



DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY CONSERVATION, MFCA

**GIRAFFE CONSERVATION AWARENESS REPORT IN BULIISA,
NGWEDO AND KIGWERA SUBCOUNTIES**

**COMPILED BY: WARDEN COMMUNITY CONSERVATION
MURCHISON FALLS CONSERVATION AREA**

APRIL 2018

BACKGROUND

In the bid to secure the giraffe population by expanding their range, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) together with the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) decided to translocate giraffes from the northern to southern bank of the River Nile in Murchison Falls National Park (NP). By the end of the two-phased translocation campaign, 36 giraffes were moved and released in the southern part of park. This program started in 2016 and ended in August 2017. During the first phase of the translocation, one giraffe strayed out of the park and was killed by the community who despite their close proximity to the park were seeing the giraffe for the first time. The community killed the giraffe panic because they thought that it was a dangerous animal that could attack people or destroy their crops. During the second phase, we therefore found it necessary to sensitize communities on the plight and conservation of giraffes.

It is against this background that UWA sought financial support from GCF with assistance from the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens to help the Community Conservation Office in Murchison Falls National Park to engage with communities in the sub counties neighboring the park – Ngwedo, Bullisa and Kigwera, in awareness campaigns to ensure that they are able to give good reception to the giraffes should they ever stray out of the park.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

- To ensure adjacent parishes bordering Murchison Falls NP and general public understand general behaviors of giraffe.
- To ensure harmonious co-existence of human and giraffes on the southern sector of National Park.
- To make the general public understand reasons for giraffe translocation on the southern sector of National Park.
- To promote positive attitudes on general wildlife conservation.
- To make local communities practically understand animal behaviors and roles played by each species in the ecosystem through field drive.

METHODS

- Face to face interaction with adjacent communities.
- Radio talk shows for wider audience coverage.
- Community visit to the National Park.

SUMMARY

- 18 villages from 6 parishes adjacent to Murchison Falls NP received giraffe conservation awareness sensitization, where meetings were conducted. 50-60 members were selected together with their leaders were selected to visit the Park. A total 338 people attended the meetings and 204 visited and toured Murchison Falls NP.
- 2 radio talk-shows were held both on Radio Maria, Nebbi and Pakwach F.M for sensitization of a wider audience.

ACTIVITIES

Community awareness

Community awareness meetings were held in 6 parishes surrounding Murchison Falls NP: Kakoora, Nyamitete (lower side) Buliisa s/county, Muvule, Nile and Mubako (Ngwedo s/county), and Nyamitete (upper side). These are the key parish where the giraffe were sighted and one was injured leading to the loss of one. Sub county officials and District Leaders were invited to attend the meetings.

Topics Covered:

- UWA and its role in conservation
- Murchison Falls NP, its key species and values
- Challenges faced by the Park and suggested possible solutions
- Benefits of wildlife conservation to both communities and government.

The role of UWA and its mandate were clearly explained as well as how UWA works with communities to sustainably conserve wildlife through revenue sharing and other community livelihood programs.

An in-depth discussion about the Murchison Falls NP focused on its history and values of the Park with emphasis on the wildlife conservation, challenges and community participation in conservation. From the discussions, it was clear that the community value the Park but have not had any opportunities to experience the Park and its species are largely known through their traditional folk tales.

The discussion then zeroed in on the giraffe, with specific details on the behavior of the giraffes and why there is great need to conserve the species. We extended our strong appeal to the community support giraffe conservation in order to increase their population and boosting tourism on the southern sector.

We provided the UWA contacts so that the leaders could contact in case the communities notice any stray giraffe in their area or if they get any issue to pass on that to support conservation.

We also sensitized the communities on the impact of poaching. Community members informed us during these meetings that they were aware that some of their colleagues, especially the youth, were involved in these illegal activities. They promised that they will mobilize the youth into groups for sensitization and UWA will support them with alternative sources of livelihood if they give up the vice.



Communities attending awareness meeting in Beroya village

Field Tour in Murchison Falls National Park

Selected community members assembled at various parish headquarters from where they were picked up by bus and driven into and around Murchison Falls NP. At the Park entrance, they were briefed on the 'Dos and Don'ts', particularly;

- Do not litter: they were advised to drop all the non-decomposing items in the litter bin.
- Do not move without a guide because of wildlife (avoid unnecessary movement).
- Do not feed or tease wildlife with food.
- Do not make loud noise in the park or hoot.
- Do not destroy or take any wildlife specimen etc

After the briefing, the community was taken on a game drive starting with the northern bank. After crossing on the ferry at 9am to the northern sector, they were given a brief history of Murchison Falls NP and then continued for a game drive as the guides explained the behavior and conservation values of the several wildlife species encountered. During the drive, they encountered several species including giraffe, lion,

elephant, buffalo, leopard, Uganda kob and more. We also discussed of the major threats affecting their distribution and health.

After the game drive, the teams were hosted at the student Paraa Education Center for more discussion and recap on the field observation. Some of the questions asked by community department were:

- What they have observed and learnt from both south and northern sectors?
- What could be the major causes of the differences between southern and northern sector?
- What should be done to curb or stop illegal activities in the Park?

All the 190 people that visited the Park had never intentionally come as a tourist before while 14 people had passed through (transited) the Park on their way to the local town Pakwach.

One community elder reacted by saying *“frankly on southern sector animal population is few compared to northern. I am very excited to see giraffe for the first time and hear different information about wildlife”*.

Another said that *“she happy to learn about breeding and different wildlife distribution pattern”* and *“glad to know that giraffes have been taken to southern bank”*. She added that her observation was that vegetation on the southern part was wilder than northern sector which is ever suppressed by animals. She advised everyone to learn from the abundance animal population on the northern sector because it's shameful that the southern side where they come from has few animals and rallied her colleagues to be to be ambassadors for conservation and protect few animals and report those who have refused who want to threaten their survival.

One member advised Park management to give more funding of revenue sharing to support different selected livelihood projects in the adjacent parishes because it will reduce communities' anger as a result of crop raiding (cassava and maize) by bush pigs and baboons. He also admitted that animal population has tremendously reduced on the southern sector as witnessed by their distribution pattern and wild vegetation cover, and requested for massive collaborative awareness with elders, local leaders and other stakeholders in order to recover animal population on the southern sector.

Communities were advised to change their attitude positively towards conservation so that animal population can increase on the southern sector attracting many tourists, this will generate more revenue in turn more funding for community projects.



Bullisa parish on game drive tour viewing wildlife.





Community of Bullisa Parish analyzing the wildlife situation on the southern and north bank based on the lessons learnt in the game drive.





Community of Ngwendu and Nile Parish after tour at north bank and lecture at the UWA education centre.



Community Ranger addressing Community of Kigwere on the challenges of poaching and the governing laws.



Local leaders caution their people to desist from poaching at the education centre after tour.

Radio Talk Show

The major topics discussed were: Giraffe and other wildlife conservation, challenges faced by wildlife, governing laws, conservation benefits to both local communities and government. Listeners were as well informed of the efforts that UWA and partners GCF are putting in to secure the future of the giraffe such as research and translocation. Listeners were given a chance to call in and give their views and what they think could be the best way moving forward in conservation of giraffes in Uganda.

- They stressed the need for their continuous involvement because some of them were hearing these things for the first time.
- Some of the listeners who called in from Buliisa district thanked UWA for moving some giraffes on the southern bank and said this will make their children and their relatives to view this animal at less cost without crossing the river.
- One call from Nebbi requested UWA management to reduce fees charged at the entrance and activities particularly for immediate communities and school children

in the neighboring district because many people have a lot of interest to see wildlife.



UWA staff conducting radio talk show at Radio Maria F.M.



UWA staff conducting radio talk show at Radio Pakwach F.M.

KEY CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

There was poor attendance in some of the sites for the meetings since it is a busy season for cultivation.

- Being rainy season, some of the planned activities were delayed by frequent rainfall and as well as poor turn up by the targeted audience for the meetings. For example, in Kirama parish.
- Transport cost was high hence the demand and target numbers were not fairly met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Different group members requested for sites at the Park boundary for different projects like apiary and fish farming, and were requested to write a request letter for their project sites.
- Management should organize retreats with local leaders surrounding the Park and offer free Park visit in order to enhance their knowledge and attitude about wildlife conservation.
- More awareness should be carried out in collaboration with local leaders, elders, and other stake holders
- More Park visit should be encouraged and supported in order to attract the targeted audience.
- Increased monitoring of the known poachers in order to change their attitude toward the Park and provision of more projects that can cause lasting change and reduce poaching.

CONCLUSION

There was a general appreciation for the program by the community as majority of the participants were visiting the Park and seeing the giraffes for the first time.

APPRECIATION

We take this opportunity to appreciate the Giraffe Conservation Foundation and the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens for the financial support this awareness program. This opportunity given to the community has been an eye opener for us. We have realized that indeed communities appreciate their Park, but they had been given opportunity to explore it. We are very positive that moving forward we have the good will of the communities surrounding the southern bank of Murchison Falls NP and we hope to keep them as close partners in conservation.

Conserving for Generations.

BUDGET EXPENSES

No.	Activity	Parish (villages)	Attendance
1	Community meeting	Kakoora (KakooraBeroyaKijumbiya)	45
		Nyamitete lower	42
		Nyamitete upper	76
		Mvule (Mvule 1 Ngwendo farm and Ajigo)	66
		Mubako (Mubako Khartoum andPara	23
		Nile (Kilyango, KisomereKasinyi)	86
			338
2	Tour visit	Kakoora and Nyamitete	55
		Mvule (Mvule 1 Ngwendo farm and Ajigo)	49
		Nile and Kirama	56
		Nyamitete upper	44
			204

No.	Activity	Expenses
1	Radio talk show –talk time	2,400,000
	staff facilitation	768,000
		3,168,000
2	Awareness meeting	
	staff facilitation	186,000
	leaders facilitation	110,000
	Mobilizers	150,000
		446,000
3	Tour visit	
	Bus hire expenses	3,500,000
	Local leaders facilitation	660,000
	Community lunch facilitation	2,562,000
	UWA staff facilitation	150,000
		6,872,000
		10,486,000