

HIGHLIGHTS

Covid-19 Impact

From March 2020 Covid-19 had a severe negative effect on global tourism. This had a significant impact on VSPT projects and activities.

All four Volcanoes Safaris lodges were forced to close from March until July as international airports in Uganda and Rwanda were closed and there were travel restrictions within the countries. From August onwards, lodges reopened and occupancy slowly but gradually increased throughout the remainder of the year.

Covid-19 travel and health restrictions from government remained in place in both countries during the year. This meant some VSPT projects such as Bwindi Bar were required to stay closed.

DEG Funding

During 2020 Volcanoes Safaris received a 50% matched grant as part of the developPPP.de COVID-19 Project from DEUTSCHE INVESTITIONS- UND ENTWICKLUNGSGESELLSCHAFT MBH "DEG" (a German financial institution). This grant provided support for existing VSPT to continue to operate which would have otherwise had a funding deficit due to the lack of tourism revenue.

Funding from Volcanoes Safaris and DEG allowed the projects at each lodge to continue as much as possible and support the communities most in need at a critical time.

A number of Volcanoes Safaris and VSPT staff were re-deployed from their work in hospitality to work on community and conservation projects.

The DEG Covid-19 projects focused on four main areas of support for the communities around VS lodges:

- Providing Covid-19 infection prevention training and personal protective equipment
- Provision of agricultural assistance and emergency food donations
- Support for VSPT hospitality and service training programs at each lodge
- Support for existing VSPT community and conservation projects

The project benefitted over 12,500 people within 2,200 families around the four Volcanoes Safaris lodges. 28 young people graduated through the hospitality and service training program, of which six are now employed at VS lodges. The Kyambura coffee cooperative added ten further members. 10,000 protective face masks, 85 1000 litre water tanks, 190 sheep, and hand-washing facilities to 2200 families were distributed.



DEG PARTNERSHIP

Through Volcanoes Safaris, match funding was secured in partnership with DEG to provide healthcare and training to support communities in Uganda and Rwanda affected by Covid-19.

This project reached over 2,200 families with various means of Covid-19 relief. Support was provided in the form of Covid-19 infection prevention training, soap and handwashing equipment to over 2,200 families, emergency food donations to over 1,600 families, 85 5,000 litre water tanks, and 190 sheep and goats to the local communities; as well as over 10,000 face masks to people living in areas neighbouring the gorilla and chimpanzee parks.

KYAMBURA GORGE ECO-TOURISM PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

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 Project Coordinator based in Kyambura, Stella Ashabe.

1. Kyambura Wetland

Expenditure \$1,058

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

During 2020 maintenance work was carried out, including trail maintenance, removal of invasive spear grass to make way for, and plant, more wetland species. 3,000 trees have been planted in 2020 from 5 different species, including fruit bearing trees such as Crystal Florence and Fig Trees. These will help to attract more birds and primates and improve the wetland experience for guests. Wetland tours are conducted to Volcanoes Safaris clients who experience the nature walks and bird watching.

2. Kyambura Coffee Cooperative

Income \$1,900 Expenditure \$1,200

The Kyambura Coffee Cooperative is a community-based initiative designed to provide vocational training to women and an alternative, but sustainable, source of income. Twenty local women and their families are actively involved in the cooperative. They tend to over 1,500 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.

In 2020, with the support of DEG, the Kyambura Coffee Cooperative expanded by recruiting and training an additional 10 members and planting over 500 coffee plants. Training has been given to enable the cooperative to improve the quality and quantity of coffee produced, leading to greater future financial returns.

During 2020 the Cooperative harvested a total of 1,200 kilos of coffee. Over 200 coffee trees were cut to allow new growth and an increase in coffee production. The coffee trees that were cut down have regrown and are fruiting. The coffee tours and tasting sessions at the community café continue to be popular with lodge guests. Coffee beans are sold to visitors and also neighbouring lodges. In 2020 VSPT sold 245 packets of coffee to participants on the coffee tours. VS lodges bought 71 packets of coffee from VSPT.

The Kyambura soap project, which was incorporated into the coffee project in 2018, produced over 107 bars of coffee-incensed soap. The bars are sold to VS lodges and given to guests as gifts.

34 coffee tours were conducted to 128 VS clients.



3. Kyambura Community Café

Income \$480 Expenditure \$710

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

In the first quarter of 2020 the café took on two trainees, Shakira and Mackline, both of which graduated from the program. Due to covid-19, the café closed from March until July. 56 guests visited the café during 2020.

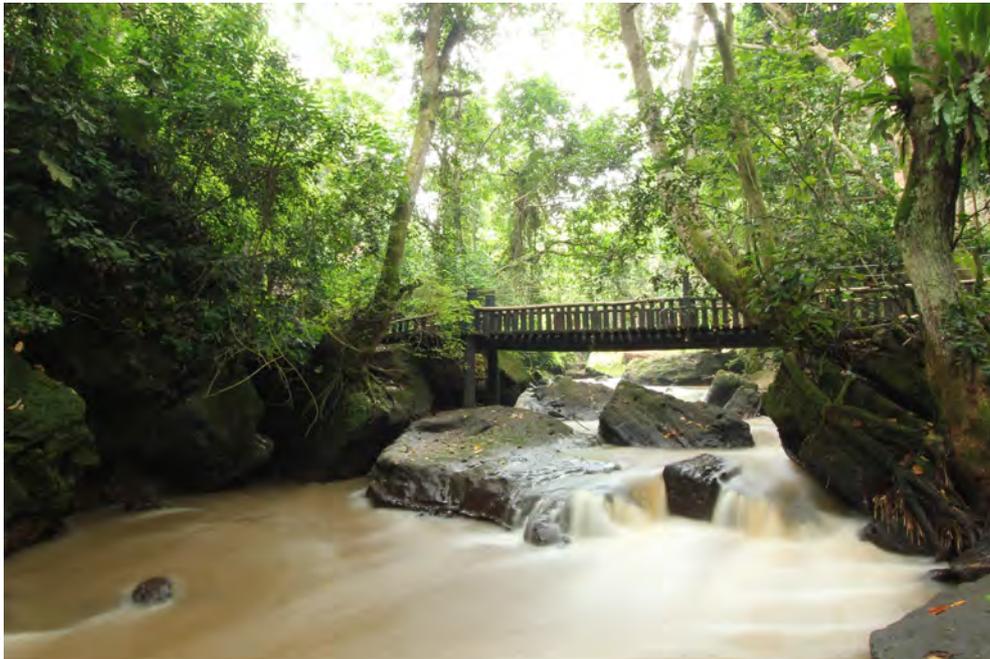


4. Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone

Expenditure \$32,000 on land

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 2020, one payment of \$32,000 was made as an instalment against the purchase of 8 acres of land in the buffer zone for an agreed price of \$127,000. A trail through the buffer zone was created to link both sides of the gorge, enabling guests of Kyambura Gorge Lodge to walk throughout one connected landscape. 3,000 trees of 5 species were planted during 2020, including a number by VS guests staying at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.



5. Bee Keeping

Expenditure \$nil

The Kyambura Bee Keepers Cooperative have been producing honey in Kyambura since 2006 in conjunction with VSPT. There are 85 beehives used as a deterrent for elephants along the escarpment. The cooperative harvested honey in early March 2020 and provided it to Kyambura Gorge Lodge and Kyambura Community Café.



6. Kyambura Drama Group

Expenditure \$200

The VSPT has also continued to support the Kyambura Drama 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 2020, two days of meetings were held at the centre with a focus on child healthcare, sanitation and nutrition.

VSPT waived the cost of hiring the Community and Conservation Centre during the year for the groups that held meetings.

8. Kyambura Community Playground

Expenditure \$nil

The VSPT in 2010 donated land for the creation of a playground which was built by members of Kyenzaza community. During 2020 VSPT organised various football matches, which aim to bring together the community with the VS staff and Kyambura Gorge Lodge guests. The highlight of the year is the Christmas Day football tournament, where VSPT gave out 5 footballs and sets of football kits to all participating teams, and the winning team received the Christmas trophy.



BWINDI LODGE

1. Bwindi Bar

Income \$3,100 Expenditure \$4,100

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 or at Bwindi Lodge. 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 five youths in service and hospitality. Niwamanya Angel, a graduate from the trainee scheme is employed as a community guide at Bwindi National Park.

All guests staying at Bwindi Lodge have at least one meal during their stay at Bwindi Bar. In 2020 there were 511 customers at Bwindi Bar, of which 217 were resident guests at Bwindi Lodge.

Due to covid-19, the Bwindi Bar closed in March 2020 for the remainder of the year.



2. Tea Processing

Income \$450 Expenditure \$370

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 2020, tea harvested from the site was sold at a value of \$450. 48 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.



1. Gahinga Batwa Village

Expenditure \$2,500

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 109 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”.

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. 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 Kabeni 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 2020 VSPT worked with the Batwa community to provide improved health and medical resources and education, and adult literacy classes. As a result of COVID-19, local schools were closed from March 2020. VSPT provided the Batwa community with a government teacher to continue their education from the village itself.

2. Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience

Expenditure \$nil

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.

2. Batwa Dance Performance

Expenditure \$330

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.

3. Batwa Vocational Centre and Agricultural Project

Expenditure \$nil

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. The products are supplied both to the lodge and local markets. The Gahinga Village Batwa community receive 100% of the proceeds from craft sales at the Vocational Centre.



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. There were two successful seasonal yields during 2020 which were shared amongst the Gahinga Batwa Village families.

VIRUNGA LODGE

1. Intore Dance Troop

Expenditure \$750

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 2020, the Intore Dance Troop carried out 25 performances at Virunga 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 18 members of the Intore Dance Troop within the lodge.



2. "One Sheep Per Family" Project

Income \$1,280 Expenditure \$1,280

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.

All 138 families from the Sunzu, 175 families of Bugeyo village, and 11 families of Kigugu village have received a sheep through the project. In 2020 the project donated another 32 sheep to the remaining families in Bugeyo village.



3. Virunga Lodge Water Tank Project

Income \$2,100 Expenditure \$2,100

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 2020, 10 water tanks, costing \$210 each, were donated by Virunga Lodge guests to families living around the lodge. All families in Sunzu village and 31 families in Bugeyo village have received a water tank.



4. Kinoni Water Source Project

Expenditure \$nil

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 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%.

6. Virunga Lodge Crafts Project

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. Crafts such as baskets, table placemats and coasters, and kitenge bathrobes are made and sold by the group.



7. Solar Panels

Income \$500 Expenditure \$500

In 2020 Virunga Lodge launched a new project to provide and install solar power in local homes. The first solar panel was donated in October 2020 from a guest donation of \$500.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 precious 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


24/6/2022