

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

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In 2018 VSPT has enjoyed some solid progress and exciting developments.

The Gahinga Batwa Village at Mount Gahinga Lodge in Uganda was completed and opened in May 2018. A group of about 18 Batwa families from those displaced from the park now live in the village, set within over 10 acres of land, which has been purchased to allow them to build homes, a community centre and have land for agricultural and recreational use. The homes were completed in early 2018 and the official launch of the village took place at the end of May 2018. They have had no permanent home since they left Mgahinga National Park over 25 years ago.

Praveen Moman, Founder of Volcanoes Safaris and Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust says of the project, “As a leading luxury lodge company offering unique safari and cultural experiences to our guests, we are also very proud of our company ethos to support communities around our lodges. Uganda is one of Africa’s most beautiful and diverse countries and we want to help preserve its rich culture. We are excited to see this project come to fruition after many years of working with the Batwa and understanding their culture and desperate needs”.

The Gahinga Batwa Village has been funded by VSPT supported by Volcanoes Safaris, the Adventure Travel Conservation Fund (ATCF), as well as donations received from guests. The settlement will enable the Batwa to break the cycle of manual labour and land rental payments and to use the land for growing crops. This will support the community’s development and allow their children to access education and health facilities. The project has been widely welcomed by the Batwa and also by the wider local community. Two young members of the Batwa community have been employed at Mount Gahinga Lodge as guides. A 60,000-litre water tank facility has also been built on nearby land allowing the Batwa community access to water.

At Kyambura Gorge Lodge, the Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone was expanded by 16 acres of additional land purchased during the year. The buffer zone helps to minimise human wildlife interactions and conflict on the edge of Queen Elizabeth National Park and Kyambura Reserve.

The Kyambura Wetland has planted a further 300 trees in 2018 from 3 different species. The wetland was expanded during 2018 with the purchase of nine additional pieces of land, adding a total of 13 acres to the existing wetland. VSPT recruited Said Kakuru as a Community Nature Guide for the Kyambura Wetland.

Bwindi Bar, opened in 2015 and the winner of the 2016 PURE Community Engagement Award, continued to provide practical service and hospitality training to local disadvantaged youths, who then go on to seek employment in VS lodges or other nearby lodges and hotels. During the year there were eight graduates of the training scheme, of which two are now employed at Bwindi Lodge, and six others employed in the surrounding area. Further marketing will be done in 2019 to increase the number of customers at the bar and increase the level of engagement with surrounding lodges and the local community.

At Virunga Lodge the “One Sheep Per Family” Project and the Water Tank Project continue to be very successful and popular with Virunga Lodge guests.

As at 31 December 2018, all 138 families from the Sunzu area have received a sheep through the project, and 27 sheep have been donated to the neighbouring village. During 2018, 120 water tanks, costing \$200 each, were donated by Virunga Lodge guests to families living around the lodge.

### KYAMBURA GORGE LODGE

The Kyambura Gorge Eco-Tourism Partnership Project helps to link the local community to conservation. The aim of the initiative is to promote sustainable eco-tourism and conserve the Greater Virunga landscape, which is one of the most important areas for avian, primate and wildlife biodiversity in Africa. It consists of series of projects that have been carefully thought out and executed by the team lead by the Project Coordinator based in Kyambura, Stella Ashabe. Activities carried during 2018 out as part of the Kyambura Gorge Eco-Tourism partnership project were:

#### 1. Kyambura Wetland

##### **Expenditure \$839 – plus land purchases of \$19,800**

The VSPT secured a 30-acre wetland south of Kyambura Gorge in 2010. Previously used as an illegal brick works site, it is now regenerated back to its natural state and attracts over 100 species of birds.

During 2018 maintenance work was carried out, including: trail maintenance, removal of invasive spear grass to make way for, and plant, more wetland species. 300 trees have been planted in 2018 from 3 different species, including fruit bearing trees such as Crystal Florence and Microcapa. These will help to attract more birds and primates and improve the wetland experience for guests.

VSPT recruited Said Kakuru as a Community Nature Guide for the Kyambura Wetland. The wetland was expanded during 2018 with the purchase of nine additional pieces of land, adding a total of 13 acres to the existing wetland. VSPT are planning to hold a community engagement meeting with the local communities to try to reduce the amount of littering in and around the wetland area.



## 2. Kyambura Coffee Cooperative

### **Income \$1,915, Expenditure \$806**

The Kyambura Coffee Cooperative is a community-based initiative designed to provide vocational training to women and an alternative, but sustainable, source of income. Six local women and their families are actively involved in the cooperative. They tend to over 1500 Arabica and Robusta coffee plants in 50 acres of rejuvenated VSPT land, and process the coffee by hand at a communal processing plant. Members of the cooperative commit to growing the coffee organically, without the use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers.

During 2018 the Cooperative harvested a total of 660 kilos of coffee as well as over 150 kilos of kidney beans, which had been intercropped with coffee shrubs. Over 200 coffee trees were cut to allow new growth and an increase in coffee production. 160 new coffee seedlings were planted.

The Kyambura soap project was incorporated into the coffee project during the year. Over 90 bars of coffee-incensed soap were made. The bars are sold to VS lodges and given to guests as gifts.



## 3. Kyambura Community Café

### **Income \$6,156, Expenditure \$3,749**

The Kyambura Community Café provides a training facility in service and hospitality for local youths. Every quarter the café aims to take on three trainees, who are trained in service, health and hygiene, and kitchen preparation.

In 2018 the café took on seven trainees of which six graduated from the program. Four graduates are employed in neighbouring lodges, and Beatrice Nasingura and Livias Kyokunda are now working full time at Kyambura Lodge in service and housekeeping departments. 600 guests visited the café during 2018, of which 250 were resident guests at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

#### 4. Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone

##### **Expenditure \$153,300**

The Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone is an area of land 3 km long and 45 acres in size running along the edge of northern side of Kyambura Gorge from the wetland through to the start of Kyambura Reserve. It serves as a wildlife buffer zone, primarily separating the local communities from the chimpanzee population that lives in the gorge.

During 2018 six pieces of land were purchased, adding a further 16 acres to the buffer zone. A trail through the buffer zone is being created to link both sides of the gorge, enabling guests of Kyambura Gorge Lodge to walk throughout one connected landscape. 600 trees of 5 species were planted during 2018, bringing the total to over 3,000 indigenous trees.



## 5. Bee Keeping

### Expenditure \$nil

The *Kyambura Bee Keepers Cooperative* have been producing honey in Kyambura since 2006 in conjunction with VSPT. During the year five beehives were added to the elephant deterrent fence along the escarpment bringing the total number of hives to eighty-five. The cooperative plan to harvest honey in early March 2019 and sell on the honey to Kyambura Gorge Lodge to serve to guests, as well as serving the local honey at the Kyambura Community Café.



## 6. Kyambura Drama Group

### Expenditure \$2,319

The VSPT has also continued to support this group, which consists of five tribes who perform educational plays about conservation and HIV/AIDS awareness to the local community once a month, and to Volcanoes Safaris clients on request. The support is in the form of a monthly donation, which is distributed among the members to ensure sustainability and to supplement the performers' income.

## 7. Kyambura Community and Conservation Centre

The Kyambura Community and Conservation Centre provides a local meeting and conference facility, as well as accommodation, to local communities, researchers, and tourists. It acts as a training centre for meetings on wildlife, conservation, and local community issues.

During 2018 meetings were held at the centre were 19 meetings for child healthcare, sanitation and nutrition, 10 meetings on bee keeping and harvesting, and one meeting for the Kyenzaza community on sanitation, construction of pit latrines, and drying racks for kitchen utensils.

VSPT waived the cost of hiring the Community and Conservation Centre during the year for the groups that held meetings, at an estimated value of \$450.



## BWINDI LODGE

### 1. Bwindi Bar

**Income \$7,864, Expenditure \$7,741**

In 2015, the VSPT officially opened the Bwindi Bar, located near the Volcanoes Safaris Bwindi Lodge on the edge of the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. The bar provides a practical training institution for local disadvantaged youths living near the Bwindi National Park in Buhoma, Bwindi.

The VSPT aims to provide practical experience in the tourism industry, to create more job opportunities in the region. Thanks to this programme, trainees are armed with the appropriate skills set to go on to gain successful employment in hospitality in the Bwindi area.

The trainees gain practical skills in food and service before they intern at the cafe for two months. They are then sent for further internships at nearby lodges. Bwindi Bar will serve a variety of coffees and teas as well as delicious breakfast options that blend international and local tastes.

During the year Bwindi Bar trained eight youths in service and hospitality. Martin Akankwasa and Behati Boniface have been employed by Volcanoes Safaris Bwindi Lodge as a housekeeper and staff cook respectively. The other six graduates have been employed in other jobs nearby.

All guests staying at Bwindi Lodge have at least one meal during their stay at Bwindi Bar, generating \$3,200 of additional income for the project from VS guests. Further marketing will be done in 2019 to increase the number of customers at the bar and increase the level of engagement with surrounding lodges and the local community.



## 2. Tea Processing

### **Income \$762, Expenditure \$750**

In 2013 VSPT began simple tea processing at Bwindi Lodge. Guests at Bwindi Lodge can experience a tea tour around the tea gardens at the lodge and understand the tea making process.

During 2018 4,800 kg of tea was harvested from the site and sold at a value of \$762. 201 number of guests from Bwindi Lodge were taken on tea tours.



## **MOUNT GAHINGA LODGE**

The Batwa community is a minority hunter-gatherer group who traditionally lived within the forests of Mount Gahinga. When Mgahinga National Park was gazetted in 1991, they were forced to abandon their traditional way of life and subsequently suffered severe socio-economic problems. This community remains marginalized and is one of the poorest communities in Uganda, as are the Batwa in Bwindi.

### **1. Gahinga Batwa Village**

#### **Income \$nil Expenditure \$39,500.**

With international attention on conservation of the endangered mountain gorillas, the Mgahinga part of the Virunga volcanoes in Uganda was turned into a national park in 1991 to provide protection to the wildlife from poaching and habitat encroachment. The creation of the park required the Batwa to be removed from their homes in the mountains and be displaced in a modern world unfamiliar to them.

A group of about 18 Batwa families from those displaced live in makeshift shelters on a tiny rocky site at Musasa, about 4km from the entrance of Mgahinga National park and Volcanoes Mount Gahinga Lodge, surviving as best as they can.

Volcanoes Safaris has now built a permanent village for the Batwa community and their families. About 10 acres of land has been purchased to allow them to build homes, a community centre and have land for agricultural and recreational use. The homes were completed in early 2018 and the official launch of the village took place at the end of May 2018.

The Gahinga Batwa community is comprised of over 100 adults and children. They have had no permanent home since they left Mgahinga National Park over 25 years ago.

Praveen Moman, Founder of Volcanoes Safaris and Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust says of the project, "As a leading luxury lodge company offering unique safari and cultural experiences to our guests, we are also very proud of our company ethos to support communities around our lodges. Uganda is one of Africa's most beautiful and

diverse countries and we want to help preserve its rich culture. We are excited to see this project come to fruition after many years of working with the Batwa and understanding their culture and desperate needs”.

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The project has been widely welcomed by the Batwa and also by the wider local community. VSPT has built a relationship with the Gahinga Batwa community for several years which has allowed us to develop a solid understanding of their needs. Since July 2018 Kabenyi Nsengiyumva and Claudine Nyiramahirwe, from the Batwa community, have been employed as nature trail guides by Volcanoes Safaris, based at Mount Gahinga Lodge.

A 60,000-litre water tank facility has also been built on nearby land allowing the Batwa community access to water. During 2019 VSPT will work with the Batwa community to provide improved health and medical resources and education, and adult literacy classes.



## **2. Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience**

### **Income \$nil, Expenditure \$270**

The Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience began in 2013 and involves members of the Gahinga Batwa community delivering a genuine cultural experience for VS clients. The trail is on the grounds of Mount Gahinga Lodge and the performance involves the re-enactment of traditional forest life including hunting and gathering as well as seeking out medicinal plants and domestic home life. Under the guidance of a Batwa guide, 452 VS clients participated to the experience during 2018.



### **3. Batwa Dance Performance**

#### **Expenditure \$1,223**

The Batwa dance group supported by the VSPT continues to perform for Gahinga Lodge guests on arrival at the lodge.

The Village Local Chairman and VSPT have been actively involved in sensitizing the community about the values of the Batwa and the importance of community interaction during these dance performances. Guests from the neighboring campsite have also participated as well as Uganda Wildlife Authority staff and visitors.



#### **4. Batwa Vocational Centre and Agricultural Project**

##### **Income \$494, Expenditure \$1,501**

The Batwa Vocational Centre was opened in 2013 and is the hub of the educational work conducted by the VSPT with the Batwa. Here the VSPT has donated a quarter of an acre of land where they learn how to farm, particularly potatoes and wheat. They are also taught sewing skills and how to make crafts, which will allow them to repair and make their own clothes as well as utensils. They also sell their products to generate an income to allow them to pay for food, medicine and other necessary items within the community.

During 2018 the revenue generated from crafts made and sold at the Batwa Vocational Centre was \$494. VSPT donated a large number of baskets to guests of the Batwa Village launch in May, which increased the expenditure for the project during the year.

In 2013 VSPT donated to the Batwa Community a quarter of an acre for purposes of growing food next to the Vocational Centre. Potatoes, wheat and vegetable are planted in rotation to train the Batwa in agricultural techniques. During 2018 there were three seasons of irish potatoes and maize, each of over 100 kgs. These crops are distributed between three Batwa families.

## **VIRUNGA LODGE**

### **1. Intore Dance Troop**

#### **Expenditure \$3,416**

Intore Dance is the finest example of Rwanda’s varied musical and dance tradition. Since its inception in 2009 VSPT has trained and equipped a troop of local dancers and trainers based at Virunga Lodge. The Intore Dance Troop continues to perform regularly for guests staying at the Lodge. In supporting the troop, by providing training, costumes and musical instruments, the VSPT helps preserve this aspect of Rwanda’s cultural heritage. Virunga Lodge also employs 22 members of the Intore Dance Troop within the lodge.



### **2. “One Sheep Per Family” Project**

In June 2014 Virunga Lodge launched the “One Sheep per Family” project, to provide one sheep to each of the 140 families in the Sunzu community. The sheep manure provides natural and effective fertiliser for growing crops. As well as providing manure, selling lambs provide income for the family.

As at 31 December 2018, all 138 families from the Sunzu area have received a sheep through the project, and 27 sheep have been donated to the neighbouring village, Bugeyo. In 2019 the project will focus on completing donations for the remaining families in Bugeyo village, which has a total of 175 families.



### 3. Virunga Lodge Water Tank Project

Although it rains heavily around Virunga Lodge, there are very few facilities for water catchment and storage and in the dry season there is an acute shortage of water. The villagers in Sunzu village around the lodge, where 138 families live, do not have enough clean water for drinking or for growing crops.

During 2018 120 water tanks, costing \$200 each, were donated by Virunga Lodge guests to families living around the lodge.



### 4. Kinoni Water Source Project

**Expenditure \$11,693**

A water tap was built in 2016 to provide a safe access point to water to the Kinoni village, neighbouring Virunga Lodge.

During 2018 a housing structure for the water taps was created, in order to ensure secure access to water for members of the Kinoni village. The water source project is managed by a committee who are voted by local leaders.

**5. Virunga Microcredit Project**

In March 2018 VSPT has launched a microfinance savings scheme for members of Sunzu Village. The objective of the project is to provide a loan that will help to generate income from investment in small scale sustainable agricultural projects, as well as weaving baskets, and breeding domestic animals. The fund is managed by a local committee and has 32 members. Loans are given for 6 months and repaid at an interest rate of 5%.

The fund started with \$1,176 and as at 31 December 2018 has increased to \$1,911, due to the interest payments received from beneficiaries of the short-term loans.

**6. Virunga Lodge Crafts Project**

**Income \$1,465, Expenditure \$733**

A group of 10 local ladies make local Rwandan crafts, which are sold directly to guests at Virunga Lodge, as well as to all VS lodges. The group started with \$105 capital in 2014. Crafts such as baskets, table placemats and coasters, and kitenge bathrobes are made and sold by the group.



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The VSPT would like to thank its dedicated staff and partners in the field, who have made possible the work and objectives of the trust. The VSPT would like to thank the staff of Volcanoes Safaris who provide marketing, administrative and bookkeeping support. Finally, the VSPT would also like to thank the Trustees for their continued support and guidance.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by:



Trustee

Date 1/11/19