

**VOLCANOES SAFARIS PARTNERSHIP TRUST (VSPT)  
ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

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2021 was another successful year for VSPT. All four Volcanoes Safaris lodges remained open throughout 2021 and VSPT enjoyed progress at each lodge.

The women's coffee cooperative at Kyambura Gorge Lodge continued to grow and develop. There were two successful harvests in 2021 and 250 new coffee trees were planted. The beekeeping cooperative also had two honey harvests, allowing Kyambura Gorge Lodge to serve local honey to guests at the lodge and Kyambura Community Café.

The trainee programmes at Kyambura Community Café and Bwindi Bar resumed and had a successful year. A total of fifteen youths graduated from the hospitality training schemes, seven of which are now employed at Volcanoes Safaris Lodges.

Virunga Lodge projects reached a significant milestone; the One Sheep Per Family project has successfully provided every family in three villages with a sheep.

At Gahinga Lodge, two new Batwa houses were constructed to meet the needs of the growing population. There were also two successful seasonal yields of potatoes planted by the Batwa, building the self-sufficiency of the community.



### 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 are managed by the Project Coordinator based at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

#### 1. Kyambura Wetland and Fig Tree Walk

##### Expenditure \$111

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

During 2021 maintenance work on the trails was carried out, including removal of invasive spear grass to make way for more wetland species. 5 different tree species have been planted in 2021, 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. 14 wetland tours were conducted for 30 Volcanoes Safaris guests who enjoyed the nature walks and bird watching.

In September 2021 the Fig Tree Walk was opened which connects Kyambura Gorge Lodge to Fig Tree Camp which is the meeting point for lodge guests to start their chimpanzee trek in the gorge.



## 2. Kyambura Coffee Cooperative

**Income \$2,877, Expenditure \$3,141**

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 2,000 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 2021, the Kyambura Coffee Cooperative expanded by planting another 250 coffee plants. Training has been ongoing to enable the cooperative to improve the quality and quantity of coffee produced, leading to greater future financial returns for the individuals involved

During 2021 the Cooperative harvested a total of 2,208 kilos of coffee. 100 coffee trees were cut to allow new growth and an increase in coffee production. The coffee tours and tasting sessions continue to be popular with lodge guests. 22 coffee tours were conducted to 62 Volcanoes Safaris clients. Coffee beans are sold to visitors and also neighbouring lodges. In 2021 VSPT sold 208 packets of coffee to participants on the coffee tours. Volcanoes Safaris lodges bought 103 kilos of coffee from VSPT.

The Kyambura soap project, which was incorporated into the coffee project in 2018, produced over 100 bars of coffee-incensed soap. The bars are sold to Volcanoes Safaris lodges and given to guests as gifts.



### 3. Kyambura Community Café

**Income \$182, Expenditure \$392**

The Kyambura Community Café provides training 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 2021 the café took on nine trainees, all of which graduated from the program. Andrew Kato, Phionah Akankunda and Betty Namara all secured internships at neighbouring lodges, whilst Emmaculate Natukunda secured a placement at Kyambura Gorge Lodge. 26 guests visited the café during 2021.



#### 4. Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone

##### Expenditure \$115,000 – land purchase

The Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone is an area of land 3 km long and 45 acres in size running along the edge of the 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 2021, 8 acres of land in the buffer zone totalling were purchased. 3,000 trees of 5 species were planted in 2021 of which 32 were planted by Volcanoes Safaris clients.



## 5. Bee Keeping

### Expenditure \$487

The Kyambura Bee Keepers Cooperative has been producing honey in Kyambura since 2006 in conjunction with VSPT. There are 85 beehives used as a deterrent for elephants along the escarpment. In 2021, VSPT contracted a beekeeping expert to train the cooperative to produce good quality honey and increase the quantity of honey harvested. The cooperative harvested 5 litres of honey in March and August 2021 and provided it to Kyambura Gorge Lodge and Kyambura Community Café.



## 6. Kyambura Drama Group

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. During 2021, the Kyambura Drama group performed to Volcanoes Safaris clients 18 times. VSPT supports the group 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 Football Pitch**

The VSPT in 2010 donated land for the creation of a football pitch which was built by members of Kyenzaza community. During 2021 VSPT organised various matches, which aim to bring together the community with the Volcanoes Safaris staff and Kyambura Gorge Lodge guests. The highlight of the year is the Christmas Day football tournament, where VSPT gave out footballs and sets of football kits to all participating teams, and the winning team received the Christmas trophy.



## 8. Elephant Trench.

A new 115m section of elephant trench has been created, to extend the trench to a total of 750m. The trench runs around the edge of the Kyambura property from the gorge to the neighbouring communities in Kibodi. The aim is to extend the trench all the way to the Kasese road which will greatly help communities in Kibodi and Kyambura from having their gardens damaged from crop raiding elephants.



## BWINDI LODGE

### 1. Bwindi Bar

**Income \$2,709, Expenditure \$4,435**

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 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 six youths in service and hospitality. Three of these trainees are now employed by Volcanoes Safaris, Katushabe Florence and Byamugisha Isaiah at Bwindi Lodge Amutuheire Prize at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

All guests staying at Bwindi Lodge visit Bwindi Bar at least once during their stay. In 2021 there were 983 customers at Bwindi Bar, of which 184 were resident guests at Bwindi Lodge.



## 2. Tea Processing

**Income \$501, Expenditure \$388**

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 2021, tea harvested from the site was sold at a value of \$501. 122 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 \$10,483**

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.



VSPT 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. Until the completion of the Gahinga Batwa Village, 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, Claudine Nyiramahirwe and Vadeste Nzabonimana, from the Batwa community, have been employed as nature trail guides by Volcanoes Safaris, based at Mount Gahinga Lodge.

Two new homes were built in the Gahinga Batwa Village in 2021. A 60,000 litre water tank facility has also been built on nearby land allowing the Batwa community access to water. During 2021 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 teacher six days a week to continue their education from the village itself.



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

The Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience began in 2013 and involves members of the Gahinga Batwa community delivering a genuine cultural experience for Volcanoes Safaris 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. During 2021, 19 Volcanoes Safaris clients experienced Batwa life through the Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience.

### 3. Batwa Vocational Centre and Agricultural Project

**Income \$0, Expenditure \$298**

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.

#### VIRUNGA LODGE

##### 1. Intore Dance Troop

**Expenditure \$1,214**

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.

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. The Intore Dance Troop continues to perform regularly for guests staying at the Lodge. In 2021, the Intore Dance Troop carried out 8 performances at Virunga Lodge.



## 2. “One Sheep Per Family” Project

**Income \$2, 985, Expenditure \$2,768**

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 155 families of Kigugu village have received a sheep through the project. In 2021 137 sheep were donated, 77 sheep by the project donated and another 60 sheep by DEG to the families in Kigugu village. There are 5 families remaining to receive sheep in Kigugu.



## 3. Virunga Lodge Water Tank Project

**Income \$630, Expenditure \$630**

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 and Bugeyo village around the lodge, where over 300 families live, do not have enough clean water for drinking or growing crops.

During 2021, 3 water tanks, costing \$210 each, were donated by Virunga Lodge guests to families living around the lodge and 23 water tanks by DEG. All families in Sunzu village and in Bugeyo village have now received a water tank.



#### **4. Kinoni Water Source Project**

A water tap was built in 2016 to provide a safe access point to water to the Kinoni village, neighbouring Virunga Lodge. The water tap serves around 3,000 individuals.

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 Lodge Microcredit Project**

In March 2018 VSPT launched a microcredit loan and 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

##### Income \$69

A group of 10 local ladies make local Rwandan crafts, which are sold directly to guests at Virunga Lodge, as well as to all Volcanoes Safaris lodges. Crafts such as baskets, table placemats and coasters, and kitenge bathrobes are made and sold by the group.

#### 7. Virunga Lodge Solar Panel Project

Villages on the islands surrounding Virunga Lodge lack access to mains electricity. The Solar Power project aims to provide access to electricity to local communities around Virunga Lodge. Electricity is the first step to improving the welfare of households, it is essential for a family to progress, to allow school-going children to read in the evening and for families to access information.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

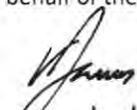
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The VSPT would like to thank its dedicated staff and partners in the field, who have made possible the work and objectives of the trust. The VSPT would like to thank the staff of Volcanoes Safaris who provide precious marketing, administrative and 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

  
a/a/2022