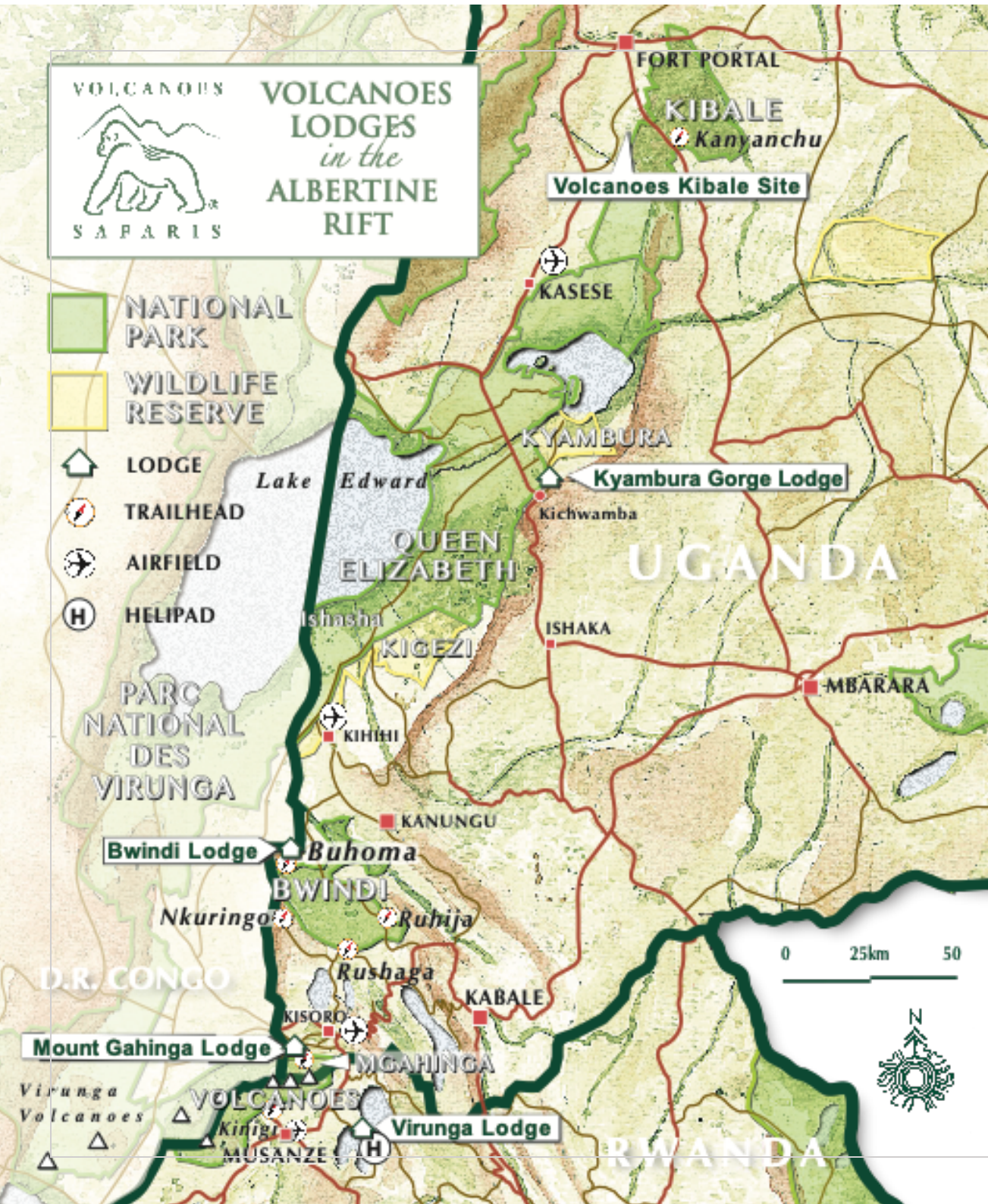


VOLCANOES



S A F A R I S

Partnership Trust
2023 Report



Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust

The Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust (VSPT), established in 2009, is a non-profit organisation that connects Volcanoes' Rwanda and Uganda lodges to the neighbouring communities and conservation activities.

VSPT aims to create long-term, self-sustaining projects that enrich the livelihoods of local communities, promote the conservation of the great apes and other endangered species, restore natural habitats and work with communities to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

As part of their stay at Volcanoes lodges, guests get an opportunity to participate in VSPT projects and to share in the lives of the local communities.

CONNECTING VOLCANOES LODGES TO COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION

Our Project Coordinators are excited to give you the highlights from 2023!

2023 has been a successful year for VSPT. The projects continue to enrich the livelihoods of local communities, promote conservation and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

As VSPT prepares to celebrate its 15th anniversary in 2024, we have hosted a series of events, created new community projects and strengthened partnerships.

Our partnership with the [Jane Goodall Institute Uganda](#) has helped us jointly

implement the Roots and Shoots Program in eight schools near [Kyambura Gorge Lodge](#). The project will increase environmental education to school children and promote conservation practices.

The [Kyambura Lion Monitoring Project](#) in the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area was launched in August. VSPT was honoured to sponsor and participate in the Uganda Wildlife Authority Large Carnivore Action Plan workshop in Kampala in May.

In Mount Gahinga, five new houses were constructed for the Gahinga Batwa Village on 2.5 acres of land. Sustainable electricity is being provided with solar panels.

In January, a panel discussion on 'The Future of Gorillas and Chimpanzees in the Albertine Rift' was held in London. The event followed an informal retreat on [The](#)

[Albertine Rift Ecosystems and Great Apes: Conservation Challenges 2022 to 2050](#) at Mount Gahinga Lodge in November 2022.

In 2024 Volcanoes Safaris will be opening its 5th lodge, Kibale Lodge in Uganda. New VSPT projects will be established to connect the lodge to the neighbouring communities and conservation activities.

We are grateful for your continued engagement and participation. We thank the dedicated staff, partners, lodge guests and supporters who have made the work possible.



Lilian Namakiika
Bwindi Project Coordinator



Ronald Hagumimana
Mount Gahinga Project
Coordinator



Augustine Mudukoyi
Kyambura Gorge Project
Coordinator



**Jean Nepomuscene
Manibishaka**
Virunga Project Coordinator



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Partnerships

VSPT is grateful for the support from government and park and wildlife authorities and partnerships with conservation organisation. In 2023, VSPT established a number of new partnerships, including The Chimpanzee Trust, Ugandan Conservation Foundation, Uganda Carnivore Program, as well as developed our existing partnerships with the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, Conservation Through Public Health, Jane Goodall Institute.

We were honoured to be a signatory of the National Chimpanzee Conservation Strategy for Uganda 2023-2033 at an event with Dr Jane Goodall hosted by the EU Ambassador to Uganda.



Praveen Moman, VSPT Chair, with Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Founder Conservation Through Public Health.



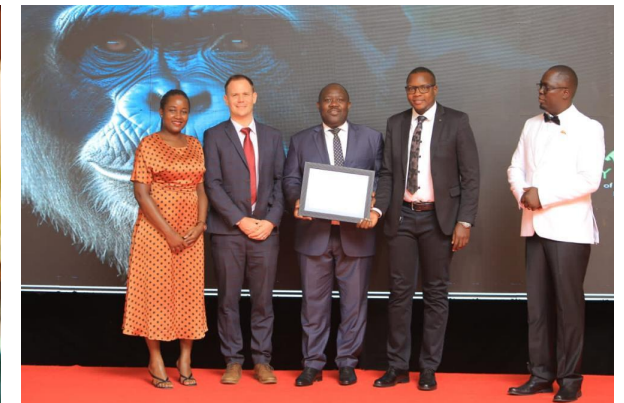
Jan Sadek, EU Ambassador, Dr Jane Goodall and Kevin James, VSPT Trustee.



Attendees of the 2023-2033 Uganda Wildlife Authority Strategic Action Plan workshop for Uganda's Large Carnivores.



James Byamukama, Jane Goodall Institute, with Kevin James, VSPT Trustee.



Joshua Rukundo, The Chimpanzee Trust, with Kevin James, Rebecca Anyoli and Simon Kaweesi, VSPT.

The Albertine Apes Alliance

In January 2023, Praveen Moman, VSPT Chair, hosted a panel discussion on **'The Future of Gorillas and Chimpanzees in the Albertine Rift'** at the Royal Overseas League in London.

Stakeholders involved in conservation and ecotourism in the Albertine Rift came together at the London event to help formulate new approaches of collaboration and galvanise collaborative action in priority areas. Panellists discussed the long-term conservation challenges in the Albertine Rift from 2022 to 2050.

Thank you to Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka (Conservation Through Public Health), Kirsten Gilardi (Gorilla Doctors), Peter Appell (Jane Goodall Institute), Ian Redmond (Ape Alliance and The Gorilla Organisation), Francis Kiwanuka (Volcanoes Safaris) and Nicole Simmons (Chimpanzee Researcher Kyambura) for your participation and stimulating discussion.

Read more about the Alliance [here](#).



Praveen Moman, VSPT Chair.



Kirsten Gilardi, Executive Director Gorilla Doctors and Ian Redmond, Ape Alliance and The Gorilla Organisation.



Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Founder Conservation Through Public Health



Ian Redmond, Ape Alliance and The Gorilla Organisation.

Partners at the Gahinga Retreat in November 2022



The Kyambura Gorge Ecotourism Project

The [Kyambura Gorge Eco-tourism Project](#) has undertaken a series of activities since 2009 to safeguard the Kyambura Gorge ecosystem.

Today, Volcanoes Safaris and VSPT are the single largest stakeholders in the Gorge ecosystem after the Ugandan Wildlife Authority. Without the intervention of Volcanoes Safaris and VSPT, the survival of the gorge and chimpanzees would be under severe threat.

Through these activities and the strategic assembling of adjoining sites next to the Kyambura Gorge, the VSPT helps to link [Kyambura Gorge Lodge](#) to the local community and promotes

sustainable eco-tourism and conservation in one of the most important areas for avian, primate and wildlife biodiversity in Africa.

Initiatives include not only those described below but also a series of smaller projects. The project is the first of its kind in the area and is an example of the pioneering work conducted by the VSPT.



The VSPT Team



Partnership with The Jane Goodall Institute

VSPT and the Jane Goodall Institute have been working together since 2021 to support the threatened chimpanzee population at Kyambura Gorge; reinforce community-led conservation and restore the natural habitats surrounding the Kyambura Gorge.

This year, the partnership has been working towards the launch of the Roots and Shoots Program near Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

Eight schools have been selected for the program which aims to inspire and engage the younger generation on community-led conservation. The selected schools will incorporate environmental studies into their curriculums and offer students the resources to motivate them to make a difference on an individual level.

The project gives each student the resources to develop a plan and implement a project that benefits the natural habitat they live in.

Lodge managers Prisilla and Philbert are joined by Peter Apell and James Byamukama from the Jane Goodall Institute Uganda



As part of the Roots and Shoots program VSPT will provide:

1. Nature walks in Kyambura Gorge and wetlands to learn about the chimpanzees and ecosystems.
2. Class trips into the park to learn about ecotourism and see the animals in the park.
3. Spend a day with the Kyambura Lion Monitoring Team.
4. Space in the Kyambura buffer zone to plant tree seedlings.



Roots and Shoots schools planting trees in the Kyambura Buffer Zone.

Roots and Shoots hosted at Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone



Kyambura Coffee Cooperative

The Kyambura Coffee Cooperative is a community-based initiative designed to provide vocational training to women and an alternative and sustainable source of income. Twenty local women are actively involved in the cooperative.

The cooperative collected 1500kg of coffee during the two harvesting seasons (350kg Robusta and 1,150kg Arabica). For each kilo harvested, the Cooperative members receive payment from VSPT. The roasted coffee beans are sold to Volcanoes lodges and served to guests.

1000 new seedlings were planted in 2023. As these trees mature, the cooperative will have a larger harvest yield and ultimately a greater sustainable income.

The cooperative also generate income by making coffee soap and scrub from the by-products. In 2023 495 bars of soap were sold for \$4 each and 448 jars of coffee scrub were sold for \$8 each.



Abarikuruji Grace (below) and Natuma Naume (above) from the Women's Cooperative



Elephant Trench

VSPT have been tackling the issue of elephants entering community land and crop raiding near Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

In 2023, VSPT extended the elephant trench between the community land and Queen Elizabeth National Park. The aim is to prevent the elephants from entering community land in search of food.



Beekeeping Project

The [Kyambura Beekeepers Cooperative](#) have been producing honey in Kyambura since 2006. The honey produced is available to buy in the lodge gift shop. Sales of the honey go directly to the Cooperative.

Kyambura Wetland Project

The VSPT secured 45-acres of wetland south of Kyambura Gorge in 2010. Previously used as an illegal brick works, the wetland has regenerated to its natural state and attracts over 225 species of birds, including a number of rare bird species such as white winged warbler, zebra waxbill, Ross's turaco and the African emerald cuckoo. Our VSPT coordinators were also thrilled to spot the cinnamon chested bee eater, the grey olive greenbul and the black crowned night heron for the first time in the wetland. The [Wetland Project](#) also serves as a training ground for young wildlife guides.



*Above: Guests visit the beekeeping project
Below: Trainee Mwijukye Onesmus in the wetland*





Kyambura Youth Training

The Kyambura Youth Training Program provides local youths with training in hospitality or wildlife guiding. Each quarter VSPT welcomes three new trainees to enroll in the program.

In 2023 the program has provided practical training experience to 12 local youths; 4 in the wildlife and guiding program and 8 in the service and hospitality program.

7 of the 12 trainees have secured employment, including 5 at Volcanoes Safaris lodges. Atwine Collins and Alex Byamugisha (below) are now working at Mount Gahinga Lodge. We continue to support other graduates from our training program as they look for employment opportunities.



*Top Left: VSPT team with guide trainees.
Bottom Left: Mwijukye Onesmus, Baguma Onesmus and Nuwabiine Precious, trainees during the year.
Centre: Graduates from the training program, Atwine Collins and Olivias Musiimenta at Gahinga.
Top Right: Atwine Collins in the Kyambura wetland
Bottom Right: Hospitality training at Kyambura.*

Kyambura Lion Monitoring Project

The [Kyambura Lion Monitoring Project](#) was launched in June following a Large Carnivore training workshop at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

Building on previous survey work in Uganda over the last two years this project now gives the Lion Monitoring Team a permanent base at Kyambura.

The project, led by Dr. Alexander Braczkowski and in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) aims to establish a science-based conservation program which supports the protection of carnivore populations and improves the livelihoods of local people techniques for rangers and tour guides.



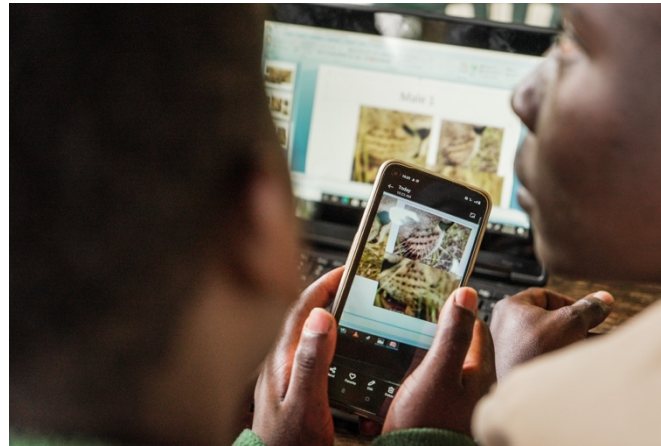
Johnson Muhereza searching for a GPS signal from a lion collar.

living in and around the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area.

Lion Survey: June to December

The team has driven 7,405km over 110 days since June to survey and record individual lions in Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area. The survey recorded a total of 28 distinct lion individuals 78 times.

In addition to the survey, the lion team have been supporting the Uganda Wildlife Authority with capacity building training in scientific monitoring



Lion monitoring training at Kyambura Gorge Lodge.



Immaculate Nabasa and Johnson Muhereza setting up camera traps.



Leopard captured on VSPT camera trap near Kyambura Gorge Lodge.

Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone

The [Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone](#) serves as a wildlife buffer zone, separating the local communities from the threatened chimpanzee population and other wildlife living in the Kyambura Gorge.

Since 2009, VSPT has worked on purchasing a 3km long buffer along the northern part of the Gorge. Over the year, a further 7 acres of land has been purchased and 15,500 indigenous trees planted on the buffer zone to contribute to the protection of wildlife and the communities in this area. We are thankful to Rubirizi district local government for the donation of 10,000 trees to the Kyambura Gorge Buffer Zone.

The Buffer Zone has hosted guests during the year to participate in the Kyambura Buffer Walk and to plant a tree during their stay at Volcanoes' Kyambura Gorge Lodge. Schools involved with the Jane Goodall Institute Roots and Shoots Program have also planted trees.



National Geographic Expedition guests at Kyambura planting trees in the Wildlife Buffer Zone.



Volcanoes Safaris fam trip agents planting trees on a gorge walk.



Roots and Shoots educational trip to learn about nature in the Kyambura Gorge ecosystem.

Partnership with Conservation Through Public Health

VSPT were delighted to support Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH) gorilla health initiatives and community training.

During 2023, VSPT has provided financial support to install 10 mobile toilets along the Ivy Trail in Bwindi Forest. The trail connects northern and southern Bwindi and is used by both community members and tourists, resulting in higher chances of human-gorilla interaction and potential spread of disease. Greater hygiene and sanitation is critical for the health and conservation of the endangered mountain gorillas.

VSPT were also delighted to sponsor the launch of Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka's new book at events in London and Kampala. The events were well attended by esteemed guests, including Her Excellency Nimisha Madhvani, Uganda High Commissioner to the UK and Her Royal Highness Nabagereka of Buganda Sylvia Nagginda. Praveen Moman, Chair VSPT, and Kevin James, VSPT Trustee were honoured to speak at the events.



Her Royal Highness Nabagereka of Buganda Sylvia Nagginda, Tonny Kayanja, Manager Bwindi Lodge, Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Founder CTPH.



Volcanoes Safaris attend the book launch for Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Founder CTPH.



Installation of toilets on the Ivy Trail in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.

Bwindi Bar

Bwindi Bar provides a practical training institution for local disadvantaged youths living near Bwindi National Park. The program offers practical experience and training in the tourism industry and creates job opportunities in the region. On graduation, trainees are armed with the appropriate skills set to go on to gain successful employment in hospitality in Volcanoes lodges or other lodges in the region.

In 2023 the trainees served 3,300 visitors at Bwindi Bar (650 from Volcanoes Safaris, 2,650 from the local community and other lodges). 27 trainees graduated in 2023, with 8 gaining full employment in lodges in the region. The VSPT Project Coordinators continue to work with the other graduates, including support in CV writing and job applications, to help them try to gain employment.



Above: Trainees graduating from the July-September program

Below: Trainees graduating from the September – December Program

Month of 2023	Tea Harvested (kg)
January	156
February	113
March	225
April	238
May	219
June	224
July	242
August	345
September	295
October	247
November	350
December	328

Bwindi Tea

VSPT has a simple tea processing project at Bwindi Lodge. Five local community members are employed to harvest the tea and earn an alternative and sustainable source of income. Guests are invited to experience a tea tour around the tea gardens at the lodge and learn about the tea-making process.

Over the year, 2982 kg of tea was harvested by the community and packaged into gifts or sold to the local tea factory.



Gahinga Batwa Village

The Batwa are thought to be one of the oldest surviving indigenous people in the Central African Region. Known for their unique culture in the forests, the Batwa of the Virunga Mountains survived by hunting small game, gathering plants and fruits, living in caves and constructing huts of leaves and branches. When Mgahinga National Park was created in 1991, they were forced to abandon their traditional way of life and subsequently suffered severe socio-economic problems. This community remains marginalized and one of the poorest in Uganda.



The [Gahinga Batwa Village](#) has continued to be supported by VSPT and Volcanoes lodge guests in 2023.

New Batwa Houses

In May the building of five new houses were completed. Sophia Nyiramaronko, Sarah Nyirarwangano, Mutesi Konze, and Nyirabarera and their families have each moved into a new home. Barahirwa Stephen was provided with his own house due to his bad health conditions. Previously they had all been living with their extended families. The families were chosen for their commitment to farming.

Volcanoes Safaris joined the community in celebrating the new houses with dances and cake.



Solar Panels

In 2023 we have created a new permanent solar panel system and battery house for the Gahinga Batwa Village. This was completed in November and has been successful so far at improving the solar power in the village.



*Above: Solar panels lighting up the Batwa houses
Top Right: Volcanoes' joining the Batwa in the launch of the new homes.
Bottom Right: The solar panels new structure with Batwa houses in the backdrop*

Education

Many of the children from the Batwa village have excelled in their recent end-of-year exam results. We are very pleased that seven of the top ten achieving students in Nyagakenge primary school are from the Gahinga Batwa Village.

Debora Nyirabatibuka is one of the top ten in her class. Felex Maniragaba, Shukuru Gad and Angela Mutezimana are in the second year of primary and also placed within the top ten in school. Zuena Uzamukunda and Nyiramugisha Sara are in primary three and excelled in their social sciences and maths exams. Innocent Maniriho was 9th across his classes in his end of fourth year of primary exams. The highly achieving children all received new shoes as a prize.



Adult education classes in the Community Centre.



Batwa children going to school.

Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience

The Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience began in 2013 and involves members of the Gahinga Batwa community sharing their traditions and cultural history with Volcanoes guests. Guests can enjoy a dance performance which involves the re-enactment of traditional forest life including hunting, gathering and the use of medicinal plants. In 2023, 115 Volcanoes guests joined the Batwa Cultural Heritage Experience.



Batwa Vocational Centre

The Batwa Vocational Centre was opened in 2013. Throughout 2023, the Batwa received lessons in sewing and crafts which will allow them to repair and make their own clothes.

Also, the Batwa make gifts which can be sold to generate an income for buying food, medicine and other necessary items within the community. The products are supplied both to the lodge and local market. The Community receive all the proceeds from craft sales at the Vocational Centre.

Agriculture

VSPT has provided the Batwa community with training in agriculture and farming practices. In April, the Community planted Irish potatoes and beans. These crops were harvested successfully in July and a second planting of Irish potatoes and cabbage was done in October and will be harvested in 2024.

Healthcare

Each week in the community centre the Batwa meets with a doctor and counsellor if they require any treatment. This is supported by VSPT.



*Top Left: Claudine, member of the Batwa Community, is employed by Volcanoes' as a community guide.
Top Right: Batwa planting potatoes*



Intore Dance Troop

The dance troupe perform the traditional Rwandan ballet called The Intore, which is based on the courtly victory dance of the Rwandan mwami (kings) for guests at Virunga. Since its inception in 2009, 18 local dancers have been trained at Virunga Lodge.

Virunga Microcredit Project

A microcredit loan and savings scheme are available for 27 members of Sunzu Village which helps small business develop and generate income. Projects such as agricultural, weaving baskets, and breeding domestic animals are funded.

Virunga Solar Panel Project

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. No panels were donated in 2023, however maintenance was provided.

One Sheep per Family Project

Since 2014 the “One Sheep Per Family” project has donated sheep to local people to use for manure, a natural and effective fertiliser for growing crops, and the sale of the lambs provide an income for the family. In 2023, the project completed its overall target to contributed a sheep to all 155 families in Sunzu village and 205 families in Bugeyo village. We are thankful for the generous support of our Volcanoes Safaris guests in achieving this goal!

Virunga Lodge Ladies Crafts Group

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.

Virunga Water Tank Project

Around the nearby villages in the dry season there is an acute shortage of water. In 2023, Virunga guests donated 10 water tanks to families living around the lodge. These donations were matched by Volcanoes Safaris.



Sheep donation to families in Sunzu Village

Partners and Awards

The Chimpanzee Trust

VSPT are proud to remain as a gold member of the Chimpanzee Trust and support them through their crucial projects to safeguard chimpanzees.

Marie Claire UK Sustainability Travel Awards Winner

Volcanoes Safaris are honoured to be named winner of the Marie Claire UK Sustainability Awards 2023 in the Independent Hotels category. Andrea Thompson, Editor in Chief at Marie Claire UK commented how 'the awards will shine a spotlight on brands and businesses that are genuinely making an effort to change their processes and make them better for people and planet'.

How to get involved

To find out more about the projects, please visit:

<https://volcanoessafaris.com/community/>

To donate to VSPT, please follow our [PayPal](#) or for tax-deductible donations from US residents via [Empowers Africa](#).



Thank you for your partnership and support

