and are effective. Collaboration is essential to address large scale deforestation of natural forest for commercial agricultural investments, such as establishing sugarcane plantations. Implementing the PES when large tracts of natural ecosystems of irreplaceable biodiversity and natural resources are being destroyed, is counterproductive. PFOs who are under pressure to cut down their forests should be supported by national and international conservation organisations to enhance their viability but also by advocating for redress through social corporate responsibility for reforestation, and the promotion of indigenous tree species, among others.

To conclude, it appears that the conservation of the chimpanzees outside protected areas and the restoration of natural forests is possible, but this demands consistency, continuous sensitisation, short- and long-term benefits (including sustainable non-monetary incentives), as well as a continuous assessment of attitudinal change.



8. Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below are drawn from cases shared, and apply to state and non-state actors involved in conservation of the chimpanzees and their habitat, harnessing cultural and community resources.

Clan-based forest conservation

- A deliberate effort needs to be made to tap into the cultural values and resources of the clans that identify with the chimpanzee as a totem (Bayanja/Banyoro; Batangyi/Bakonzo and Basiita/Banyoro) so that they can strengthen their roles as agents of conservation within their respective clans, among other clans, as well as become partners for development interventions. Working with women, as cultural and conservation agents, may prove to be an effective way to nurture a sense of responsibility in the youth. Given the drastic loss of forest cover, it would be advisable to continue providing firm protection over cultural resources in and outside protected areas, and where possible collaborate with NFA to propagate much-demanded forest plants in community gardens and private forests.

Conducive legal framework for conservation

- There is need to operationalise and decentralise the laws that address endangered species, such as the chimpanzee and wildlife outside protected areas, and to publicise these provisions so that authorities at local levels are able to identify and support the conservation of such species. A census of the chimpanzees residing outside the protected areas, an estimation of forest coverage required to sustain them, and the extent of forest corridors that require restoration is crucial.

Strengthening resilient cultural communities

- Harnessing accumulated community experience coupled with the use of indigenous knowledge will situate conservation interventions in the local context and support the integration and retention of conservation practices. Working with cultural resource persons, and using cultural spaces for learning, will contextualise and enrich the conversation, especially with the youth. The effective use of multimedia and other communication tools, methods and languages to engage diverse audiences within the community can re-inforce conservation messages.

Restoration of forest corridors

- Collective efforts need to be made to restore forest corridors by planting indigenous trees in a sustainable manner, to contribute to increased and diverse forest cover. The initiative taken by Chimpanzee Trust illustrates that this is possible along with the restoration of watersheds and vegetation along riverbanks in areas, providing alternative sources of water and reducing human-chimpanzee conflict. Strengthening the viability of forests by introducing ecotourism that focuses on chimpanzee conservation and other income generating activities, will enhance the appreciation and value associated with the forest.

Engaging the youth

- Youth engagement proved to be effective but, to

ensure sustained engagement, it is necessary to establish a multi-pronged approach that involves diverse stakeholders, especially the institutions mandated to conserve natural heritage (such as UWA NFA, and the National Environmental Management Authority). This will ensure continuity given the limited lifespan of most development projects. Diversifying youth activities that harness their cultural resources tend to trigger more personal interest and may prove especially effective.

Sustained, culture appropriate community sensitisation

- Appreciating that short-term projects do not sustainably build community relations and trust, or provide sufficient time to observe and support attitudinal change, long-term engagement and sensitisation is recommended. The practical involvement of the youth in the entire process of conservation planning, implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes increases their understanding and sense of ownership of conservation efforts.

Institutionalise partnerships and incentives

- Collaboration has proved to be a positive approach to conservation. Institutionalising partnerships by signing Memoranda of Understanding, especially with PFO Associations, to support the preservation of indigenous trees and plants, the conservation of the chimpanzee as well as the restoration of forest corridors might therefore prove useful. Incentives to PFOs provided by the State and other development partners should clearly outline the expected outcomes of such collaboration.

Evaluation and documentation of impact

- The experiences described in this document demonstrate a diversity of interventions that have contributed to the conservation of the chimpanzees and their habitat over the years. Each intervention has merits that can inform future conservation efforts and contribute to the enhanced capacity of community members. These practices also form a foundation to consolidate community experiences and efforts. An evaluation of their outcomes, lessons and insights should therefore be undertaken to inform future conservation interventions.



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Uganda is home to about 5,000 chimpanzees, now considered an endangered species. Various initiatives have been undertaken to conserve them and their habitat, using cultural and community resources, with varying degrees of success. Each intervention has merits that can inform future conservation efforts and contribute to the enhanced capacity of community members to understand and participate in conservation interventions. This publication attempts to capture lessons and insights from conservation

interventions that can inform effective, context specific conservation practice in Uganda.

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