WWF
UGANDA

WWF UGANDA 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The year when we made significant strides for People and Nature

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Acronyms

ARR	Albertine Rift Region
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFCD	Dutch Fund for Climate and Development
EACREEE	East African Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
HCV	High Conservation Value
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
NbS	Nature based Solutions
NFA	National Forestry Authority
NP	National Park
PA	Protected Area
PAWS	Progressive Animal Welfare Society
RMNP	Rwenzori Mountain National Park
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMART	Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
NRM	Natural Resource Management
TBP	Tripple Benefits Program

Message From

THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Dear Supporter,

Nature Conservation continues to witness huge challenges, and this reporting year is no exception as we continue to witness signs that our environment is under immense pressure of degradation. As a result, WWF in Uganda has remained determined, to do everything possible to halt the degradation of our natural environment and build a Country in which humans live in harmony with nature. This is the indomitable spirit I see every day – from staff, partners, supporters, Government Agencies and Ministries.

In this report, you will read about the success of our interventions in averting climate change, how we have created strong livelihood systems, our bold move to clean up habitats by dealing with Invasives, our work with young people and the pivotal Policy and Governance moments that are set to improve the management of the protected areas among others. Another critical success of our work was recorded under the freshwater program where our interventions continue to improve both the quantity and quality of our Fresh water resources.

Allow me mention the successful fundraising under our Great Virunga Transboundary Program that will now see us rollout the the One Health approach to address complex, interconnected challenges such as disease emergence, climate change, habitat destruction, and antimicrobial resistance.

Under our Renewable energy program, we successfully launched the Renewable Energy tool- to build the case for transitioning to renewables by offering guidelines for a 100% renewable energy future.

I wish to recognize the continued contribution and support from the government of Uganda, WWF International, ROA, our Partners and beneficiaries, Country office leadership and the entire staff fraternity for the commendable work done. We look forward to a holistic and successful new year as we unveil and implement our new Country Strategic Plan - 2026-2030.

Ivan Tumuhimbise
WWF -UCO Country Director

About WWF UGANDA

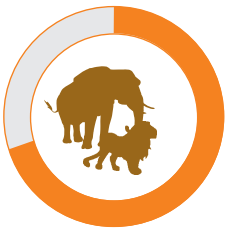
WWF Uganda's goal is to ensure that the Country achieves a just transition to a low carbon development pathway whilst protecting and restoring resilient forest landscapes, wildlife populations and freshwater ecosystems that support biodiversity and socioeconomic transformation.

WWF in Uganda concentrates her efforts in the Albertine Rift Region (ARR) of Uganda with approximately 80 percent of the organisation's resources directed to programmes in this area. The ARR is recognised globally as a biodiversity hotspot and is home to more threatened and endemic species than elsewhere in Africa. The region has the highest biodiversity value in Uganda and is also one of WWF's global priority places. The ARR is also home to more than 11 million people who experience high levels of poverty. Over **95%** of the population practices subsistence farming and rely on natural resources and healthy ecosystems to support and supplement their farming incomes.

As you will notice in this report, WWF in Uganda is however expanding her work throughout the Country, now covering Eastern Uganda and parts of Northern Uganda.

Our PROGRAM AREAS

WILDLIFE

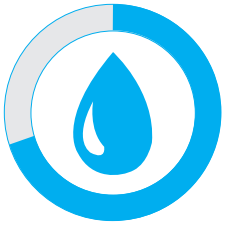


Uganda's wildlife is both a global treasure and a national lifeline. This natural heritage faces growing threats from poaching, habitat loss, and escalating human-wildlife conflict. Our Wildlife Programme addresses these challenges directly, within priority ecosystems of Bwindi Impenetrable Conservation Area, Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area and the wildlife corridors, and the key wetlands, to protect key biodiversity and strengthen national resilience.

FORESTS

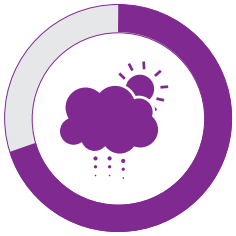
Our forests programme is a bold response to the country's alarming 2.6% annual forest loss. The programme aims to improve the integrity of High Conservation Value (HCV) forests within and outside protected areas through Strengthening the management and restoration of 300,000 hectares of High Conservation Value (HCV) forests by 2030 and facilitating a transition to sustainable models of production for key commodities (such as coffee, cocoa) and consumption of forest resources for the benefit of people and nature.

FRESH WATER



The program focuses on enhancing the quantity and quality of freshwater resources, stabilizing the diversity of aquatic flora and fauna which enhances fisheries resources for improved nutrition and food security. It promotes the adoption of sustainable land use practices to reduce pollution from agriculture, innovative waste management practices including campaigns against single use plastics, restoring, protecting and sustainably managing riparian areas and water catchments.

CLIMATE AND ENERGY



This programme is a strategic response to the country's increasing climate vulnerability and energy poverty. WWF aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 1.1 $MtCO_2e$ and enhance the resilience of communities and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change through integration of food systems by promoting renewable energy for irrigation, food processing, and storage, supporting climate smart agriculture and utilising agricultural wastes for bioenergy

REGIONAL AND TRANSBOUNDARY INITIATIVES

WWF UCO actively engages in transboundary conservation efforts and regional programming through key initiatives such as the African Regional Energy Hub (REH), International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) and Greater Virunga Landscape Initiative.

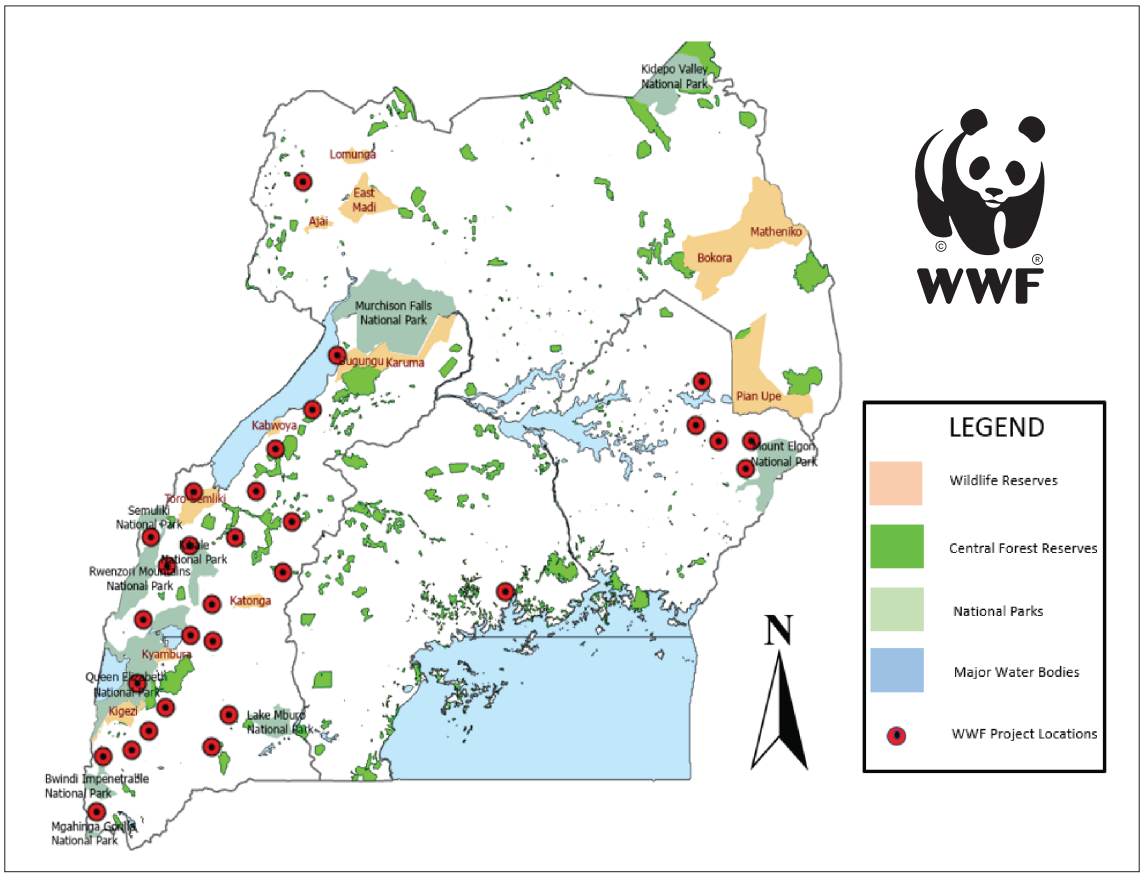
The REH, hosted by WWF UCO, plays a pivotal role in advancing Africa's transition to clean, affordable, and sustainable energy systems in collaboration with WWF country offices in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Zambia, DRC, and Mozambique. The Greater Virunga Landscape Initiative strengthens collaborative conservation in one of Africa's most biologically diverse transboundary areas, spanning Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC. The International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) focuses on safeguarding endangered mountain gorillas and their transboundary habitats in Uganda, Rwanda, and DRC.

WHERE WE WORK

Our Geographical Coverage

WWF Uganda operates in the four landscapes of;

- Bwindi-Mugahinga
- Greater Rwenzori
- Murchison Semliki
- West Nile



2024-2025 in Numbers

102,969 tCO2e Amount of carbon sequestrated

353,066,300 Income generated from Income generating Activities

1,297ha Total Number of hectares of indigenous trees grown

1,000ha of natural forests regenerated

4,708ha of exotic tree species grown

13 Nature based enterprises established

6 New projects signed up

WILDLIFE THRIVING

Wildlife underpins our survival. Our Wildlife program is as old as WWF's inauguration in Uganda. Our main objective is to ensure Strong Species and Protected areas. We are currently doing this by strengthening the management of wildlife habitats and flagship species, implementing the zero poaching strategy, minimizing human-wildlife conflict and strengthening the management of protected areas. The results are amazing as you will read on!

01 When the Wild Couldn't Roam: Reclaiming Queen Elizabeth's Savannah from a Silent Invader

For generations, the vast open savannahs of **Queen Elizabeth National Park** (QENP) have stood as one of Uganda's most iconic and biodiverse landscapes. With its rolling plains, crater lakes, and rich mosaic of woodlands and wetlands, the park has not only attracted awe-struck tourists but also sustained the delicate balance between humans, wildlife, and nature. But in recent years, something silent and creeping had begun to shift.
What many visitors didn't see was that **climate change** was altering the very fabric of the park's ecosystem.

Rising temperatures and prolonged droughts were not just drying out water sources, they were giving rise to **invasive plant species** that slowly began choking the life out of the park.

Unlike foreign species imported by accident or trade, these were native plants—Dichrostachys cinerea (sickle bush), Parthenium hysterophorus (congress weed), and Lantana camara (common lantana)—but now mutated by climate stress.

Tougher, more aggressive, and unpalatable to wildlife, they began overtaking open grasslands that once fed thousands of animals.

According to Joseph Arinaitwe, Warden for Ecological Monitoring at QENP, *"Between 40–50% of the park's former savannah grasslands—some 1,100 to 1,300 square kilometers—have already been overtaken."*

The worst of the three, Dichrostachys cinerea, locally known as Kalemanjojo, was forming dense, thorny thickets that were not only inedible to wildlife, but also dangerous.

> **"— It restricts animal movement, injures them, and even blocks access to vital water points,** Arinaitwe noted.

As native species disappeared and food chains were disrupted, wild animals began doing the unthinkable, crossing into neighboring communities in search of food and water.

The fallout was devastating. Human-wildlife conflicts spiked. Crops were trampled, livestock attacked, and fear grew on both sides of the park's borders.

Something had to be done—not just for tourism or biodiversity, but for peace.

Under the Climate Adaptation and Protected Areas (CAPA) initiative, WWF Uganda, with support from the Government of Canada through IISD, joined hands with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) to restore what had been lost. The mission was bold: manually remove Dichrostachys cinerea from 200 hectares of invaded land.

However, rather than bringing in outside contractors, the solution was rooted in the very people living alongside the park. Ten community groups of 17 members each were formed—gender-sensitive, inclusive, and deeply local. They were trained, equipped, and mobilized to cut, uproot, heap, and burn the invasive plants. In return, they earned income, found purpose, and became part of the solution.

The transformation has been both ecological and human. Wildlife has returned to the restored zones—grazing freely, moving safely, and accessing their traditional drinking points near the lakes. Tourists, once disappointed by animal scarcity, are now spotting wildlife more easily.

The incidence of wildlife straying into communities has dropped significantly, reducing tension and fostering coexistence once more.

For the community members, the intervention became more than a job. They learned to value the role of conservation in their daily lives. Some have turned the uprooted invasive wood into charcoal, creating an additional stream of income. Others now see the park not as a source of conflict, but as a shared heritage worth protecting.

The CAPA initiative is a powerful example of how Nature-based Solutions (NbS) can help restore ecosystems while strengthening community resilience. By integrating gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive approaches into protected area management, CAPA ensures that the voices of the people matter—and that their lives, alongside wildlife, can thrive amid the growing threats of climate change.

From a park once silenced by invaders to one now echoing again with the sounds of life, Queen Elizabeth National Park is rising. Not just because of what was removed—but because of who was involved in reclaiming it.

02 Harnessing Technology to Protect the Rwenzori Mountains

The Rwenzori Mountains National Park (RMNP), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is one of Uganda's most ecologically significant landscapes. However, the park has faced increasing pressure from surrounding communities, with threats such as poaching, illegal logging, and encroachment straining the Uganda Wildlife Authority's (UWA) ability to manage the area effectively — especially given the challenging terrain and limited personnel.

Recognizing the urgency, WWF Uganda, supported by the Hempel Foundation under the Restoration for a Resilient Rwenzori project — stepped in to equip rangers with the tools they need to effectively monitor and protect the park.

What has followed is a powerful demonstration of how technology can transform conservation and improve the effective management of the protected area from reactive to proactive.

> "Before this support, we relied mostly on physical patrols and chance encounters. We couldn't be everywhere at once, and often, by the time we detected illegal activity, it was too late, shared George Businge, senior warden RMNP.

Technology Bridging the Gaps

WWF Uganda provided a wide range of digital tools tailored to meet the unique demands of the Rwenzori terrain. These included:

- **19 Blackview smartphones** pre-installed with field data collection apps
- **32 camera traps** strategically placed to detect animal and human movement
- **One DJI M300RTK drone** for aerial surveillance
- **Two laptops** for analysis and reporting
- **Solar lighting and charging** systems for nine ranger posts

Alongside the hardware, the focus on capacity building was key. WWF trained **over 300 rangers** in the use of camera traps and wildlife monitoring technology, **Global Forest Watch** for fire and deforestation alerts, and in SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) for data-driven decision-making.
"The introduction of these tools has completely changed how UWA manages the park," said Businge, adding that that they have moved from guesswork to informed action.

" With accurate data, UWA is now making timely and strategic decisions for park protection and species monitoring."

Unveiling the Rwenzori's Hidden Secrets

One of the most remarkable outcomes of using this technology has been the discovery of wildlife that had previously only existed in stories and speculation. For years, there had been local accounts of a unique elephant population in the Rwenzoris — the so-called Rwenzori Elephant. But no one had ever documented them.

That changed with the deployment of camera traps.

"The cameras confirmed the presence of the Rwenzori Elephant — a huge milestone for conservation," says a UWA ranger. "We also captured images of chimpanzees and the elusive Rwenzori duiker, among others."

What was once a knowledge gap is now a growing database of wildlife presence, distribution, and activity. The information has not only improved UWA's understanding of species richness in RMNP but has also informed zoning, patrol planning, and community sensitization.

Fighting Crime with Evidence

Beyond wildlife monitoring, technology has strengthened UWA's ability to detect and deter illegal activities. Camera traps, for example, have helped identify poachers, resulting in arrests and prosecutions. Drones have uncovered illegal logging in remote areas, and Global Forest Watch alerts have enabled rangers to respond quickly to bushfires and encroachment, protecting both wildlife and community resources.

Improving Ranger Welfare and Motivation

WWF Uganda also addressed day-to-day challenges faced by rangers. Before the intervention, many ranger outposts operated without electricity and clean water were rehabilitated.

Today, thanks to solar lighting and charging systems installed in nine posts, rangers can keep their devices operational, improve security, and stay in communication even in the remotest parts of the park.

A Conservation Model for the Future

What is unfolding in RMNP is a model for conservation in challenging landscapes. By combining smart technology with local expertise and international partnerships, Uganda is safeguarding not just a park, but a living ecosystem with global significance.

> "— This isn't just about protecting nature — it's about giving conservation teams the confidence, tools, and knowledge to do their work effectively. That's what lasting impact looks like, as WWF Uganda project manager Kenneth Tumwebaze puts it.

03 From Conflict to Coexistence: Communities and Carnivores in Harmony

In the shadow of Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP), where lions once roamed freely in great numbers, there came a time when uneasy tension lingered between people and predators breeding what conservationists termed the Human-Wildlife Conflict. For decades, local communities — largely dependent on livestock for survival — continue to live with the risk of losing their animals, their income, and sometimes their lives to roaming carnivores like lions, leopards, and hyenas.

According to UWA wildlife statistics, the toll is sobering: from 2018 to 2021 alone, carnivore attacks claimed around 180 livestock, injured over 100 people, and tragically killed 21. In return, nearly 70 lions, 100 leopards, and 265 hyenas have been lost to retaliation since 2014.

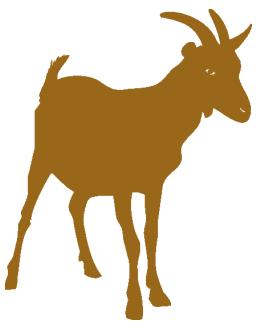
This vicious cycle has not only strained human lives and livelihoods but also pushed Uganda's carnivores to the brink. In QENP — a protected area spanning nearly 200,000 hectares — only about 40 lions remain today.

But a new chapter is unfolding- WWF Uganda, with support from the UK Government through the Darwin Initiative, is implementing the "Effectively Tackling Human-Carnivore Conflicts through Systematic Approaches in Uganda" program.

Anchored in the Conflict to Coexistence (C2C) approach, the program has transformed how conflict is managed by focusing on six key pillars: understanding interactions, governance and policy, prevention, response, mitigation, and monitoring.

In four conflict hotspots—Nyakatonzi and Hamukungu in Kasese, Kyambura in Rubirizi, and Kihihi in Kanungu—community groups have been formed comprising of UWA scouts and reformed poachers. These groups are now key players in reinforcing patrolling efforts, detecting threats early, and responding before tragedy strikes. Through training, equipment support, and engagement, the very people who once hunted wildlife are becoming its protectors.

Since its launch in August 2024, the project has strengthened community capacity on peaceful co-existence, with communities demonstrating improved understanding and actively applying the six elements monitoring, prevention, mitigation, policy and governance, response, and understanding interactions to manage human-wildlife conflicts



There were also no reported retaliatory killings in the reporting period, again a success attributed to this program.

The program doesn't stop at prevention. It is also strengthening local governance systems, building capacity for UWA rangers, and empowering communities with alternative livelihood options—vital in an area where the average household income is just $163 a year.

At its core, this is not just a conservation effort. It is a people-first approach—recognizing that the survival of lions and other carnivores depends on the well-being, safety, and participation of the communities that live alongside them.

The road from conflict to coexistence is steep, but with community at the heart, hope is not only possible—it is already taking root in the heart of the Queen Elizabeth landscape.

04 How Nature-Based Solutions Reduced Incidents of Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Katara Parish- a community adjacent to Queen Elizabeth National Park is home to over 6,000 people spread across six villages. For years, the proximity to the park was both a blessing and a curse. While the fertile land allowed communities to grow crops like cassava, millet, onions, beans, and bananas, it also made them vulnerable to wildlife incursions — particularly from elephants, buffaloes, and Uganda Kobs.

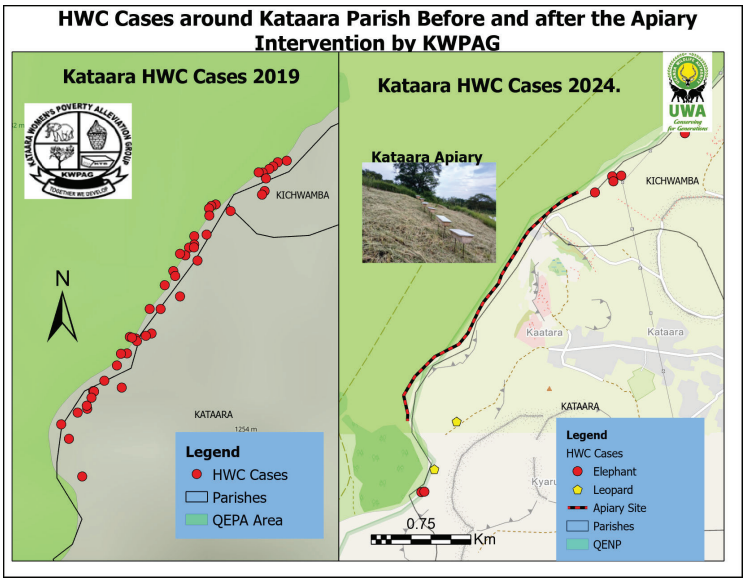
Elephants, the most destructive of all, routinely raided farms, trampling crops and threatening lives. Entire harvests were lost overnight, and with them, food security crumbled. Children became malnourished, families grew desperate, and the tension between humans and wildlife escalated into tragedy. At least 10 families lost their husbands — the primary breadwinners — in confrontations with elephants.

In retaliation, some community members resorted to poisoning the elephants, pushing the conflict to a dangerous edge. Efforts by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), such as digging trenches along the boundary, proved insufficient. Elephants simply filled the trenches and continued to raid farms.

Amidst this despair, WWF extended support to a group of widows, mobilized under the Katara Women Poverty Alleviation Group.

In partnership with UWA, WWF Uganda facilitated a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the community and park authorities. This allowed for the sustainable use of natural resources within designated park buffer zones. One of the most impactful innovations was training the group to use elephant dung to make paper — a symbolic and practical shift in mindset from conflict to conservation.

From this paper, they began crafting artisanal products such as bags, photo frames, and notebooks — generating income while fostering appreciation for the very animals they once feared.



UWA allocated 50 meters of park land for a fire line, which the community now maintains. Grass harvested from this area is used for thatching, mulching, and building, providing another valuable, sustainable resource.

One of the most transformative nature-based solutions has been the introduction of apiaries. WWF supported the Katara Women Poverty Alleviation Group with **850 beehives** installed along a 10-kilometer stretch of the park boundary. The hives serve as a natural barrier, deterring elephants from crossing into farmland, while creating new income streams. Today, over **83 community members produce honey**, wax candles, propolis, venom, and even wine, earning an estimated **UGX 15 million** (USD 4,214) annually. Beyond protecting crops, bees also boost pollination, which improves yields and strengthens household food security.

Recent UWA statistics confirm a marked reduction in elephant incursions and crop raids in Katara following the installation of beehive barriers. The once-frequent wildlife confrontations that led to loss of life and retaliatory killings have significantly reduced, signaling a major breakthrough in promoting coexistence between communities and wildlife.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Children starting school today will grow up in a world that's very different from the one we know now. Climate change and over-exploitation of natural resources will intensify while economic, technological and social changes will create new demands but also new opportunities for young people in an increasingly interdependent world. WWF Uganda has now incorporated programs that target young people in schools and those out of school to her day-to-day operations. The aim of these is to empower and motivate young people, partners and local communities, to solve the challenges facing the environment.

05 The Value of Young People in Conservation

> There is growing understanding at WWF that involving young people in conservation initiatives is a key success in ensuring a future in which humanity will live in harmony with nature sustainably.

WWF Uganda, with support from DANIDA through WWF-Denmark, rolled out the the Green Schools Program across 35 primary and secondary schools in the five districts of; Rubirizi, Kasese, Bunyangabu, Kabarole, and Ntoroko districts.

The project is aims at transforming over 40,000 pupils and 350 teachers into agents of change—using schools as springboards for climate resilience and sustainable living.

At the center of this transformation are school kitchen gardens. In small spaces behind classrooms and in reused containers like old basins, jerrycans, and sacks, students are growing a variety of vegetables—cabbages, eggplants, spinach, onions, carrots, sukumawiki, and local greens like dodo. These gardens supplement school meals.

Daniel Bindu, Headteacher Kinyampanika Primary School states that the pupils have also extended the practice to their homes and at community institutions such as Churches, mosques and hospitals.

In homes and communities where the pupils face resistance, teachers are stepping in to continue the behavior change conservations with the said communities.

The results are promising: families now report improved meals, reduced spending, and a new sense of pride in what their children are achieving.

But gardening is just one part of the Green Schools journey.

Pupils are also planting school woodlots, restoring degraded areas and contributing to long-term climate mitigation. Along riverbanks, they're establishing bamboo belts to reduce erosion and protect water sources. Through environmental clubs, children express their ideas and advocate for nature through drama, debates, songs, poems, skits, speeches, and even writing articles that echo their passion for the environment.

These creative platforms not only build confidence but spark meaningful conversations at home and in the wider community. They turn climate change from an abstract concept into something real and actionable.

The Green Schools model is cultivating more than vegetables and trees—it's cultivating resilience, leadership, and behavior Change. The pupils aren't just learning about climate change; they are living the solutions, modeling them in their homes, and inspiring their communities.

06

Earth Hour Continues to have Impact in Uganda

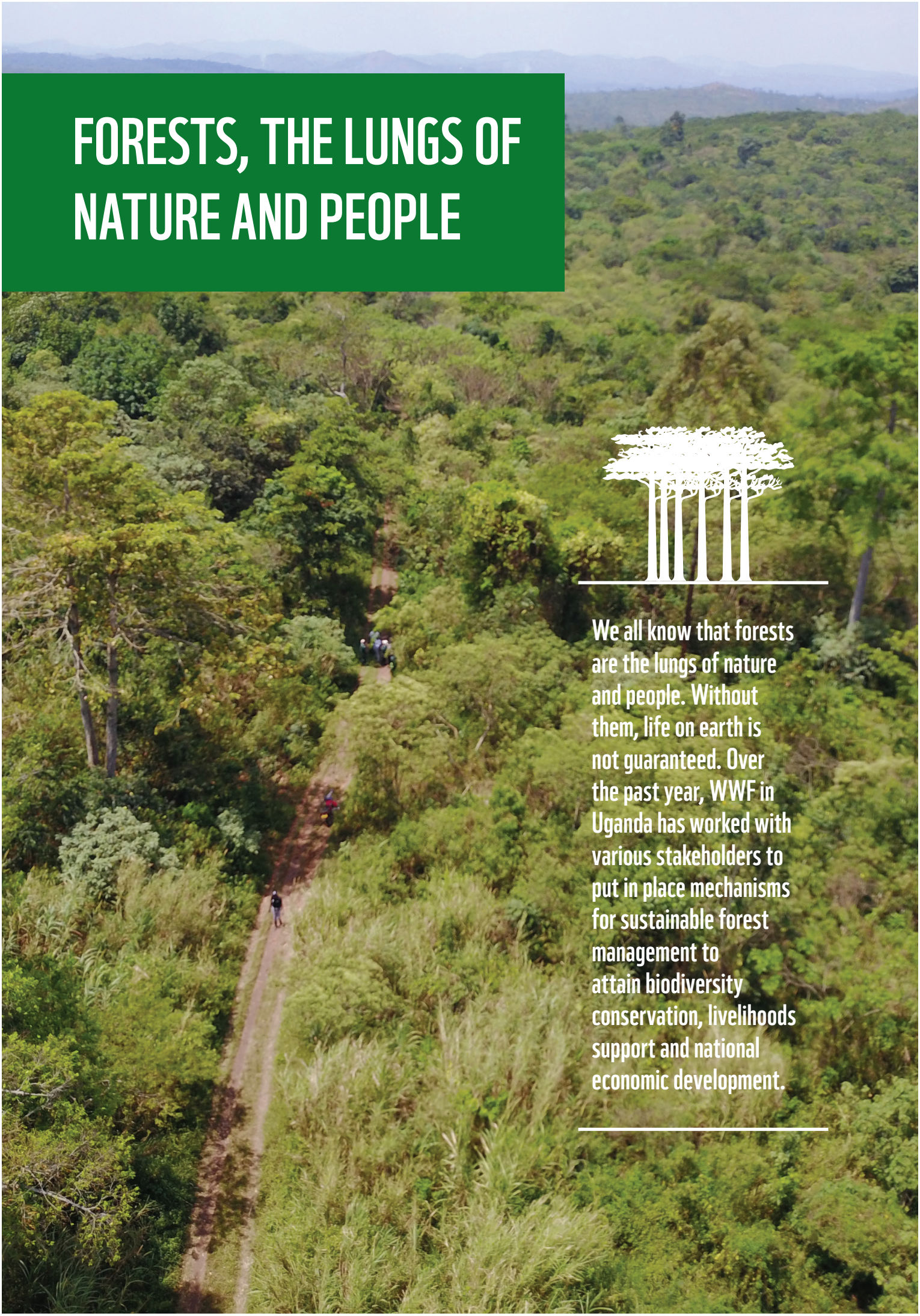
Thousands of Ugandans came together for Earth Hour 2025 in an inspiring show of action and commitment to nature.

Convened under the theme of Water, Ugandans raised their voices against the increased water pollution demanding for behavioral change and producer responsibility for the single use plastics, one of the biggest polluters of Uganda's water resources.

During the Campaign, WWF supported communities to establish Earth Hour Woodlots at 35 primary schools and 7 secondary schools. This was done to reduce pressure on the natural forests by providing an alternative source of cooking fuel for the institutions.

WWF also visited the 2700-hectare Earth Hour Forest established in 2020. The forest is doing well. Probably this is one of the greatest milestones for the Earth Hour campaign since it was flagged off at the Uganda Country Office.

FORESTS, THE LUNGS OF NATURE AND PEOPLE



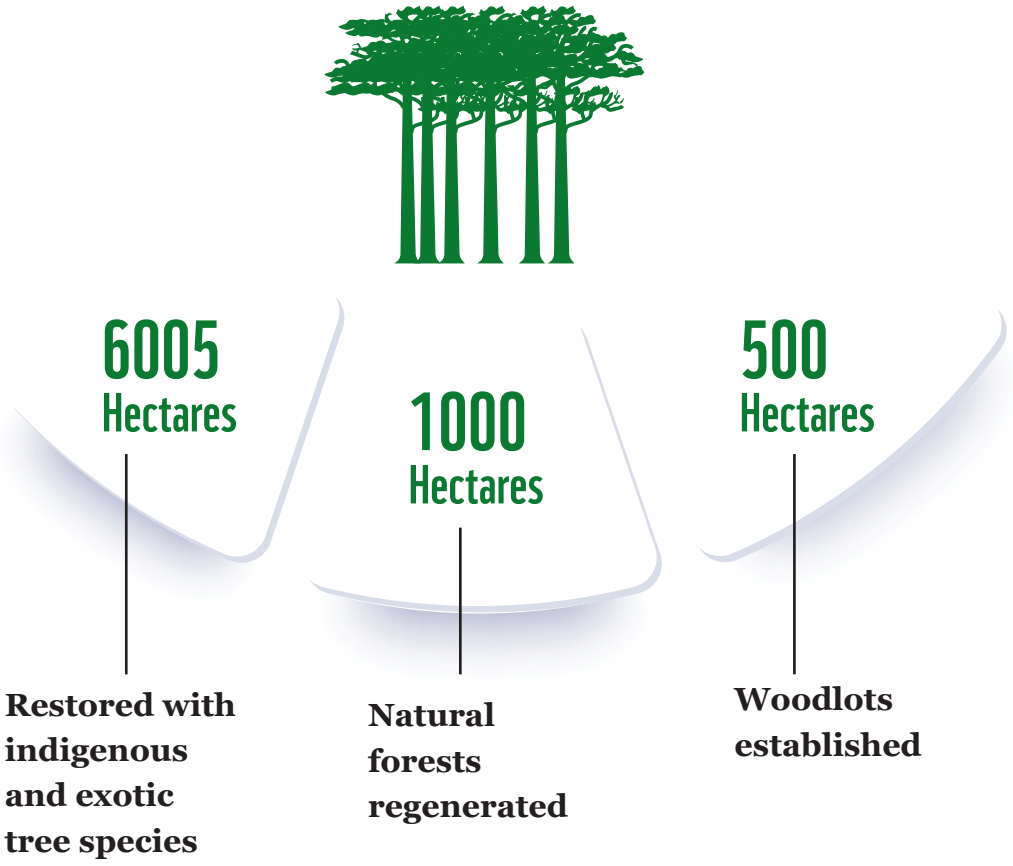
We all know that forests are the lungs of nature and people. Without them, life on earth is not guaranteed. Over the past year, WWF in Uganda has worked with various stakeholders to put in place mechanisms for sustainable forest management to attain biodiversity conservation, livelihoods support and national economic development.

07 WWF Restores Degraded Landscapes

Deforestation and land degradation, exacerbated by climate change and unsustainable land use practices, pose a threat to ecosystem functions, land productivity, and food and water security in the Albertine.
WWF in Uganda has mainstreamed Forest landscape restoration across all her programs. In the last financial year, we successfully restored the ecological and productive functions of degraded ecosystems in tree-rich landscapes, increasing the resilience of the landscapes and the people who live in them.

1500 hectares were restored with indigenous and exotic tree species while 1000 hectares of natural forests were regenerated, and 500 hectares of woodlots were established.

The regenerated natural forest landscapes have also stored additional carbon, thus contributing to climate change mitigation.



PEOPLE BENEFITTING

08 How the Water Source in Ntoroko has Improved Livelihoods

Ntoroko District, Uganda – Once terrorized by crocodile attacks and plagued by waterborne diseases, communities along River Semuliki are now experiencing relief and renewed hope after a bold ecological restoration effort transformed the fragile riverbank into a safe, thriving buffer zone.

Under the *Leading the Change* program, **WWF Uganda**, with funding from **SIDA** and in partnership with **Tooro Botanical Gardens**, spearheaded the restoration of a **2-kilometer stretch of degraded riverbank**—gazzeting a **100-meter buffer zone** for community-led conservation. This once-bare corridor has been replanted with **bamboo**, **indigenous tree species, and fruit trees**, stabilizing the banks and preventing further erosion into Ugandan territory.

River Semuliki, which forms the natural boundary between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, has long been under threat. Years of human activity along its edges—coupled with intensifying climate impacts—caused the river to shift course, eat into farmland, and expose communities to danger.

In the past, the degraded riverbank became a hotspot for **crocodile attacks,** with **an average of 3–10 cows lost each month,** along with several human fatalities.

To ensure local ownership, over **100 families** were mobilized under the Bweramule-Rwamabale Water Users Association to lead riverbank restoration efforts. The planting activity not only strengthened the riverbank against erosion but also created temporary employment for local youth. These young workers used their earnings to pay school fees, purchase household necessities, and start small businesses, improving household livelihoods and fostering community resilience

But restoration alone could not solve every challenge. For years, the community depended on River Semuliki for water—despite it being unsafe for domestic use and a home to deadly crocodiles. That changed with the construction of a **solar-powered** well in Bweramule, a second major intervention of the program. With **a capacity of 165,600 liters per hour,** the facility now serves over 300 households and provides safe water for **more than 3,450 animals daily.**

According to **Silver Birungi**, WWF Uganda's Program Manager, the water source was designed to **relieve pressure on the river**, improve health and hygiene, and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

> "The access to clean water has not only improved community health but also reduced the dangerous encounters between people and wildlife, Birungi said

adding that deaths attributed to crocodile attacks while fetching water dropped drastically from over 15 per month to zero.
Prior to the program roll-out, this community experienced the harsh realities of **climate vulnerability**. Located in a **low-lying area,** Ntoroko suffers from **seasonal flooding** and **extreme drought**, which erode soil, destroy livelihoods, and push people into closer conflict with wildlife. With no alternative water sources and widespread environmental degradation, families were forced to collect **contaminated river water** for both household use and livestock.

The intervention is also having ripple effects beyond safety and health. Improved access to water has freed up time—especially for women and girls—who can now focus on other productive activities. The reforested riverbank is reviving biodiversity, stabilizing the landscape, and even supporting micro-climates for local agriculture.

River Semuliki, once a symbol of danger and loss, is now becoming a story of sustainability and harmony. Through partnership, ecological restoration, and local empowerment, a fragile landscape has turned into a fortress of resilience—where both people and wildlife can thrive side by side.

09 The Year WWF came Together to give Life to the Community of Bwitho

In 2024, the community of Bwitho in Kyarumba Subcounty- Kasese district was brought to its knees. Heavy rains triggered massive flooding as River Dubu burst its banks. What followed was a catastrophe—violent floods and mudslides tore through the village, sweeping away homes, crops, and infrastructure. The river diverted its course, cutting straight through the village trading center, destroying buildings, burying gardens, and disconnecting communities from schools, markets, churches, and health facilities.

The human toll was equally heartbreaking: four lives were lost, and over **70 families** were displaced. A total of **1,866 people** were relocated to makeshift shelters at Bwitho Primary School and the Kyarumba parish headquarters.

For the residents of Bwitho, the devastation was more than just physical—it was emotional and deeply personal. Generations had lived on this land, relying on its rivers, soil, and seasons to survive. Now, that very land had turned against them. In the wake of the destruction, fear and uncertainty filled the air. But from the ruins emerged a lifeline.

The Solution:

WWF with Fundraising from Global Affairs Canada come in


Before


After

WWF Uganda, through the Climate Adaptation for Protected Areas (CAPA) project, and in partnership with Kiima Foods and support from the Government of Canada through IISD, stepped in to offer a path toward recovery. After assessing the situation, the WWF team identified Bwitho as a community highly vulnerable to climate change, one that needed not just relief—but resilience.

Our Response

Our interventions were three-phased: Emergency and immediate short-term solutions, intermediate and long-term solutions They introduced nature-based solutions to restore the degraded ecosystem and protect the community from future climate shocks. River Dubu was rechanneled to its original course, and **20,000 bamboo** was planted along three kilometers of its banks to stabilize the River bank and reduce erosion. Contour trenches—**44 kilometers** in total—were dug into the hillsides to slow water runoff and prevent future landslides. Vetiver grass was laid to further anchor the soil. Rainwater harvesting tanks were installed in key households to reduce pressure on surface runoff, and over 8,000 agroforestry trees were planted—species like Grevillea, Albizia, and Macadamia that would one day provide shade, fuel, food, and income.

Yet the true transformation came not just from digging trenches or planting trees, but from the people themselves. The project integrated Participatory Integrated Planning (PIP) trainings, which encouraged families to come together, identify their priorities, and map out their path to recovery and prosperity. Through this approach, the community became not just recipients of aid, but active architects of their own resilience.

According to John Muhindi Kiima, the Chairperson of Bwitho Village, the ripple effects have extended beyond any one household. Inspired by training and visible results, residents have embraced conservation practices—not out of obligation, but out of belief.

> "People are digging trenches and planting trees not because they're told to—but because they see the benefits," he says.

Today, Bwitho is a community renewed. The river flows peacefully between banks now reinforced with bamboo. The once barren hills are slowly turning green. Rainwater is no longer a threat, but a resource. Trees promise fruit, timber, and energy for tomorrow.

What was once a scene of despair is now a symbol of regeneration.
The story of Bwitho is not just about surviving a disaster. It is a story of what happens when nature is restored and people are empowered.

It reminds us that when communities are not only supported in recovery but are entrusted to lead in restoration, the impact is lasting. Nature, when nurtured, gives back—and in Bwitho, life is flowing again.

Now a Model conservation Community;

Now, Bwitho Village is being recognized not just for its recovery, but for its transformation into a model conservation community. The once-forgotten hillsides and damaged riverbanks have become learning grounds for other communities, schools, and institutions interested in climate adaptation and nature-based solutions. Students from nearby schools now make study visits to observe how the bamboo plantations stabilize riverbanks, how trenching and vetiver grass slow runoff, and how community-driven conservation can bring about real change. Agricultural extension workers and local leaders from neighboring districts have also come to witness firsthand what inclusive planning and ecological restoration look like on the ground. What was once a symbol of devastation has become a classroom for resilience and environmental education.

Social services have returned to the community

Social services have also returned to Bwitho, bringing with them a sense of normalcy and hope. The restoration of feeder roads by the communities themselves has reconnected the community to nearby schools and health centers, enabling children to resume their education and families to access essential healthcare.

Bwitho Primary School, once turned into an emergency shelter for displaced families, has reopened and resumed its full learning calendar.

Improved household incomes and livelihoods

With nature healing and infrastructure returning, household incomes and livelihoods have also improved. Under the CAPA project, over 100 residents earned income through restoration work such as planting bamboo, digging trenches, and maintaining nurseries. Families have invested in sustainable ventures including fish farming, transportation, agroforestry, and kitchen gardening applying knowledge gained from PIP training to better plan and manage resources. On average, households reported a 3 % increase in income, with many shifting away from risky or unsustainable practices.

As one community member shared,

> "I used to depend on charcoal burning, but now I earn more from fish farming while protecting the environment.

10

How Nature Based Solutions are Transforming Lives

For years, communities in the Greater Rwenzori Landscape faced a quiet but devastating crisis. Rivers such as Kabiri, Dunguluha, and Nyamuruseghe — once lifelines for farming, clean water, and livelihoods — had become symbols of risk. Hills and riverbanks, stripped of vegetation due to deforestation and unsustainable farming practices, could no longer hold back the rains. Flash floods became more frequent, destroying crops, washing away roads, and displacing families.

WWF Uganda introduced the concept of nature-based solutions in her programming. This is a concept that highlights the fact that people can proactively protect, manage or restore natural ecosystems, while significantly contributing to addressing six major challenges: climate change, food security, water security, human health, disaster risk, and social and economic development.

One of our Programs, "Innovative and Gender-Sensitive Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Resilience and Green Jobs has been implemented in the districts of Kasese, Bunyangabu, Kabarole, and Rubirizi. The program is addressing environmental degradation and socio-economic vulnerability simultaneously — using the power of nature to build climate resilience and generate sustainable livelihoods.

According to ***Benjamin Ojelel***, Project Manager at WWF Uganda, the approach is simple but powerful:

> "We used nature to heal nature — and at the same time, to support people. By investing in agroforestry, bamboo

restoration, and green skills, we've created opportunities where once there was only survival.

The results have been both tangible and transformative. So far, 250 hectares of degraded land have been restored through agroforestry and the planting of indigenous tree species — significantly increasing forest cover while stabilizing steep hills and riverbanks. Along critical waterways such as Nyamuruseghe, Mobuku, and Dunguluha, over 15 kilometers of riverbanks have been reinforced using indigenous bamboo, which has helped reduce soil erosion, slowed down surface runoff, and improved water quality. More than **2,000 households** have actively participated in tree planting and soil and water conservation measures, including mulching, trenching, and the construction of terraces — helping to reclaim fertility, reduce land degradation, and restore productivity.

At the same time, the program empowered over **94 youths** and women with skills in nature-based enterprises such as bamboo craft production, basket weaving, beekeeping, and composting techniques.

To ensure long-term sustainability and improved market access, the trained youth have been organized into Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) like the Bukonjo Bamboo Group. Through these groups, members save regularly, access credit, and sell their products collectively.

In 2024, the Bukonjo group saved **UGX 4.36 million** (USD 1,225) and supplied bamboo crafts to three local markets. These efforts opened new income streams, helping families pay school fees, invest in farming, and build stronger household resilience.

The program is not only bringing back trees but also stabilizing the land and, most importantly, reigniting hope**. *"Now, I can pay my children's school fees from selling bamboo chairs,' one youth member says Biira Rosette,*** a 25-year-old mother of five from Kyondo Sub-County. Biira is one of many whose lives have been transformed. Trained in bamboo handcrafting, she now earns a steady income from her products. With support from her local savings group, she has diversified into poultry and piggery, increasing her household income from **UGX 20,000 to UGX 50,000** (a 150% increase) and improving food security for her family. Her story illustrates the ripple effect of community empowerment, as hundreds of other participants have similarly leveraged skills and savings to strengthen their livelihoods.

More importantly, a cultural shift is taking root. Where once farmers cultivated riverbanks out of desperation, now bamboo and trees stand tall, holding the soil and slowing floodwaters. Youth who once turned to sand mining or charcoal burning are now artisans, beekeepers, and bamboo entrepreneurs.

What began as a response to crisis has become a blueprint for resilience.By combining environmental restoration with green jobs, the Nature-Based Solutions program is not only healing landscapes — it is empowering communities to become stewards of their own future.

11 How the Timber Yard is Boosting WWF's Forestation Programs

In the bid to Improve and transform timber markets, WWF working with the Rukungiri District Local government supported the establishment of the Wood processing plant.
Famously referred to as the timber yard, the plant has significantly strengthened the wood value chain by adding value locally, creating jobs and reducing reliance on external markets.

The yard is transforming raw timber into finished or semi-finished wood products, capturing more economic benefit to communities and indeed making tree planting a worthwhile venture.

WWF has organized **over 727 community members** (**148** women, **579** men) into cooperatives across five districts: Rukungiri (**20** women, **112** men), Kasese (**44** women, **103** men), Kisoro (**40** women, **169** men), Mitooma (**14** women, **58** men), and Rubirizi (**30** women, **137** men). Through these cooperatives, members raise high-quality seedlings, grow trees, and process products at the plant, collectively generating about **UGX 20 million** (USD 5,000) annually.

This model has boosted household incomes, improved livelihoods, and strengthened collaboration, making cooperatives a highly effective approach in the region.

20 hectares
of mature trees (eucalyptus and pine trees), the communities are now able to sell legal timber to Kenya and Rwanda, earning them a monthly household income of about **USD 5000.**

Christopher Tumwine, a member of the Rukungiri tree growers and timber traders' society said that all members in his group are now geared towards adding value to their forest products.

> "WWF has supported us in acquiring the necessary machines which have enabled us to cut the tree logs or wood in different sizes and shapes. We no longer have to use the hand-held lander to smoothen or size up the wood, or even sun-dry them, because we have acquired a drying machine

that takes a couple of hours to remove water from the wood, and ensure that it is ready for the market," Tumwiine said.

Furthermore, this same machinery ensures that the timber is processed to meet international standards. This, according to Tumwine, has created an opening for their members to export quality timber. And with equipment like a surfacer machi sharpener blade, the circular saw, thicknesser machine, spindle, molder, and wood drier all in place, the Rukungiri timber yard is a platform burgeoning with great promise and reward for all tree farmers, to benefit nature and people.

If there was any doubt about the prospects from tree growing, they are finally put to rest. The communities have added that the free seedlings under the WWF programs have enabled them to reduce the costs of planting and hence increase their profit margins. And the bigger story is the fact that this has translated into a greener landscape.

Over the past one year, these cooperative societies have planted one million seven hundred and forty-nine thousand seedlings.

3939 acres of land covered in tree seedlings. Essentially, this is equivalent to **3939** football pitches of new forest cover, a big step from the bare land, that had been affected by deforestation.

12

The Batwa Indigenous Community- Bridging the Conservation, Cultural and Livelihood Divide.

Before the gazettement of Bwindi Impenetrable Park — the home to Mountain Gorillas — in 1991, the Batwa, an indigenous group, depended on Bwindi's resources as their home and livelihood. The gazettement meant a loss of their homes, culture, livelihoods, and identity.

WWF Uganda, working with a rural organization — Uplift the Rural Poor — conducted a systematic assessment on governance and identification of priority actions. After identifying the underlying governance complexities, a cultural values approach was identified to achieve sustainable livelihoods for the Batwa community and conservation of Bwindi.

The Batwa Community Tourism Development

The Batwa community has since been organized and trained in alternative livelihood options, tourism development and marketing, and forest landscape restoration, among others. Under product development in the district tourism development plan of Kisoro, which was developed with support from WWF, there is special and deliberate attention given to the Batwa.

> **These are people whose orientation has seen them live in the forests for so many years. And that history of theirs is captivating, too, as a tourism aspect,** stated a district official.

He added that through this tourism development plan, the Batwa have been skilled in community tourism aspects. This is all intended to give them a better livelihood as a tourist focal point in Kisoro. As a result, the community has attained better earnings for their livelihoods and placed less pressure on the forest.

The community has also been equipped with costumes to improve their cultural performance. This has improved their brand and presentations, and they are now enjoying an average of two performances per day — earning them approximately **USD 200** — money they are utilizing to invest in other livelihood activities.
This support was made possible through WWF's Leading the Change program, funded through WWF Denmark.

Game changer in Batwa costumes

The Batwa Accumulative Savings and Credit Association

WWF, in collaboration with Uplift the Rural Poor (URP), rolled out leadership, financial, and business management training. These trainings gave birth to the Batwa Accumulative Savings and Credit Association. To date, after a period of just one year, the group has over **USD 1,000** in savings.

The Batwa are now able to access interest-free loans to pay medical bills, start small businesses, pay school fees, among others — a critical step for a community that was nearing extinction but is now working towards attaining self-sustainability.

Mainstreaming SRHR and HRBA among the Batwa

WWF and URP have integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) across all interventions. As a result, reported incidents of gender-based violence have decreased by an estimated 15%, improving safety and wellbeing for women, youth, and other vulnerable community members

The community has also embraced education and are taking their children to school. While they still utilize the forest as their source of medicine, they have now embraced the services at established health facilities and are accessing services such as immunization, malaria treatment, HIV care and counseling, family planning services, among others.
This has improved the quality of their lives.

Access to Clean Water

The Batwa community were previously trekking over 7 kilometers to fetch water from the stream. The situation was worsened by the hilly terrain, which made it difficult for them to carry two jerrycans. The water crisis disorganized the daily routine of women, who oversaw this task as per the community gender roles.

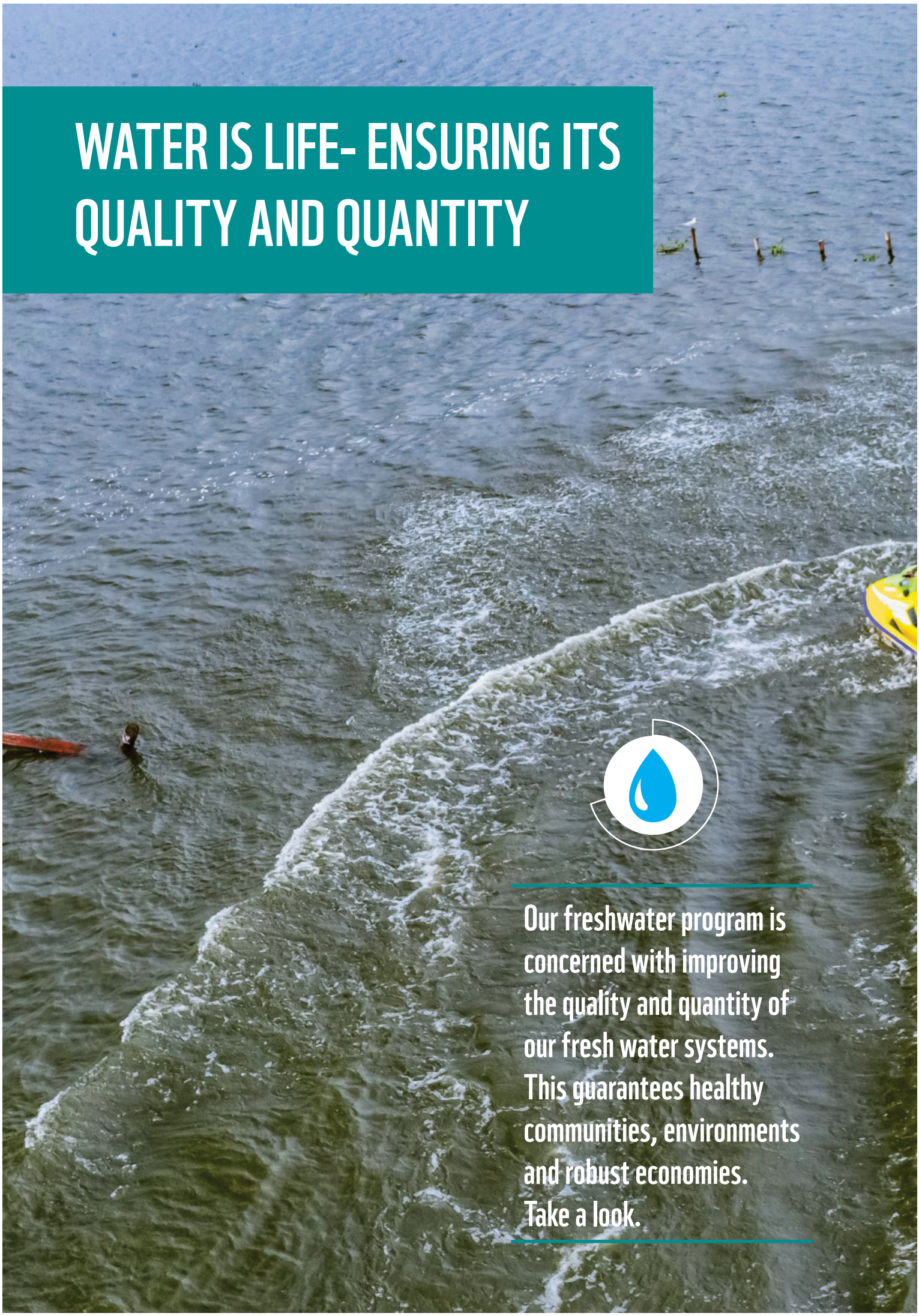
Enid Kabibi, a member of the Batwa community, further explains that if she started her journey to fetch water at 6 a.m., she would only be back home past 10 a.m. This greatly reduced their productive time. For the school-going children, it was worse.

They would need to fetch water in turns, and the person responsible for the task at any given time would have to miss school.

This came with increased cases of school dropouts in the community, teenage pregnancies, among others.
WWF addressed this by introducing rain harvesting tanks in the communities. The **30,000-litre capacity tanks** have not only saved the Batwa women from abuse but also reduced school absenteeism.

The locals are no longer attacked by wild animals on their way to collect water through the park. The school children can wash their uniforms, but most importantly, they no longer miss school. And most importantly, the women now have time to engage in other income-generating activities to improve the well-being of their families.

WATER IS LIFE- ENSURING ITS QUALITY AND QUANTITY



Our freshwater program is concerned with improving the quality and quantity of our fresh water systems. This guarantees healthy communities, environments and robust economies. Take a look.

13 Addressing Water Quality and Quantity in the Rivers of Kyambura, Nchwera and Kagina

WWF's Triple Benefit Program is a transformative initiative that applies Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to address the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss, community vulnerability, and climate change across the Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL), a region known for its exceptional biodiversity but increasingly threatened by deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable resource use.

Centered on conserving biodiversity, enhancing community well-being, and improving climate resilience, the program recognizes that ecological degradation and human hardship are deeply intertwined, particularly in sensitive areas such as Bwindi and Maramagambo-Kalinzu. Vital forest and river ecosystems, including the Kyambura, Nchwera, and Kigina rivers, have faced severe disruption.

This year, WWF prioritized the restoration of these rivers based on both local consultation and IUCN's global NbS standards, integrating science-led and community-informed approaches to improve water security as a core environmental and societal challenge.

Through the planting of indigenous tree species, a total of 669 hectares of river catchments were restored in the last one and half years: **350 ha** along River Kyambura in Rubirizi district, 50 ha along River Kigina in Kisoro district, and 269 ha along River Nchwera in Rukungiri and Mitooma districts.

These efforts strengthen habitat connectivity, particularly along the Kyambura River between Kasoha Kitomi Central Forest Reserve and the surrounding landscape. These rivers support rich biodiversity and feed into globally significant water systems: Kyambura and Nchwera rivers flow into Lake Edward, which drains into the Semliki River and ultimately in the Nile, while Kigina feeds into River Ivi, part of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park ecosystem.

WWF provided **13 heifers, 59 rainwater harvesting tanks, 103 sheep, 50 goats, 1,050 beehives, and 8 biogas units to 756 households** in protected areas. As a result, an estimated 50% of these households have reduced their reliance on forest resources, while generating additional income and improving food security. This intervention has tackled poverty, a major driver of encroachment, and strengthened the resilience of participating communities.

Water Testing to guide WWF Programming.

The Ministry of Water and Environment, in collaboration with WWF, conducted a water quality and quantity assessment exercise for the selected rivers in the greater Virunga landscape; namely R. Kyambura, R. Nchwera and R. Kigina.

This assessment exercise was a proactive step towards understanding the current state of these precious resources whose results will act as a baseline to inform WWF programming on the same. The main objective was to establish the water quantity and quality of the resources in order to address the current challenges facing the ecosystems using nature-based solutions.

Overall, Turbidity, Colour and TSS were found to be significantly high exceeding the standard values of wastewater for all the sources except R. Kigina. This shows particularly concerning levels of suspended solids, which could negatively impact aquatic life, water quality and water quantity. The study also revealed a dramatic increase in Turbidity and TSS between R. Nchwera at the bridge and downstream, suggesting a potential source of sediment or pollution input in that reach. This could be due to degraded riverbanks, probably brought about by activities like sand mining, poor farming methods and others.

WWF is now using this findings to rollout programs to address the issues raised to ensure that the quality and quantity of water in these rivers is safeguarded.

14

Reclaiming Awoja: How Communities in Eastern Uganda are Bouncing Back from Floods and Landslides

Over the years, the districts of Bulambuli, Sironko, Bukedea, Kumi, and Katakwi nestled within the Awoja Catchment have lived under a grim shadow. Torrential rains would strike without mercy. Rivers swelled, Hillsides gave way, and entire villages were left in a state of instability from floods and landslides that destroyed homes, wiped out crops, and claimed lives.

These disasters were not just environmental; they tore at the social and economic fabric of communities. Soil erosion, rapid deforestation, and the creeping effects of climate change left once-fertile land barren. Eastern Uganda's food basket was on the brink of collapse.

But from this crisis emerged a new chapter, one rooted in restoration and resilience. In response, the Ministry of Water and Environment, with support from the World Bank, contracted WWF to implement urgent catchment management strategies across the middle and lower Awoja sub-catchments. At the heart of the initiative: empowering communities to take charge of their environment.

Across Apeduru-Apapai and Lake Okolitorom sub-catchments, community members were mobilized to undertake soil and water conservation actions.

They planted vetiver grass, dug infiltration pits, and constructed diversion channels to redirect runoff from vulnerable slopes. With over **80% of wetlands** previously encroached, WWF moved swiftly to demarcate and restore three wetlands in Bukedea and two in Katakwi.

Communities that once depended on these wetlands for survival were supported with alternative livelihoods including beekeeping, improved cookstove production, and fish farming.

A vigorous tree planting campaign engaged over 180 community members who established six tree nurseries and raised more than 500,000 seedlings, which were planted across degraded landscapes. This initiative not only restored tree cover, reducing soil erosion and enhancing ecosystem services, but also generated over UGX 180 million in income for participating households, strengthening livelihoods and promoting sustainable land management.

The results have been nothing short of remarkable. In just two years, wetland restoration jumped from **35% to 80%**, and vegetation cover improved from **15% to 48%** Crop yields have bounced back and so has hope.

Clean water access, once a distant dream, is now a daily reality. Twenty water sources in Bukedea and 15 in Katakwi were protected and equipped with water conservation structures. Water Use Committees trained by WWF now manage these critical lifelines.

Additionally, 10 rain gun sprinkler irrigation systems were provided to farmer groups in Bukedea and Katakwi districts, enabling more than 300 farmers to grow crops even during dry spells. This has improved food security and ensured more reliable harvests. Communities have also benefited from coffee pulping machines, which allow them to process and add value to their harvests, boosting incomes and strengthening economic resilience.

What began as a fight against nature's fury has transformed into a story of community resilience, environmental recovery, and renewed hope. Today, the people of Awoja can say proudly: ...Water is life. Trees are wealth. And this land - once broken - is healing...

15 Bringing River Rwizi Back to Life

Uganda's River Rwizi provides water and related environmental services to some 2.5 million people in the southwest of the country. It's the main source of water for Mbarara city, a major business hub with a population of more than 1 million supporting industries including beverage companies, milk plants, construction, municipal solid waste, health facilities, agro-industry and farmlands.

Despite its importance for regional social, economic and ecosystem functions it had been heavily degraded, resulting in water shortages during the dry season and flash floods during the wet seasons. Degraded ecosystems and a lack of vegetation in the upper and middle

catchment had resulted in a lack of surface water body storage, except for a few small remaining wetlands. This posed a severe risk to the booming industrial and agricultural hub in west Uganda.
To address these challenges, WWF in partnership with AB InBev, the parent company of Nile Breweries Limited, started implementing a project of restoring River Rwizi aimed at restoring the catchment area of the river to boost the water quantity and enhance its quality as well restore the biodiversity around the catchment area. The interventions introduced for the river restoration were done in the upstream where there are hills, mid-stream where there are people's gardens and downstream where there is the river and its buffer zone.

In the downstream, the interventions started by restoring the buffer zone and the wetlands around the river. Before the program was rolled out, communities were practicing agriculture within the buffer zone and had degraded the wetlands through brick laying, sand mining and animal grazing.
The river buffer zone which covers 13.5 hectares has been restored by stabilizing the soil structure where over 9,000 tree seedlings of different species like bamboo and indigenous ones like mvule, musizi and grevillea were planted as they can hold the soil particles and prevent silt from flowing directly into the river.

Bamboo has been planted on the first 30 meters of the buffer zone to make sure that the riverbank is stable and not easily washed away by the runoff.
In addition to the trees, three hectares of the buffer zone have been planted with napier grass and trained the farmers how to harvest it just by cutting and not uprooting to destabilize the soil structure which would then become weak and flow into the river. Over 40 local farmers participated in this exercise by clearing the bushes, digging the pits and planting the trees. In the midstream where there are mainly plantations, farmers have been trained on how to do soil and water conservation with the introduction of infiltration pits and percolation pits which minimize soil erosion which would have caused siltation in the river hence affecting the water quality.

In the upstream, interventions focused on water harvesting and restoring vegetation on the hills which had been degraded due to overgrazing and deforestation to make sure that the speed of water as it runs from uphill is reduced.

Water tanks with a capacity of 10,000 cubic litres each have been constructed for households in the hilly areas. For the program, it was aimed at solving the issue of soil erosion by reducing on the amount of water which would have been running down the hills into the river while for the households, it provides water for home use and reduces over dependency on the river as the only source of water. To trap the remaining water, these residents were also told to dig trenches in their plantations which hold the water run off while in turn keeping the gardens well moist and crops thriving even during the dry seasons. Indeed, with these restoration efforts in place, the vegetation around the riverbanks like papyrus is growing back and the water becoming clearer again.
WWF has recently installed a water monitoring system. This is going to be used to assess the actual success of the water quality and quantity of Rwizi.

IMPROVED NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

WWF Uganda in the last year continued to work to improve natural resource governance through various initiatives focused on enhancing community participation, strengthening institutional frameworks, and promoting transparency and accountability. Our efforts efforts aim to ensure sustainable resource management and equitable benefit sharing, ultimately contributing to both environmental conservation and improved livelihoods.

16 Carbon Markets Regulations - a Key Milestone for Uganda

Uganda has reached a major milestone in its climate journey with the official launch of the National Climate Change (Climate Change Mechanism) Regulations 2025, commonly referred to as the Carbon Market Regulations. These regulations mark a critical step forward in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, particularly Article 6, which enables countries to cooperate on emissions reductions through international carbon markets.

The regulations are expected to unlock new opportunities for climate finance, drive sustainable development, and create green jobs in key sectors such as forestry, renewable energy, and agriculture.

Uganda, a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1993, has positioned itself as a regional leader in climate action. With vast natural resources and a strong political commitment to environmental sustainability, the country is leveraging its carbon sink potential to catalyze inclusive and climate-resilient growth.

The development of the Carbon Market Regulations was led by the Climate Change Department (CCD) under the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), with technical and financial support from the Worldwide Fund for Nature and our Partner Environmental Management for Livelihood Improvement Bwaise Facility (EMLI)

Following the official launch, , WWF in Collaboration with EMLI and the Ministry of Water and Environment have embarked on familiarization and rollout meetings and workshops with targeted stakeholders to trigger early compliance and enforcement of the regulations

17 District Forest Development Plans Developed

WWF Uganda has supported the development of District Forest Development Plans (DFDPs) for 12 districts to promote sustainable forest management and conservation.
According to Ivan Tumuhimbise, the Country Director of WWF in Uganda, DFDPs are crucial for ensuring that forests continue to provide essential ecosystem services and contribute to sustainable development, including improving livelihoods and supporting biodiversity

"Additionally, DFDPs are now supporting fundraising for the local governments by providing a clear, strategic framework for forest management activities, including conservation, restoration, and development. This framework is attracting funding by demonstrating a well-defined need, proposed solutions, and measurable outcomes, making it easier for donors to see the value and impact of their investment" he said.

18 Successful Establishment of Collaborative Forest Management Groups

WWF Uganda together with Kitara Civil Society Organizations Network last financial year successfully facilitated the process of establishing Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) groups across the Albertine Rift. Under the Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate Smart Development (IFPA-CD) project funded by the world bank through National Forestry Authority(NFA), the consortium successfully negotiated 19 CFM Agreements in 12 districts of Yumbe, Moyo, Terego, Buliisa, Kagadi, Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa, Kitagwenda, Rubirizi, Mitooma, Rukungiri and Kanungu.

These groups are aimed at effectively conserving various Central Forest Reserves such as Kagombe, Kitechura, Ibambaro, Ihimbo, Muhangi, Mt Era amongst others through a collaborative approach with the communities.

The signed agreements mark a new chapter in forest governance within the Albertine Rift, with WWF, NFA, and local governments pledging to ensure effective implementation. The initiative promises not only improved conservation outcomes but also increased benefits for local communities through sustainable forest management.

19

WWF Facilitates a 10 year CFM for Kalinzu Communities

In the same Financial year, WWF Uganda has facilitated the signing of a 10-year Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) agreement between the national forestry authority nfa (NFA) and communities living adjacent to Kalinzu Central Forest Reserve in Rubirizi District. The community, mobilized under the Ndangara-Nyakyiyanza Tutungukye Group, has been committed to forest stewardship since 2013. This renewed agreement extends their collaboration until 2035.

According to Rita Murungi, Rubirizi District Natural Resources Officer, the agreement will foster sustainable use of Kalinzu's resources by enabling communities to participate in forest management, especially at a time when Kalinzu is being proposed for upgrade to a national park.

Additionally, the arrangement will not only protect biodiversity but also enhance household incomes through opportunities like carbon credits from planting indigenous trees.

WWF in Uganda promotes CFM to ensure sustainable forest management, conservation, and development, aligning with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This approach leverages local participation and benefits to create more effective and sustainable forest management practices.

The entire process has been facilitated by WWF Uganda under the Leading the Change project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) through WWF Sweden.

20 Strong Partnerships for Climate Resilience

As we reflect on the past year, it's clear that climate change remains one of the most pressing global challenges in addition to biodiversity loss and the ever increasing need to feed the growing population. Rising temperatures, intensifying natural disasters, and unpredictable weather patterns threaten ecosystems, economies and communities worldwide.

Within Uganda, we have continuously seen alterations in weather patterns, drier spells and failures in agricultural productivity as well as landslides and flooding. In response, WWF Uganda through their transformative partnership with VELUX A/S and WWF Denmark are implementing the Natural Forest Regeneration for Enhanced Carbon Stocks in the Albertine Rift (FRECAR) project- part of the global "Forest projects portfolio" - which prioritizes actions to address climate change impacts through building mitigation approaches and community resilience across the Bugoma-Kagombe landscape. This initiative focuses on a host of Central Forest Reserves in the northern Murchison-Semliki landscape through localized partnerships with The National Forestry Authority

(NFA); Kitara Civil Society Organizations Network (KCSON) and Environment Management for Livelihoods-Bwaise Facility (EMLI). The project's goals are multifaceted: increasing carbon stocks, improving community well-being, and conserving biodiversity.

By involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders—including local communities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the Church, the private sector, and various government departments— the project ensures a participatory approach that enhances its effectiveness and sustainability in the Albertine Rift. Building climate resilience for humanity requires a collaborative and transformative partnership, bringing together governments, private sector, civil society organizations, and local communities. We have developed strong partnerships with National Forestry Authority (NFA), Kitara Civil Society Organisation Network (KCSON), Environmental Management for Livelihood Improvement (EMILI) – Bwaise facility and the community which are essential for sharing knowledge, resources, and expertise to develop effective climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

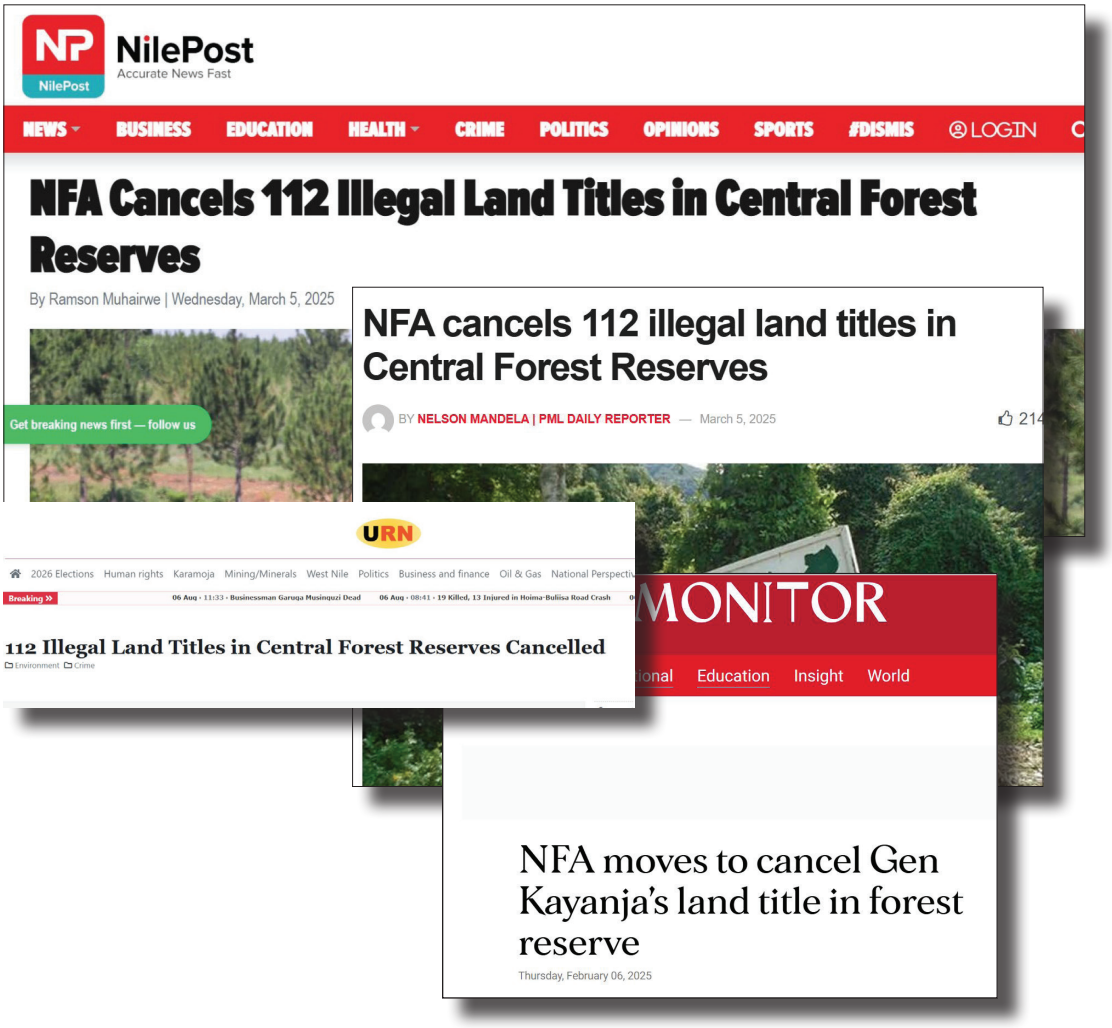
Each of these partners plays a critical role in climate resilience. For instance EMLI-Bwaise Facility is supporting the program on the policy arena and engagement with government; where their role has culminated in the review and consequent gazettement of the National Climate Change (Climate Change Mechanisms) Regulations 2025.

WWF and NFA's Partnership encourages collaborative forest management to enhance regeneration of the forest cover. This has been achieved through capacity building programs for communities adjacent to the Central Forest Reserves(CFRs), joint planning and signing of Collaborative Forest Management Agreements for effective management. Todate, Nsugasugi Environmental Conservation Associtaion(NECA)- a community group we are working with has signed a collaborative forest management agreement with NFA and there are two(02) others pending finalization. These enhance the effectiveness of forest management, conservation, and sustainable use, promote community involvement, ensuring their needs and concerns are addressed which in the long run support sustainable livelihoods, reducing poverty and promoting economic development.

According to Richard Kyalisima the National Forestry Authority (NFA) Sector Manager for Kagadi Sector, " *up to 80% of Kagombe CFR had been degraded, severely affecting the surrounding environment and communities*" and through the work with WWF, he further notes that "*WWF has bridged the gap that existed between the community and NFA as an institution through capacity building meetings, support the recruitment and equipping of 18 patrolmen to ensure no encroachment and prevent wildfires. This has encouraged a positive relationship between NFA and the community working together to restore Kagombe CFR. Additionally, continued partnerships will provide an opportunity for landscape approach to conservation and benefiting other CFRs in the area for connectivity"* Kyalisima added.

21

WWF Groundbreaking Research Leads to Cancellation of 112 Illegal Land Titles in Forest Reserves



WWF Uganda in Collaboration with the Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda commissioned an investigation to ascertain the extent of encroachment and issuance of illegal land titles within Central and Local Forest Reserves in Uganda.

The research also established and documented individuals and companies who possess such titles in gazetted green parks and forest reserves.

The study was carried out in the Budongo Ecosystem range (Hoima and Kikuube), Southwestern Range (Bushenyi, Mitooma, Rubirizi, and Buhweju districts) and Lake Shore range (Kayunga, Wakiso and Mpigi). The study established that there was a reduction in encroachment in Central Forest Reserves in the said districts due to the uptake and implementation of tree planting permits and licenses managed by the NFA.

However, that was not the case for Wakiso district where the rate of encroachment was high specifically in Gunda Local Forest Reserve around Katabi town, Kitubulu, and Nonve Central Forest Reserve. Impact.

As a result of this research and the publicity that the media awarded to it, the National Forestry Authority working with the Ministry of lands, housing and Urban development canceled 112 land titles that were erroneously issued in central forest reserves in the districts of Kampala, Kayunga, Mukono, Jinja, Masaka, Entebbe and Mpigi.

WWF in collaboration with ACCU has since built the capacity of citizens on whistleblowing procedures and delivery standards for Forests and Wetlands. Specifically, the capacity enhancement was regarding monitoring of natural resources (forest and Wetlands) and Whistleblowing using legal frameworks and delivery standards as a guiding tool including Whistleblowers Protection Act 2010, the Constitution, Access to Information Act 2005, Anti-Corruption Act 2009, Zero tolerance to Corruption Policy 2019 and service delivery standards forests and Wetlands 2023.

As a result of constant engagements with communities and district stakeholders at the local level,6 contract agreements for CFM groups of Nyarugote CFM, Swazi Nitubasa CFM, Kiyanga Natural Resource Conservation Association (KINARECA), Ndangara Nyakiyanja Tutungukye Group (NNTG), Bitooma Abeteraine Twebiseho Association (BATA) and Rwanzere Tree Planting Association were finalized.

AFRICA REGIONAL ENERGY HUB

The Africa Regional Energy Hub (REH) which is hosted at WWF in Uganda has been implementing a 29.5 million NOK, five-year Africa Energy Transformation (AET) project (2021-2025).

The programme builds towards a just transition from coal/ fossil fuels to renewable energy (RE) solutions in Kenya, Tanzania and Madagascar and China by: Addressing national policy and regulatory frameworks for a RE transition, facilitating the divestment of African and Asian financial institutions from coal/fossil fuel fired power plants and increasing financial flows to RE, including women-led RE enterprises.

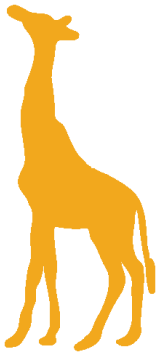
Madagascar

Barefoot College Madagascar Enjoying Stronger Partnerships and Reach!

Since 2017, Barefoot College Madagascar (BCMada) has been dedicated to empowering women from remote villages, turning them into agents of change within their communities. By January 2025, the organization had trained 120 solar technicians across Madagascar, equipping them with the skills to bring sustainable solar energy to their villages.
With financing from the EAT project, the organization has strengthened her communications infrastructure.

The organization has developed and implemented a multi-channel communication strategy, recruited dedicated communications staff and acquired essential equipment for content creation and outreach. These efforts have not only increased BCMada's visibility but also bolstered its credibility, attracted new technical partners, and helped launch a sustainable income-generating activity—the Tsiafajavona lodge in Ambatolampy

Tanzania



Sustainable Energy Forum Driving Tanzania towards Affordable and Reliable Re.

The National Coalition of Sustainable Energy Forum (SEF-Tanzania) with support from WWF Tanzania through the EAT project successfully engaged the government of Tanzania through the Ministry of Energy (MoE) to advocate for a renewable energy policy that provides national statement, commitment and direction toward transitioning to renewable energy that is affordable and reliable for every citizen.

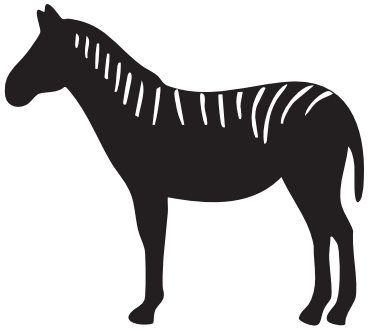
One of the key milestones for the forum was the development of the National Energy Efficiency Strategy developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy of Tanzania and the European union and WWF through the EAT project.

China

WWF's Africa Energy Transformation Project wins big at Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) 2024

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was hosted by the Chinese government in Beijing in September 2024, gathering African delegates, including 80-odd ministers, from 44 countries and 17 international/regional organizations to discuss how China and Africa should strengthen collaboration on investment and trade.

During the event, the WWF offices of Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Madagascar and Norway in partnership with Africa-based CSOs including Traffic, PADJA, African Wildlife Foundation and ACBA, among others, developed a position paper contributing to policy recommendations on five priorities for China-Africa cooperation.



Kenya

Kilifi County Energy Plan to Foster Economic and Environment Resilience

Kilifi County, located along Kenya's coastal region, has long faced significant energy challenges. Traditionally, the county relied heavily on biomass sources such as firewood and charcoal. This dependency contributed to severe environmental degradation, deforestation, and health risks associated with indoor air pollution. Limited access to modern, clean energy solutions hindered economic growth, exacerbated poverty, and placed undue strain on natural resources.

Recognizing these pressing challenges, a transformative change was set in motion when the County Government of Kilifi partnered with WWF to develop a comprehensive, sustainable County Energy Plan. This plan aims to not only address these long-standing challenges but also to foster economic and environmental resilience.

Sustainable Energy Access Association Advocacy Strategy promoting Renewable Energy Access in Kenya

Through the support from NORAD AET project, the Sustainable Energy Access Association of Kenya successfully developed an advocacy strategy which has been critical in guiding advocacy work to promote renewable energy access. Through the strategy, the association members have successfully engaged and influenced different policy processes in the country such as the development of the National Energy Policy, The Integrated National Energy Planning framework and the county energy plans.

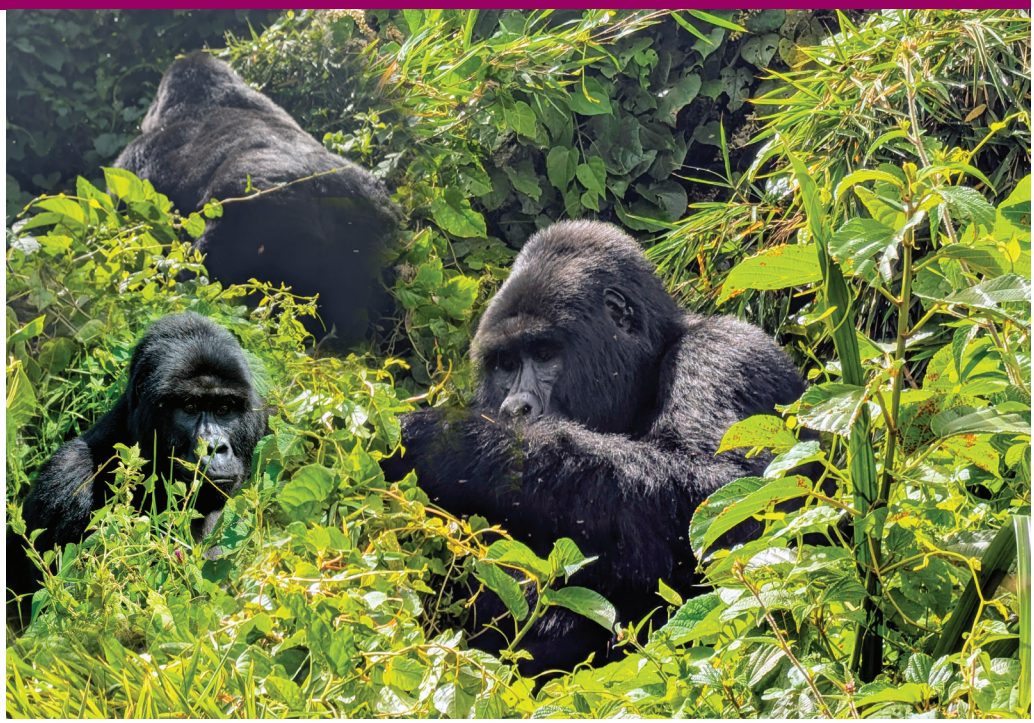
Uganda

1. WWF Uganda played a pivotal role in shaping Uganda's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Bill by convening a national multi-stakeholder consultation. Key recommendations submitted to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development included provisions for equitable enforcement, integration of electric vehicle infrastructure, de-risking private investment, and improved regulatory clarity.

2. To accelerate clean energy access and investment, WWF Uganda equipped 27 financial institutions and renewable energy investors with technical training aimed at enhancing their capacity to develop and scale up green financing products. This effort is expected to catalyze over USD 1 million in renewable energy financing over the next five years.

3. In a strategic partnership with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), WWF Uganda strengthened the finance and investment readiness of 25 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through targeted capacity building. This culminated in a national deal room session, where 50 SMEs pitched to over 20 prospective investors. The initiative enhanced SMEs' ability to craft viable proposals, laying the groundwork for future access to renewable energy investment opportunities and unlocking climate-smart business growth.

GREATER VIRUNGA LANDSCAPE COLLABORATION TAKES SHAPE



Since August 2022, WWF Uganda through the Greater Virunga Landscape Program has been brokering a collaborative mechanism to foster stronger partnership between Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration and key conservation and development NGOs whose operations transcend borders of the three GVL Partner states. The goal was to advance a collaborative partnership among like-minded organizations devoted to the conservation and sustainable management of the GVL in support of GVTC, mandated state agencies, local NGOs and communities.

This year, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) underpinning this collaboration was signed and the benefits are starting to emerge. These include; Bringing wider recognition of the global value of the GVL; Improving conservation outcomes and increasing investment where there are gaps; Avoiding duplication; Improving transboundary collaboration; Framework to share experiences, lessons and jointly overcoming challenges; Providing more support to GVTC and National Governments enabling stronger alliances with international NGOs and local CSOs, also development sector.

One of the immediate benefits of this collaboration has been joint fundraising to achieve priorities in the Greater Virunga Landscape Transboundary Strategic Plan (2024-2033), which was completed last year. These efforts have secured some early wins for the landscape.

Towards Zero Poaching Project (UK Illegal Wildlife Challenge Fund, £599,508 for 3 years):

This project is in response to increasing global trends in illegal wildlife trade (IWT), capacity, capability and coordination of multiple governmental bodies responsible for wildlife across the Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL). The project was initiated in August 2024 and is intended to improve detection, prevention and reduction of both national and cross-border IWT. Through advancement and promotion of standardised monitoring systems and tools; and regional cross-learning and coordination, the project will ultimately contribute towards ensuring stable populations of wildlife, and improved well-being of local communities across GVL. The project partners include WWF, WCS, IGCP, GVTC and TRAFFIC.

Secure Gorillas and Safe communities project (WWF-Denmark, $422,000 for two years):

The project purpose is to secure the mountain Gorilla's through a combination of interventions in Uganda. Working with International Gorilla Conservation Program (IGCP) and Gorilla Doctors (GD), WWF Uganda is using some of the funds to support the Gorilla census, help Uganda government to develop new 10-year management plans for Gorilla parks (Bwindi and Mgahinga NP), and support disease surveillance of Gorillas and neighbouring communities, including supporting livelihood interventions for HUGO groups around Bwindi. The project commenced at the beginning of July 2024 and will be implemented for 2 years.

The One Health Project ($24million for the whole consortium/ 6.5million for WWF):

In September 2024, WWF in collaboration with partners received approval of a one Health project entitled "Strengthening One Health Based PPR in the Greater Virunga Landscape". Funded by the Pandemic Fund through FAO, WHO and UNICEF, the project will tackle critical gaps and issues identified under the 3 priority areas of the Pandemic Fund i.e. Surveillance Systems, Laboratory Systems, Human Resources/ Workforce Strengthening. It specifically focuses on the need to strengthen coordination between the human and animal health sectors in the GVL particularly where there is the potential for disease spill over, due to the rich biodiversity, high human population density and the existence of a thriving nature-focused tourism sector. The project is being implemented by GVTC, WWF, Gorilla Doctors, IUCN and IGCP.

SAFEGUARDING OUR WORK FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE

WWF in Uganda has embraced and rolled out the Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF) to secure better conservation outcomes with and for local communities. Additionally, this has enabled us to avoid unintentional harm to people or nature.

In the last financial year, we were able to achieve the following.

- Finalized and validated Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMFs) for the Greater Rwenzori Sub-landscape, the Murchison-Semliki Sub-landscape, and the West Nile Sub-landscape. These have been mainstreamed into our programs. The Bwindi-Mgahinga Conservation Area (BMCA) ESMF was officially approved by the Regional Quality Assurance Committee (RQAC), marking a major milestone in safeguards governance.

- Conducted 10 Grievance Redress Mechanism training for partners and community representatives to enhance awareness and responsiveness.

- Installed 7 suggestion boxes across the 7 sub-counties within the Greater Virunga Landscape to facilitate community feedback and grievance reporting. During the recent Country Leadership Monitoring visit, these boxes were opened in the presence of community leaders and the issues recorded for further processing.

- Integrated Environmental Social Safeguards risk screening 100% of all new programs with tailored mitigation plans developed for high-risk areas.

- Collaborated with local governments of Kisoro, Rukungiri, Kanungu, Rubirizi, and Kasese to integrate safeguard practices into conflict resolutions and promote inclusive conservation.

Our Funders

Our Implementing Partners

WWF National Offices supporting our work

- WWF Finland
- WWF UK
- WWF Denmark
- WWF Germany
- WWF Norway
- WWF Sweden
- WWF USA

Why we are here.

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

panda.org/uganda

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