The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration

Sam Mwandha: Executive Secretary,
Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration Secretariat
The red box shows the mountain gorilla habitat.
The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration

• This a mechanism for coordination of conservation and natural resource management initiatives in the Central Albertine Rift.

• Initiated by the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Institut Congolais Pour la conservation de la Nature (ICCN) and the then Office Rwandais du tourism et des Parcs Nationaux (ORTPN) now Rwanda Development Board (RDB)

• Started as informal meetings between the field (park) staff of the Protected Areas institutions and stakeholders spearheaded by IGCP

• Later the PAA heads were brought on board and signed an MoU for the collaboration - 2004

• The Ministries responsible for the three agencies have also discussed and signed declarations in support of the collaboration – 2008, 2009

• The process for legalisation of the collaboration through a treaty is in advanced stages
The Approach for the establishment of the Collaboration

Phase I: Field-based coordination and collaboration

• Field collaborative activities include:
  – coordinated patrols, joint training,
  – Regional planning and communication - TSP
  – Regional monitoring of gorilla and its habitat
  – Learning process: exchange of experiences
  – Mountain gorilla tourism: harmonization of rules & regulations, benefit sharing policy.

• Phase II: Formalization of regional collaboration

• Phase III: Formal designation of TBNRM
Importance of collaboration in the region

• Highest Species Richness and number of Endemic Vertebrates in Africa – including mountain gorilla
• Largest mammal biomass recorded
• Rich biodiversity - diverse habitats
• Numerous challenges to conservation in the region (poverty, high population densities, land fragmentation, insecurity)
• Conservation is at a cost to the local population through crop damage, threat to lives
Species Richness and Endemics
Largest mammal biomass recorded
Rich biodiversity - diverse habitats
Some threats in the landscape

Poaching

Landscape fragmentation

About 45,000 tones of charcoal is consumed in Goma alone each year

Poverty

Crop damage
Many of the Threats that are transboundary in nature
Current Status of Collaboration

- Have a functional Transboundary Secretariat
- In process of securing government recognition of the secretariat as an inter-state agency - Working with the three governments to finalise the Treaty establishing the Secretariat
- Have clear strategy for implementation – Transboundary Strategic Plan developed
- All the organs of Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration are operational
- The secretariat has received funds for implementation of the TSP from the Netherlands Government. Further support from US State department and WWF Sweden also received.
National Ministries (Environment/Wildlife/Forestry/Tourism/Foreign Affairs) MOU
Formal classification of the Transboundary Protected Area

MOU
Role: To ensure sustainable biodiversity conservation

UWA/ICCN/RDB MOU

Roles: To establish regional collaboration; ensure harmonised approach to PA planning & management; secure sustainable financing for TB PA Management and carry out monitoring & evaluation

TCS

Regional Research Committee
Role: ensuring transboundary research and ecological monitoring

Regional Tourism Committee
Role: ensuring financial sustainability and a regional approach to tourism planning and development

Regional Community Conservation & Private Enterprise Committee
Role: conservation-related enterprise in the community, and private sector; education & awareness

Regional Law Enforcement and Security Committee
Role: ensure law enforcement; strengthening regional security & PA capacity development;

Regional Transboundary forum
Role: compilation of the Regional Management Planning framework, M&E, Communication

Source: Adapted from IGCP (unpub)
The Role of TCS

- Coordinate the implementation of the Transboundary Strategic plan
  - Ensure harmonised approach to PA planning & management;
  - Secure sustainable financing for TB PA Management
  - Carry out monitoring & evaluation
  - Coordinate Learning and exchanges of best practices across the CAR
Keys areas of collaboration identified in the Transboundary Strategic Plan

• Landscape management
• Law enforcement and security for the communities and wildlife
• Education and awareness
• Economic development for the neighbouring communities
• Financial sustainability for the PAAs
• Effective management capacity

For success of the above there should be an enabling environment and effective collaboration
Examples of implementation (1)

Landscape management

- Bamboos planting to manage erosion in the landscape, provide raw material for crafts away from protected areas
- Community nurseries for agroforestry trees on own land
- Collaborated research and monitoring especially for Gorillas with various stakeholders involved e.g. gorilla census, health monitoring and RBM
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison of Bwindi population size and structure over the years</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total population estimate</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>340</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of groups</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of solitary males</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean group size</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>2-23</td>
<td>3-25</td>
<td>3-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion immatures</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion multi-male groups</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of habituated groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals in habituated groups</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of population habituated</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
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Note continued increase in gorilla population since the initiation of collaboration between the PAAs about 15 years ago.
Examples of implementation (2)

Law enforcement and security

• Coordinated patrols
• Sharing of intelligence information on illegal activities
• Regular meetings including immigration, customs, government security agencies
Examples of implementation (3)

Education and awareness

- Exchange visits
- Communication strategy for GVTCS
- Planned field visit for media in May
Examples of implementation (4)

Economic development for the neighbouring communities

• Construction of community tourism/enterprise centres in the three countries
• Training of partners esp. communities involved in tourism activities
• Bamboos planting for handicraft material
• Bee keeping activities
• Tourism trail for the Batwa in Uganda
Community Commercial Centres for training and marketing of handcraft products - Kinigi Rwanda
Community Centre in Kisoro Uganda
Energy and enterprise centres in DRC

Co-operative centre at Bukima DRC

Energy centre at Munigi DRC
Examples of areas of support to communities

- Tree nurseries
- Cultural tourism
- Water harvesting
- Bee keeping/honey production
Examples of areas of support to communities

- Crafts from bamboo
- Alternative energy
- Briquette project
Examples of implementation \( (5) \)

Financial sustainability for the PAAs

- Road rehabilitation in DRC linking Rumangabo and Bukima that has enhanced tourism and contributed to increased incomes of Virunga park
- Revenue sharing from gorilla tourism (gorilla crossing boundaries)
Why institutionalize the collaboration

- Need for legal recognition to enable effective coordination
- Require recognition of the three countries to initiate transboundary policies and plans
- Operationalise the organs of the collaboration
- Legal mandate will enable the organs of the collaboration to take binding decisions
- Legitimacy to fundraise and manage resources
Thank you