

Gorillas in the Midst

Assessing the peace and conflict impacts of International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) activities

Anne Hammill Alec Crawford with contributions from Charles Besançon

Final Report
July 2008



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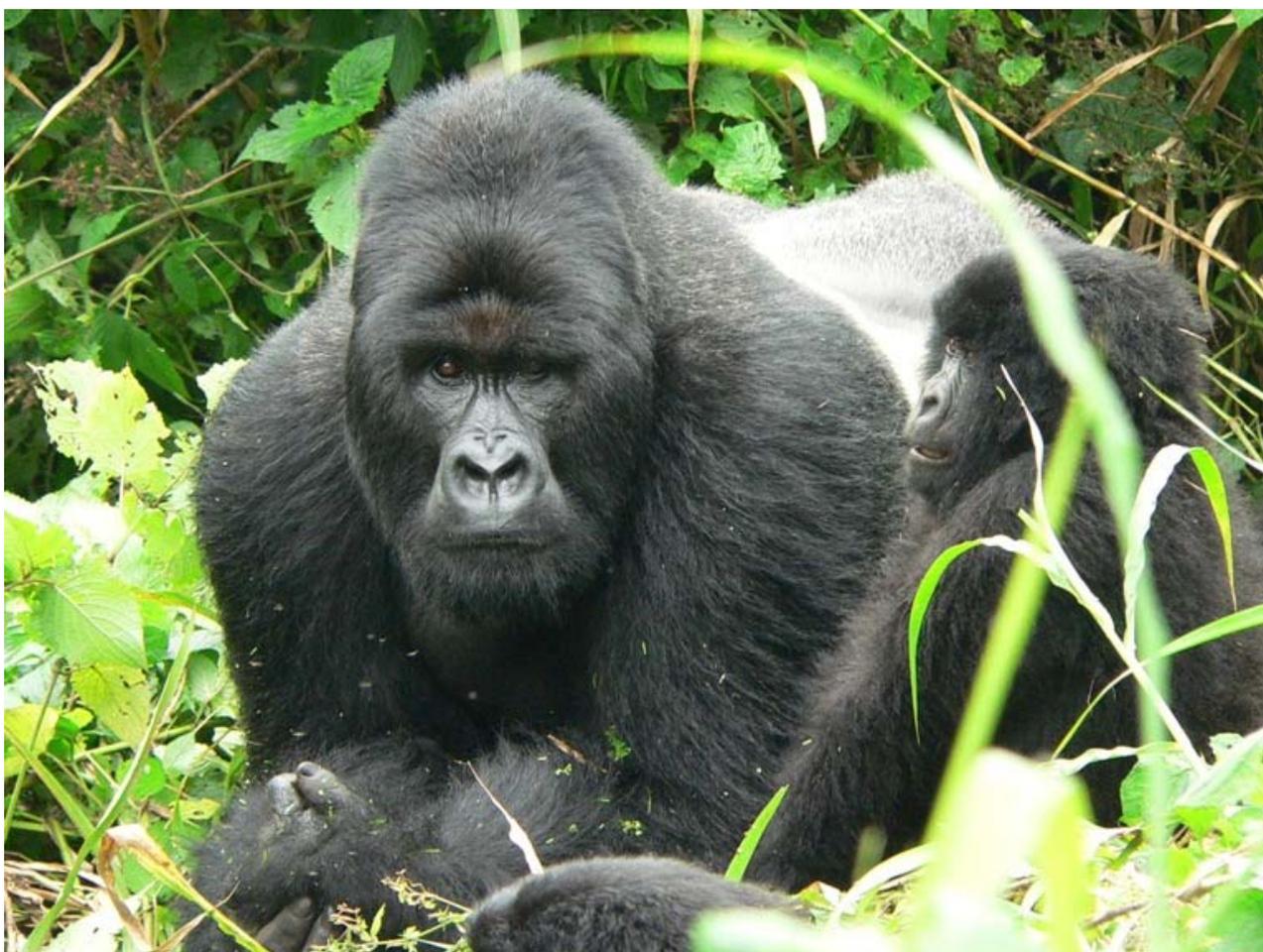


Photo courtesy of IGCP.

1.0 Introduction

Conservation work in conflict zones and across international borders has impacts on more than just wildlife populations and their habitats; it can also have a profound effect on the peace and conflict dynamics in a region. For example, while the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) implements activities with the primary objective of conserving mountain gorilla populations and habitat, anecdotal evidence suggests that these activities have also improved communication and dialogue among different authorities in the region, thereby fostering relationships and cooperation that are fundamental to peacebuilding. Conversely, decades of experience have shown that conservation interventions can cause tensions and contribute to conflict. This is especially portentous in conflict zones, where any external intervention can unintentionally fuel tensions and conflict by sending the ‘wrong’ message or entrenching perceived inequities.

As a result, IGCP sought a more detailed and systematic understanding of how their conservation and development activities affect peace and conflict dynamics in the Great Lakes region. In order to ensure that they do not inadvertently exacerbate the conflict dynamic but instead actively contribute to peacebuilding, IGCP contracted the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) to conduct a Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of some of their field operations.



Regional training for census. Photo courtesy of IGCP.

The goals of the project were:

1. To assist IGCP in achieving their conservation goals by integrating conflict sensitivity into their activities, ensuring that peacebuilding opportunities are maximized and threats to biodiversity conservation are addressed.
2. To develop knowledge about the relationship between conservation and peace/conflict dynamics that will contribute to conservation thinking and practice beyond the central African region.

In order to achieve these goals, the following objectives were specified:

- a. Analyze how IGCP activities address—both positively and negatively—the root causes of conflict in the Virunga/Bwindi region;
- b. Integrate the results of the PCIA analysis into the management and monitoring plans of IGCP activities;
- c. Build the capacity of IGCP staff to design, conduct and implement the results of PCIA's; and
- d. Communicate the value of conflict sensitivity in Transboundary Natural Resource Management (TBNRM) activities to the broader conservation community.

A combination desk-based and field research were undertaken to conduct the analysis, build institutional capacity and identify opportunities for integrating conflict sensitivity into IGCP's programming. The emergent and adaptive research process, which was occasionally disrupted by changes in personnel, resulted in three interesting case studies on the links between conservation, peace and conflict, as well as lessons on the PCIA methodology itself. These lessons have already gone on to inform other similar research projects on conflict-sensitive conservation in the region.

2.0 Background¹

Conservationists working in the Virunga-Bwindi region are faced with mounting socio-economic pressures that not only threaten biodiversity but make their jobs more challenging and potentially dangerous. This calls for adaptive and innovative approaches to planning, implementing and evaluating conservation interventions so that they minimize risks and address some of the root causes of threats to conservation.

¹ This section is based on the IISD Strategy Paper developed for the project, 'Conserving the Peace: Integrating Conflict-Sensitivity into Conservation Interventions in the Albertine Rift' (2006).

2.1 What do we mean by conflict?

Conflict is one of the greatest threats to conservation in the region. It is a multi-dimensional social phenomenon, indicative of social change and transformation (see Box 1).² Depending on how conflict is diagnosed and managed, it can lead to a range of outcomes, from constructive development opportunities to violence and human suffering.

Conflict can be characterized according to:

- ↪ **Causes:** Socio-cultural, economic, governance and security issues that generate grievances.
- ↪ **Actors:** The individuals and groups contributing to, or affected by, conflict.
- ↪ **Geographic scope:** The physical scale and spread of the conflict.
- ↪ **Intensity:** The spectrum of conflict intensity ranges from *violent conflict*, characterized by ‘open acts of hostility’, to *non-violent*. The latter can include *latent conflict*, where tensions exist but parties have not decided to act, or *manifest conflict*, where parties decide to act, but not through the use of violence.

BOX 1: Conflict

Conflict takes place when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or pursue their interests through actions that damage the other parties.

When resolved peacefully and non-coercively, conflict can be a force for positive social change. It can be a sign of a society adapting to changing economic, social and environmental realities, and an opportunity for marginalized groups to redress injustice.

When conflict is ignored or suppressed, it often leads to increased frustration and tension, which, left unchecked, might result in violence.

Given the wide range of factors that drive conflict, it is clear that if conflicts are to be adequately addressed, their context must be clearly understood.

2.2 Conservation and conflict

Conservation interventions are affected by, address and sometimes contribute to conflict. Conservation interventions are not apolitical, as Wilshusin et al. (2002) point out:

...[T]he conservation community becomes a key player among a host of others since it contributes heavily to shifts in power dynamics in rural areas that are already highly politicized. This is a result of its relative wealth and influence compared to most local actors. In short, conservation practices are not benign. They alter the local playing field, sometimes drastically.

² International Alert. 2003. *Resource Pack for Conflict Transformation*, London.

represent a loss of assets and income to local communities, which can contribute to social disarticulation, loss of identity and increased marginalization.³

Resulting conflicts over restricted resource access tend to take place between local communities and conservation actors, but sometimes they can fuel tensions between different communities or community members. These conflicts focus on issues such as compensation for expropriated land or housing, illegal harvesting or use of restricted resources (e.g., poaching), and provision of adequate resource alternatives.

- b) Introducing or increasing the costs of conservation:** For communities living in park-adjacent areas, the close proximity to wildlife can expose them to considerable economic burden and personal risk. These costs include crop loss and property damage, physical threats to people from wildlife, loss of livestock and disease transmission.

The socio-economic costs of living beside conservation interventions can contribute to tensions and confrontations between communities and conservation actors. Efforts at reducing or offsetting these costs—such as guarding, physical buffers and income-generating activities—can minimize or resolve these conflicts.

- c) Unequal benefit-sharing:** In an attempt to offset the costs of conservation, some interventions involve provisions whereby a portion of conservation-related revenues (park fees, tourism permits) is reallocated to surrounding communities for small-scale development projects such as health clinics and schools. When these benefits are inequitably distributed—i.e., captured by elite groups rather than shared with those in greatest need of the benefits—conflict can arise between different community members, as well as between community members and conservation actors, who are perceived as reinforcing power asymmetries.

2.2.2 Regional-level conflicts resulting from deep-rooted social, cultural and economic factors

At the regional-level, conservationists in the Virunga-Bwindi area must also deal with the immediate aftermath and continued risk of violent or armed conflict. Since the early 1990s, the shared borders of eastern DRC and western Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi have been marked by civil war, genocides and mass movements of people across and within borders. Domestic conflicts have spilled across frontiers and have drawn the four countries into a recurrent cycle of armed conflict and proxy war. These conflicts refer to the complex array of tensions and violence stemming from issues such as socio-economic disparity, political representation, identity, citizenship and weak governance. Further details on the causes and dynamics of regional conflict situation are discussed in Section 4.3.1 below.

Violent conflict remains a concern—and a genuine threat—for conservation in many parts of the region. Ongoing armed conflicts between militia groups pose direct threats to personnel and resources. Refugees, internally displaced peoples (IDPs) and demobilized troops often turn to the

³ Cernea, M. M. 2005. 'Restriction of access' is displacement: A broader concept and policy. *Forced Migration Review*, Volume 23: 48-49.

unsettled lands and resources of protected areas, intensifying park-people conflicts and even sparking new conflicts between surrounding communities as resource competition increases. Furthermore, a post-conflict setting or unstable peace can translate into volatile socio-political dynamics that raise the stakes of conservation management decisions, such as gazetting.

Examples of the ways in which conservation interventions interact with regional-level conflicts include:

- a) **Conservation interventions being affected by armed conflict:** Ongoing conflict can affect the environment in general and protected areas in particular: warring factions can threaten the safety of staff or base themselves within protected areas with an ensuing free-for-all for the park's resources, patrolling park boundaries can become hazardous and international funding sources can dry up.⁴
- b) **Conservation activities contributing to regional tensions:** Conservation is not just passively influenced by conflict. Because access to or control over natural resources is at the heart of many conflicts in the region, interventions that influence the availability of these resources risk creating or exacerbating tensions. The examples listed in section 2.2.1 highlight how tensions result directly from a conservation project in a local setting. In a regional context, the relationship between conservation and conflict can be both direct and indirect:

↳ *Direct:* In a region where development needs are high and political relationships are characterized by mutual suspicion (and, in some cases, aggression), the management decisions regarding natural resources can become highly charged political issues that lead to disagreement and conflict between local authorities and between governments. This can be the case with transboundary natural resources, particularly those with high economic value such as mountain gorillas. Conservation interventions that affect the distribution of these resources and revenues can create tensions between the affected countries. Alternatively, interventions—such as gazetting—that involve the relocation of people and disruption of livelihoods can rekindle long-standing tensions between different identity groups.

↳ *Indirect:* Because of the volatile context, conservation interventions may also inadvertently contribute to regional conflict through their operational procedures. That is, in addition to **what** conservationists do (e.g., monitor gorillas, establish parks), **how** they do it may also lead to the escalation of conflict. For example, compensating park-adjacent communities with cash for conservation activities may make them targets of violence or aggression by armed groups based in the area.

⁴ See the Biodiversity Support Program's report, *The Trampled Grass: Mitigating the impacts of armed conflict on the environment*. Washington, D.C., USA.: Biodiversity Support Program.
<http://www.worldwildlife.org/bsp/publications/africa/139/titlepage.htm>

2.2.3 Linking local-level and regional conflicts

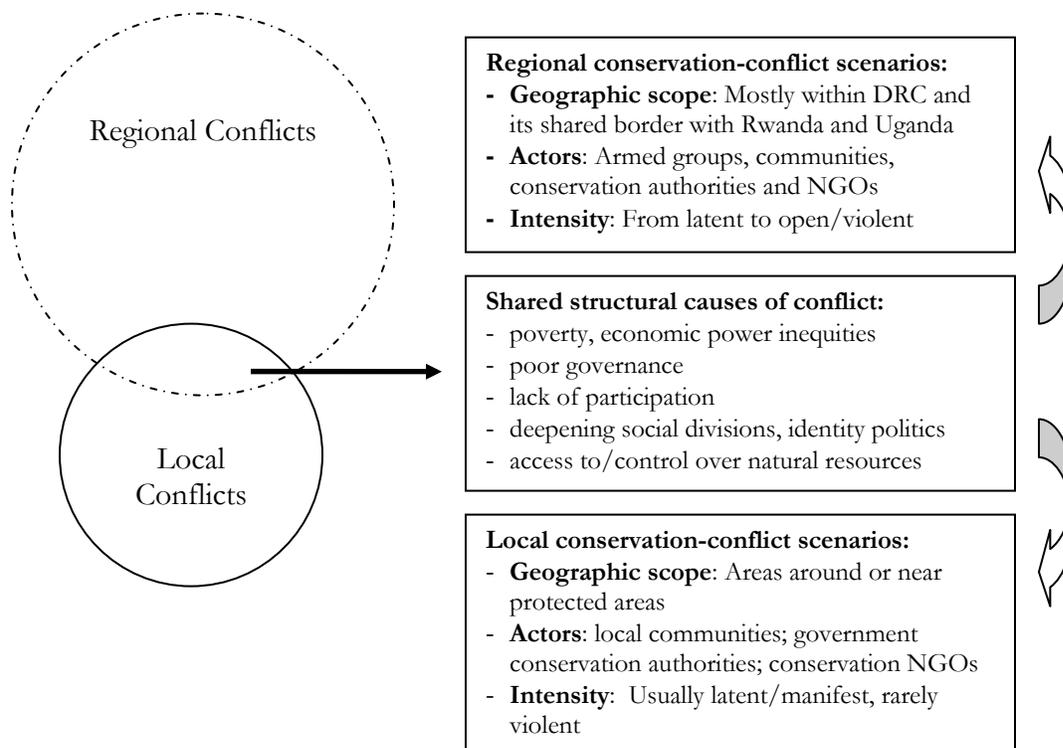
The sections above describe both localized conflicts that result from the implementation of a conservation intervention, and conflicts that result when an intervention interacts with a broader set of socio-political dynamics to exacerbate existing tensions and grievances. The former signifies a direct, causal role of conservation, while the latter implies a more passive, indirect role where the risk of conflict is attributed to forces beyond the scope and control of the project.

While not always obvious, the two conservation-conflict categories are related. Both conflict scenario types relate to issues such as unequal benefit-sharing and restricted access to livelihood resources. This suggests that both categories share some of the same structural causes of conflict, such as poverty, intensified competition for natural resources, lack of political participation, weak governance, and deepening social divisions (both in terms of identity and rural/urban disparities). Figure 1 below attempts to demonstrate this relationship.



Photo courtesy of Alec Crawford.

Figure 1: Linking local- and regional-level conflicts in the Virunga-Bwindi region



2.2.4 Conservation and peacebuilding

Apart from conservation's potential contribution to both local and regional conflicts, its potential role in regional peacebuilding must not be overlooked. Understanding of this link stems from the emerging field of environmental peacemaking. Transboundary protected areas are in some circumstances referred to as 'Peace Parks' due to their potential to foster trust and cooperation between different—sometimes previously opposing—stakeholders for the common purpose of managing biodiversity and protecting livelihoods. Such environmental cooperation can go on to have positive spin-offs for peace. As Conca and Dableko (2002) explain:

The basis for this [environmental peacemaking] claim lies partly in the general conditions understood to facilitate cooperation, partly in the issue characteristics common to many environmental problems, and partly in the kinds of social relations that are engendered by ecological interdependencies (p. 10).

They go on to describe two ways in which environmental cooperation may occur (p. 10–13):

1. 'Changing the strategic climate': Exploiting environmental problems as opportunities in conflictual situations. That is, using discussions over environmental issues as a means to create minimum levels of trust, cooperation, and transparency between actors, thereby improving the

‘contractual environment’ in the bargaining process; and

2. ‘Strengthening post-Westphalian governance’: Looking outside of formal, state-sanctioned negotiations to broader social dynamics—i.e., using environmental concerns to deepen trans-societal linkages, strengthen regional identities, and transform state institutions to become more open, democratic and accountable.

Transboundary conservation initiatives, such as those supported by IGCP, have the potential to promote environmental cooperation along both pathways. For example, the technical cooperation needed to establish and manage PAs across borders could serve as an opening to other forms of cross-border cooperation, while the opening of borders to allow for animal migrations and personnel exchanges may deepen transnational relations (personal and economic) and regional identities, thereby lessening the incentives for conflict. Likewise, protected areas can support livelihoods, generate tourism and finance some degree of post-conflict reconstruction. Conservation may therefore prove to be one of the more viable opportunities for peacebuilding in a post-conflict setting such as the Great Lakes region. On a smaller, more localized scale, well planned, conflict-sensitive conservation interventions can contribute to community peacebuilding.

That is emphatically not to say that conservationists should cast themselves as ‘peacemakers’. Conservationists can’t expect to transform a larger inter or intra-state conflict—but they can make sure their interventions don’t exacerbate existing tensions. If appropriate they can also design their conservation interventions in a way that could help, in a small way, to build community reconciliation. No-one would suggest, for example, that a joint school trip of Protestant and Catholic school children in Northern Ireland is going to resolve a centuries old and bitter conflict—but it’s a small step in the right direction.

2.3 Rationale: Why a PCIA of IGCP activities?

Given these multiple and dynamic links between conservation, conflict, and peace IGCP expressed an interest in understanding how its mission, mandate and activities were linked to conflict and peacebuilding in the Virunga-Bwindi region.

1. IGCP has established projects in conflict zones—i.e., areas with ongoing or recent histories of violent conflict, as well areas where the potential for future conflict (still) exists.
2. Peacebuilding is a stated objective of some of IGCP’s programming, particularly their transboundary activities, including the hosting of regular regional meetings to promote dialogue and cooperation between and among the protected area managers from the three countries and the wider NGO community. However, according to Kenneth Bush (1998), the first step in evaluating peacebuilding projects is a “refusal to accept them at their self-described face value.” There is a growing need to systematically evaluate them, and identify where gaps exist. Moreover, understanding how an intervention contributes to peacebuilding is as instructive as understanding how it contributes to conflict.
3. There is documented and/or anecdotal evidence of conservation activities contributing to both

peacebuilding and to tension in the region.

Engaging the support of consultants and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), IGCP organized a preliminary scoping mission to identify the different types and levels of conflict in the region, and how they are linked to the protected areas. Accepting that transboundary conservation is a type of conservation intervention, why does their establishment or management warrant the use of PCIAs? Apart from the aforementioned protected area-related conflicts that are also relevant to transboundary conservation areas, there are two additional reasons that suggest a need for conducting PCIAs:

- Many transboundary conservation area are established in conflict-prone areas—an obvious point, given their associated peacebuilding objectives, but an important one to emphasize. Unlike other conservation interventions and traditional protected areas, transboundary conservation areas are, for the most part, being targeted to regions with recent histories of conflict. These regions include Southern, Eastern and Central Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and Latin America.
- Along the same line as the first point, many transboundary conservation areas are self-described peacebuilding projects, or at least claim to contribute to peacebuilding. Intuitively, this makes sense. Getting previously opposing interests to come to the table to cooperate on a mutually important priority—biodiversity conservation and economic development—could form the basis for building trust and friendly relations. But given some of the violent histories between some of these parties, this can be a dangerous assumption to make. Fully understanding how an intervention contributes to peacebuilding is as instructive as understanding how it contributes to violent conflict; a careful analysis is required.

Given the recent proliferation and enthusiasm for transboundary conservation and the growing concern over the relationships between protected areas and conflict, it behooves the conservation and development community to follow the lead of the humanitarian community in making sure their contributions ‘do no harm.’



Photo courtesy of IGCP.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Overall approach

The methodology for assessing the peace and conflict impacts of IGCP's work was an emergent process, characterized by a combination of field and desk-based research. The main steps in undertaking the analysis were: (i) identifying a methodological and analytical framework; (ii) case study selection; (iii) data collection; and (iv) case study analyses, including a refinement of the analytical framework.



IGCP staff. Photo courtesy of IGCP.

The methodological and analytical framework for the study drew from a number of sources. These included the Ken Conca and Geoffrey Dabelko's 'environmental peacemaking' concept,⁵ Kenneth Bush's 'Hands-On PCIA',⁶ Mary Anderson's 'Do No Harm' framework,⁷ and the Resource Pack on 'Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding.'⁸ Using these frameworks, the research team decided to structure its analysis as follows:

- a. Conflict analysis: Understand the peace and conflict context related to IGCP's conservation intervention by analyzing the causes, actors and dynamics associated with the conflict.
- b. Intervention analysis: Understand the conservation intervention's intended and actual implementation, looking at aspects such as purpose, scope, location, beneficiaries, resources and results.

⁵ Conca, K. and G. D. Dabelko (eds). (2002), *Environmental Peacemaking*. Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press.

⁶ Bush, K. 2006. *Hands-On PCIA: A Handbook for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)*.

⁷ Anderson, M.B. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace or War*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

⁸ Africa Peace Forum, Center for Conflict Resolution, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Forum on Early Warning and Early Response, International Alert, Saferworld, 2004. *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace building: Tools for peace and conflict impact assessment*.

- c. PCIA: Assess how the intervention affected the peace and conflict context according to different areas of impact, and different aspects of the peace and conflict context. That is, how did the intervention affect, both positively and negatively, the causes, actors and dynamics of the conflict in the areas of:
 - i. Conflict management capacities: Capacity of individual actors, organizations, states to identify and address conflicts non-violently as well as respond to peacebuilding opportunities.
 - ii. Militarized violence and human security: Patterns and levels of violence associated with armed groups, as well as perceptions of security or insecurity.
 - iii. Institutional structures and processes: Governance capacities and opportunities for participation at different levels in government (from village to national level) and in organizations.
 - iv. Economic structures and processes: Availability, distribution and management of resources for equitable and sustainable economic development, whether at the local or national level.
 - v. Social empowerment: Establishing and/or maintaining a culture of tolerance, inclusiveness, equity, justice, participation and respect among different parties, whether they are defined by characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, economic wealth, etc.
- d. Indicators: Start thinking about indicators for monitoring and evaluating peace and conflict impacts.

Using this broad research framework, the research team selected three IGCP interventions for analysis. IGCP undertakes activities at local, national, and regional levels. Much of the local activity involves addressing population pressures on gorilla habitat and health. This can be through measures to enhance livelihoods, resolve human-gorilla conflicts and support environmental



Photo courtesy of IGCP.

education. At the national level, activities focus on building the capacity of protected areas authorities to plan, implement and monitor park management activities. And regional level activities focus on coordinating and harmonizing local and national activities so that the Virunga-Bwindi ecosystems can be managed in contiguous blocks.

The specific IGCP activities that were selected as case studies were:

- ↪ **The Mgahinga Community Development Organization** – Examining how IGCP’s involvement with a community-based enterprise around Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) in Uganda affected local efforts to address tensions around revenue sharing.
- ↪ **Nkuringo land purchase and buffer zone** – Examining how IGCP’s land purchase to establish a buffer zone around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, and the subsequent development of a buffer zone management plan, may have contributed to or resolved park-people conflicts and other community-based tensions.
- ↪ **Transboundary cooperation** – Looking at the mechanisms used by IGCP to encourage cross-border cooperation and interaction including surveillance, regional meetings and the preparation of a trilateral revenue-sharing agreement.

The rationale for selecting these interventions was based on a desire to analyze different types of conservation interventions at different scales, as well as on the availability of information. Following initial consultations and field observations, Project Leader Charles Besançon recognized the MCDO and Nkuringo interventions as having peace and conflict impacts on park-people relations. These initiatives also had some associated documentation available for review, as activities had been underway for several years. There were fewer local-level activities in the other IGCP countries, and most seemed to be at the planning or early implementation stages. While this did not theoretically preclude them from inclusion in the study, field support in Uganda appeared to be stronger. Regional-level activities were included in the analysis, as IGCP’s work in this area was well-established and well-recognized by partners and donors.

The case studies represent interventions at different stages of the project or program cycle. Some of the interventions have been either completed or abandoned—i.e., the Nkuringo land purchase and MCDO initiative, respectively—while transboundary activities are still underway. For the activities that have been terminated, the research team approached the analysis like an evaluation, while activities still underway were approached as a monitoring exercise.

3.2 Data collection

Data were collected through document reviews/analysis and stakeholder consultations, primarily during research trips to the region. A series of five research trips were undertaken over the course of the project, although a substantial amount of desk-based research also complemented this fieldwork.

To understand the origins, structure, mandate and range of work undertaken by IGCP, existing project/program reports, as well as documents and studies from government departments and other NGOs, were reviewed. Other sources of information included popular books and media including newspapers, magazines and television.

Social science research offers a great deal of useful knowledge for understanding the cultural relationships among groups of people in the area, including the Batwaa people and ethnic groups such as Tutsi, Hutu, Lendu and Hema. Academic literature in a range of disciplines—including

African history/studies, political science, anthropology, economics and geography—was consulted to shed light on the unique circumstances that have brought the communities to the Virunga-Bwindi region and the issues that challenge sovereignty, identity, power and security in the region.

Consultations were conducted with local community members, park staff, NGO staff, and various government actors including representatives from different ministries, security forces and border patrols. These consultations were in a variety of formats, including semi-structured, open-ended interviews, informal discussions, and participatory workshops.

A summary of the stakeholder consultations that were conducted over the research years is provided in Table 1. The number of people consulted under each stakeholder category is listed as approximate due to staff turnover and transfers, or location of consultations (e.g., Uganda Wildlife Authority [UWA] staff being interviewed in Ruhengeri), which sometimes led to confusion and overlaps in categories. Because people who agreed to participate in the consultations did so on the assurance of anonymity or at least non-attribution of opinions/observations, names are not provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of stakeholder consultations

Stakeholder category	Approx # consulted	Consultation format
IGCP Staff		
- Headquarters (Nairobi)	6	Semi-structured interview; informal
- Rwanda (Kigali, Ruhengeri)	7	Semi-structured interview; workshop; informal
- Uganda (Kampala, Kabale)	3	Semi-structured interview; workshop; informal
- DRC (Goma)	5	Semi-structured interview; workshop, informal
Protected Areas Staff		
- ORTPN (Rwanda)		
• Headquarters	2	Semi-structured interview; informal
• Ruhengeri	5	Semi-structured interview; workshop; informal
- UWA (Uganda)		
• Headquarters	1	Semi-structured interview
• Kisoro	2	Semi-structured interview; workshop; informal
• Buhoma	5	Semi-structured interview; workshop; informal
• Nkuringo	3	Semi-structured interview; informal
- ICCN (DRC)		
• Kinshasa	2	Semi-structured interview; workshop; informal
• Goma	5	Semi-structured interview; workshop; informal
NGOs & CBOs		
- WWF (Kenya, DRC)	3	Workshop; informal
- WCS (Uganda, DRC)	5	Workshop; informal
- FZS (DRC)	2	Workshop; informal
- ZSL (DRC)	3	Workshop; informal
- MGVP (Rwanda)	1	Workshop; informal
- CARE (DRC)	2	Informal
- AICC (Uganda)	8	Semi-structured group interview; informal
- MCDO (Uganda)	4	Semi-structured group interview
- NCDF (Uganda)	12	Semi-structured group interview
- Beekeeper Group (Rwanda)	3	Informal
- Handicraft Group (Rwanda)	2	Informal
- Individual community members (Rwanda, Uganda, DRC)	12	Informal

Workshops in particular yielded valuable information for this project, as they not only provided useful inputs but also offered a forum for developing the capacity of IGCP staff to conduct and implement the results of PCIA's and to promote conflict sensitivity. Topics of discussion in all forms of consultation revolved around natural resource scarcity and management issues, livelihood issues, conflicts between and among communities and protected area authorities and lastly, ethnic issues. Consultations were also tailored to specific case studies of interest to the overall study.⁹

A summary of each of the research trips is provided below.

3.2.1 Trip 1: Initial site description and preliminary analysis (February–March, 2004)

While this first research trip took place before the start of the Buffett-funded portion of the project, it was crucial for defining the scope of work. Project Leader Charles Besançon travelled to the IGCP head office in Nairobi and then to each of the country offices in Rwanda, Uganda and DRC. The purpose of these visits was to meet with IGCP staff, introduce them to the project, and hold preliminary consultations on the links between conservation and conflict. The results of these discussions provided a basis for developing the conceptual and methodological framework for the project.

3.2.2 Trip 2: PCIA brainstorming workshop (March–April 2005)

To finalize the research framework and methodology, the Research Team (i.e., Project Leader and IISD Technical Advisor, Anne Hammill) undertook a field visit to the Virunga region. The purpose of this visit was to hold a regional brainstorming workshop in order to introduce the project and solicit feedback on its approach, as well as discuss observed links between conservation and peace/conflict in the region. Discussions from this meeting helped the project team members fine-tune the research framework and methodology. Immediately following this meeting, the project team members undertook field research to gather information on some of IGCP's conservation and community development activities. This involved meetings with IGCP staff in Kigali, Ruhengeri and Goma, as well as visits to project sites in other parts of the Virunga region.

3.2.3 Trip 3: PCIA field research (September 2005)

Field research continued when the Project Leader attended the Regional Meeting in Ruhengeri to update IGCP and its partners on the project and continue gathering field information. Specifically, at the regional meeting the Project Leader received assistance from IGCP staff and the Protected Areas authorities in making the final selection of specific case studies to be analyzed in this project. They also discussed entry points in IGCP planning for integrating conflict sensitivity as well as potential indicators. The Project Leader then visited the IGCP office in Goma, DRC and held impromptu meetings with community leaders around Virunga National Park to discuss the peace and conflict impacts of gorilla tourism and other conservation activities.

⁹ The locations and depth to which these case studies will be investigated was one of the agenda items at the inaugural brainstorming meeting in Ruhengeri for this PCIA in late March 2005.

3.2.4 Trip 4: Regional meeting in Goma (December 2005)

A penultimate research trip was undertaken in conjunction with the Regional Meeting in Goma. Participation in the Regional Meeting consisted of spending half a day presenting on the PCIA project. Specifically, the Project Team reviewed the purpose, rationale and approach of the project and provided an update on the selected case studies. After this, the Research Team conducted a brief exercise, soliciting ideas and feedback on potential peace and conflict indicators for conservation activities in the Virunga-Bwindi region. Participation in the Regional Meeting also provided an opportunity for more informal interactions with IGCP staff and PA authorities, which supplemented the results workshop exercise on indicators.

3.2.5 Trip 5: Final PCIA field research (August 2007)

While Research Trip 4 was intended to be the final field visit to the region, changes to the management and structure of the project required an additional trip. Specifically, the departure of Project Leader Charles Besançon from the project just after the research trip 4 and prior to undertaking the final analysis of the data resulted in some delays and complications. While the Technical Advisor, Anne Hammill, had accompanied the Project Leader on some of the Research Trips, her role was mostly limited to co-organizing and facilitating the two workshops. Much of the firsthand field research had been undertaken by the Project Leader. Upon his departure, it was decided that the Technical Advisor would try to use his research notes to undertake the final analysis. The field notes were helpful in providing a general context of the case studies, but important details were either missing or the context had changed significantly, highlighting the difficulties with transferring field research experience. As more time elapsed from the time of the Project Leader's departure, it became too difficult to backfill this missing information. It was therefore decided that a fifth and final trip to the region would be undertaken to collect this missing information, as well as update the existing data collected earlier in the project.

With some additional resources from IISD, Anne Hammill and IISD Project Officer Alec Crawford returned to the region to talk to various IGCP staff and partners on the three selected case studies. They travelled to Uganda, where they conducted a series of semi-structured consultations with different stakeholder groups—community organizations, individual community members and park staff—in both the Mgahinga and Nkuringo areas. These were supplemented by discussions with IGCP staff. In DRC, the Project Team met with IGCP and ICCN staff to discuss experiences with transboundary collaboration. The trip ended in Rwanda with consultations in Ruhengeri and Kigali, where the Team met with IGCP and Office Rwandais Du Tourisme Et Des Parcs Nationaux (ORTPN) staff (both in the field and at headquarters) to discuss transboundary collaboration.

3.3 Limitations and challenges

Before discussing the results of the research, it is important to note the limitations and challenges associated with applying the emergent, social science-based methodology described above.

- **Use of qualitative, subjective information:** The data used to assess the peace and conflict impacts of IGCP's work consisted of peoples' perceptions and opinions. This reliance on

subjective information introduces different problems, as personal biases influenced the basis for PCIA analysis. Nonetheless, the research team felt the methodology was appropriate, as conflict is a social construct based on perceptions rather than scientific facts. Whether a perception is seemingly justified or not, the fact that it exists and is expressed can be sufficient to create conditions conducive to peace or conflict. Becoming conflict-sensitive means understanding the perceptions that are out there may potentially fuel or resolve conflicts, and trying to adjust activities accordingly.

- **Data collection and analysis:** Moreover, the manner in which stakeholders' perceptions were gathered—largely through semi-structured interviews and informal discussions—did not lend themselves to structured analysis, such as coding and discourse analysis. Notes were taken by hand, reviewed, and recurring themes pulled out for discussion in the final analysis. This approach means that researcher bias has a strong influence on what is ultimately discussed and emphasized in the final analysis.
- **Researcher bias:** It is worth noting the potential biases introduced by the research team in gathering and analyzing the information for this work. All members of the research team possessed a social science background. The initial Project Leader had a professional background in protected areas management, particularly of transboundary protected areas, and was interested in how it could contribute to peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas. The IISD researchers had backgrounds on the links between environment and human security, and were interested in how environmental management could contribute to both peace and conflict.
- **Personnel turnover:** Finally, one of the unexpected but significant challenges faced in undertaking the PCIA research was the turnover or change in personnel—both within IGCP and the research team. While this is a regular occurrence in any organization, this did lead research delays and information gaps.

4.0 Results

Using the results of the five research trips and other desk-based research, the three selected case studies were developed and analyzed in terms of IGCP's observed and potential contributions to peace and/or conflict in the Virunga-Bwindi region.

4.1 Case Study 1: Amagyembere Iwacu Community Camp (AICC) for Conservation and Better Livelihoods of Neighbours Adjacent to Mgahinga Park

Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) is located in Kisoro district, south-west Uganda. It covers the northern slope of three Virunga volcanoes, and is contiguous to both Parc National des Virungas (Mikeno Sector) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Parc National des Volcans in Rwanda. The 33.7 km² park is part of the transboundary habitat for the critically endangered mountain gorillas and home to the rare and endangered golden monkeys. In addition to protecting biodiversity, the park provides crucial environmental services to surrounding human communities, serving as an important water catchment area and helping to regulate the local climate and conserve soil.

MGNP is under threat, however. Immediate threats include clearing and conversion of land for agriculture, poaching, firewood collection, charcoal production, cattle grazing and fire. The underlying socio-political drivers of these threats include high population density (estimated at 300 people per square kilometre), limited available land, poverty and restricted livelihood options, lack of alternative energy sources, insecurity and displacement.

4.1.1 Background

Over the last 50 years, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park has been threatened and its forest cover reduced. In its early days, it was dually designated a wildlife reserve and a forest reserve, jointly managed by the Game Department and the Forest Department, though little active management resulted from this arrangement. During the 1950s, local residents began to resent the reserve, as it was land they believed they had a right to utilize to sustain their livelihoods.¹⁰ As a result of this resentment, as well as the growing need for land and limited government authority in the area, local people cleared approximately nine square kilometers of land for farming in an area now called Zone 2.¹¹

In August 1991, Mgahinga was gazetted as a national park and people living in Zone 2 were evicted. Those who possessed documentation proving they had been allowed to enter and use the forest were financially compensated for their move; those who did not possess such documentation were not. Many evictees did not own additional land outside the park and simply returned to the

¹⁰ Adams, B. and M. Infield. 1998. *Community Conservation at Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, Uganda*. University of Manchester. African Wildlife Foundation. University of Zimbabwe. University of Cambridge. Report.

¹¹ Kalpers, José. 2001. *Volcanoes under Siege: Impact of a Decade of Armed Conflict in the Virungas*. Washington, D.C.: Biodiversity Support Program

communities from which they originated, located in the three parishes surrounding the park. But even those who had plots outside the park faced income contraction and livelihood insecurity as a result of the relocation.

With the encouragement of park staff and several NGOs, many of these evicted landholders decided to purchase additional lands adjacent to the park entrance in order to benefit from what they saw as growing tourism opportunities related to gorilla trekking. A total of 33 evicted families each contributed approximately UGX 21,000 to purchase the additional land just outside of MGNP's main gate, located in Gisozi parish. The plan was to establish a community-run tourist facility to cater to the expected influx of trekkers. In order to formalize this arrangement, in 1993 the 33 families established the Amagyembere Iwacu Community Camp (AICC), a registered community-based organization with an elected executive committee.

During its first 10 years, the AICC managed to generate some revenue. According to AICC executives, these revenues were used to expand and upgrade campground facilities, as well as support community needs such as infrastructure and school fees. The group had help on both of these fronts: donor assistance funded some facility renovations¹² while tourists, learning of the community support program, started sponsoring schoolchildren. However, business continued to rely on a limited customer base of walk-in and word-of-mouth visitors, and two developments cut significantly into profits. First, the emergence of war in neighbouring Congo in 1997 reduced the amount of overland traffic in the region. Moreover, the Ugandan government prohibited overlanders from staying near the park for security reasons and insisted they stay in Kisoro town, visiting the park only on day trips. Second, in 2004 the one habituated gorilla group in the park, the Nyakagezi group, migrated into neighbouring Rwanda for long stretches of time, taking with them the primary tourist draw for the park. While the group had never been completely resident in Uganda (it had been habituated in DRC and had regularly moved between the two countries), it had been spending enough time in MGNP to create tourism demand and a certain level of economic dependency. Further compounding these exogenous events was the poor management of the campground, which ultimately led tourists to stay elsewhere.

The campground revenues and benefits that were generated despite these developments remained concentrated in one parish, and within that parish mostly among the 33 families involved in AICC. These livelihood benefits were by no means lucrative; most AICC executive members continued to rely on agriculture as their primary source of income. AICC was therefore keen to continue expanding and improving the campground to maximize its market share of the tourism traffic through MGNP.

4.1.2 Description of conflict

AICC started lobbying local and international NGOs for financial support to upgrade its facilities. IGCP, who had supported the campground since its inception, was eager to expand the earning potential of the campground as well as the number of beneficiaries. Specifically, IGCP wanted to see benefits distributed beyond the 33 founding members of AICC to include other people from Gisozi

¹² For example, two Peace Corps volunteers helped the group secure funding from USAID to expand its banda accommodations.

parish and the other two parishes adjacent to the park (Rukongi and Gitendre). According to IGCP staff, the members of AICC agreed to expand coverage of their activities to other parishes in exchange for closer collaboration with IGCP, who would help AICC seek additional financial resources, including a community-negotiated partnership with a private tourism company. To consolidate this expanded effort, the Mgahinga Community Development Organization (MCDO) was established in late 2003, a registered company limited by guarantee. The intention was to establish a local institution that would coordinate community-based initiatives around the park.

In fact, the establishment of MCDO was precipitated by the opportunity to apply for funding through the UNDP Small Grants Programme. A proposal for US\$50,000 was prepared to support renovations in the campground. Funding was contingent on two conditions: a) that the project be renovation-based rather than ‘starting from scratch’; and b) that it contribute to community development. IGCP and MCDO needed AICC for the former, using the existing campground as collateral to access the grant, while AICC needed IGCP and MCDO for the latter. AICC members were most directly involved in developing the proposal. Their understanding was that once funding was secured and investments were made in upgrading the campground, MCDO would buy the land from the 33 members of AICC. These members would subsequently relinquish their ownership rights, and campground benefits could be shared more broadly.

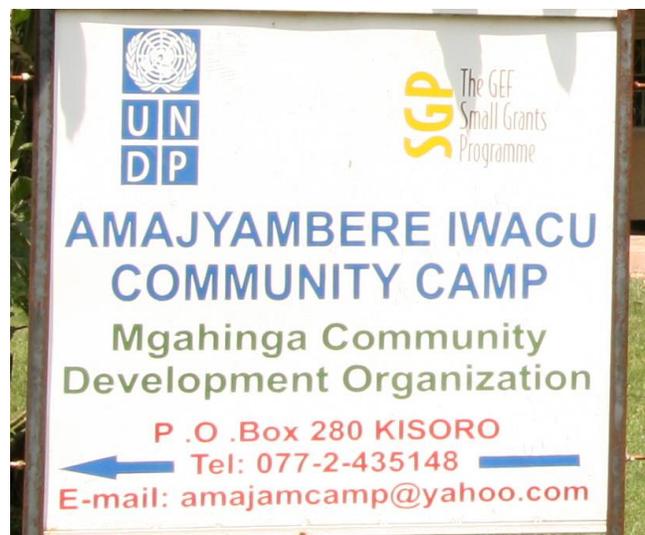


Photo courtesy of Alec Crawford.

Meanwhile, park staff and NGOs, including IGCP, went into the three park-adjacent parishes to mobilize community support for MCDO, whose management structure consisted of an elected executive. Local communities, having heard of the UNDP grant opportunity, enthusiastically embraced the idea of becoming members of MCDO, believing that their UGX 1,000 investment would buy them a share in the improved campground and generate benefits, such as other community projects and money for school fees. A total of UGX 3.4 million was collected from community members in the three parishes through MCDO membership fees.

A number of misunderstandings took seed during the process of applying for and negotiating the UNDP funding. People who had paid a membership fee to join MCDO believed the campground was now communally owned and the UNDP money would yield additional benefits for the park-adjacent communities, perhaps through small enterprises, infrastructure renovations, etc. AICC, however, had a different understanding of the agreement. For them, the grant was strictly for campground renovations and not any other community development activities. Moreover, if they were not happy with the offer from MCDO-IGCP to purchase the campground, they would simply decline the offer and continue to operate the campground as usual, without revenues accruing to

MCDO members. The campground would then represent one of many projects operating under the MCDO umbrella in the three parishes; they would share experience and advice with the other projects, but revenues would largely remain within the 33 founding families.

Crucially, IGCP-MCDO and the AICC had not agreed on the sale price of the campground before submitting the UNDP grant proposal. Upon securing the funding, IGCP commissioned a professional valuation of the property that led to an offer of UGX 30 million to AICC. However, since they had by this point secured the financial means to upgrade their facility, AICC executives were no longer beholden to MCDO or to IGCP; they could either receive additional cash from the sale, or could operate an improved facility, which might prove to be even more lucrative. AICC therefore rejected the IGCP offer and demanded UGX 66 million for the property. Unable to match this price through fundraising or the collected MCDO membership contributions, IGCP withdrew its offer and backed away from the project, citing AICC's lack of commitment to community development. IGCP explained its position to UNDP, who tried unsuccessfully to mediate between the two parties (IGCP/MCDO and AICC), but in the end continued to support the AICC.¹³

At this point, MCDO members were refunded their membership fees¹⁴ and the organization effectively folded, holding its last executive meeting in October 2005. However, unbeknownst to the executive committee, AICC continued to operate the campground under the MCDO banner: the MCDO name is prominently displayed on the campground's sign, and AICC operates a number of projects under the MCDO name, even setting aside some office space for MCDO in the campground's new offices. Thus, while AICC uses the MCDO name, the benefits of the campground continue to accrue solely to the group's 33 founding members. AICC maintains that the projects that they are running under the MCDO banner come from all three parishes, yet MCDO executive members appeared to be completely unaware of this.

Over this time, the AICC did manage to secure an arrangement with the private tour company Red Chilli. While this did increase the campground's marketing reach for a time, the death of the company's owner in late 2005 forced Red Chilli to withdraw. Without this marketing link, and with the migration of the Nyakagezi gorilla group into Rwanda in late 2004, tourism has fallen in the region.

4.1.3 Peace and conflict impact of the AICC campground upgrade

IGCP's activities around Mgahinga Gorilla National Park were unable to resolve the conflict between community members over the potential benefits flowing from the AICC development project. While this intervention did attempt to increase and equitably share campground revenues among the three park-adjacent parishes, a series of conflicting goals, poor communication and misunderstandings led to the intervention's collapse.

¹³ It is unclear how the AICC accessed the UNDP funds, which were to be deposited in an MCDO account which would require signatories from all three parishes for any withdrawals.

¹⁴ Refunding the membership fee money proved a bit problematic, as some funds had been used to meet as a group throughout the UNDP grant process. This deficit was made up for with funds from the grant, thus reducing the amount available for campground renovations.

The first factor contributing to the conflict was that the two principal negotiating partners in the intervention (IGCP and AICC) were not working towards the same goal. Each had its own agenda: while IGCP sought to increase and expand benefits to park-adjacent communities, the founding members of AICC were concerned—justifiably—with earning a strong return on their initial investment. This non-alignment of interests threatened the project when AICC, having used its alliance with IGCP and MCDO to secure UNDP funding for campground renovations, rejected IGCP's offer to buy the facility for UGX 30 million, demanding more money. A dispute resolution mechanism had not been established for the process, leaving IGCP and MCDO with no recourse to confront AICC and reach a compromise. Without this mechanism, and with IGCP withdrawing from the project in light of AICC's evident lack of commitment to broader community development goals, MCDO was left without institutional support and effectively stopped operating in October 2005.

This brings into question the sustainability of the initiative. Although designed to serve as a community development organization working across all three parishes, the MCDO did not survive in its intended form beyond the collapse of the AICC agreement. One reason for this may have been the organization's management structure; one of the MCDO board members was also a founding member of the AICC, creating a conflict of interest between the two parties which allowed AICC to benefit from information asymmetries. The institutional integrity of MCDO is brought into further question considering the ease with which AICC managed to co-opt the organization for its own purposes and operate it without the knowledge of the MCDO executive. This may be a function of IGCP/UWA rushing to establish MCDO in time to include it on the UNDP small grants application; more time must be taken to ensure these types of community development organizations build the capacity to operate independently.

The seemingly rushed nature of the AICC-IGCP-MCDO partnership also led to a significant amount of misunderstanding concerning the economics of the agreement. Whereas MCDO members believed that their UGX 1,000 membership fee automatically translated into a share of the renovated campground's increased revenues, AICC members believed that they would either sell the campground at a profit or continue to operate it as one of several community-based projects under the MCDO umbrella. A lack of effective communication, both between partners and among their constituents, led to differing expectations that made mutual agreement difficult.

Finally, neglecting to agree on a sale price for the campground before the UNDP funding was secured shifted bargaining power to AICC. Without any legal obligation to transfer ownership of the campground to MCDO, AICC was in a position to either operate a renovated campground, or ask for more cash to maximize their return. Once UNDP funding had been granted, IGCP and the MCDO had no leverage with which to negotiate with the AICC. Having a clear idea of expectations and negotiating positions, as well as solid plan for managing the entire process—from establishing the partnership, to valuing the land, to making an offer—may have averted some of the problems among AICC, MCDO and its partners.

Table 2 summarizes the observed peace and conflict impacts of the AICC / MCDO campground upgrade. While peace impacts were difficult to observe due to the project's collapse, lessons can be drawn from its failures. First, effective communication is central to empowering community

members, strengthening negotiations and avoiding misunderstanding. To achieve this, interventions must be carefully planned and must be aware of the negotiating positions and interests of those involved. Second, dispute resolution mechanisms and the obligations designed to support them can help minimize exploitation, align interests and reduce the chance of conflict. These mechanisms, whether statutory or customary, must be identified in the planning process and supported and built on during the project.

Table 2: Peace and conflict impacts of the AICC/MCDO campground upgrade

Area of impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
Conflict Management Capacities		* limited capacity to address conflict due to the absence of a dispute resolution mechanism (MCDO)
Institutional structures and processes	* increased interaction between protected areas authorities and communities	* conflict of interest with shared board member between the AICC and MCDO * unsustainable institutional structure, as evidenced by MCDO's collapse and co-option by AICC * tensions between organizations (IGCP/UWA and UNDP)
Economic structures and processes	* campground upgraded, increasing tourism potential	* non-alignment of economic goals among the three parties * manipulation of economic power and valuation process rewarded * economic benefits not shared, limited to a small number of people * unclear or unenforced financial management protocols, allowing AICC to receive funds without recourse
Social empowerment	* initial opportunity for community members to come together to identify shared goals, needs, priorities (that would be addressed through MCDO)	* frustration and resentment towards AICC members * feeling of hopelessness among MCDO member households as a result of returned membership fees, no community development activities

4.2 Case Study 2: Nkuringo land purchase and buffer zone

Located in southwest Uganda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) sits on the western edge of the Rift Valley, across the border from Parc National des Virungas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The park was first gazetted into a forest reserve in 1932. In 1961 it was made an animal sanctuary, before becoming a national park in 1991.

Due to its dramatic altitude variations (between 1,160m and 2,607m), BINP is one of the few areas in East Africa where lowland and montane vegetations meet, a varied topography which has contributed to the park's extremely rich biological diversity. Bwindi is the most diverse forest in East Africa both for tree species (with more than 163 species/10 endemic) and ferns (with more than 104 species).¹⁵ The park is also home to a great variety of birds, insects and mammals; endemic birds and butterflies live among dozens of frog species, chimpanzees and African elephants, to name only a few. However, perhaps most notable among the park's residents are 320 mountain gorillas—nearly half of the global population.

4.2.1 Background

In 1993, BINP management opened two of the park's gorilla groups to tracking. Mubare and Katendegere groups, each habituated over a period of two years, met with considerable success; tourism companies who organized gorilla visits were operating at close to 100 per cent capacity. To respond to this demand, UWA decided in early 1995 that a third group should be habituated in the park. This decision was supported by the BINP management plan (1995–1999) and the Bwindi Tourism Development Plan (1992), both of which indicated that a third gorilla group would be considered for habituation upon the opening of the first two groups for tourism.

All plans were suspended in April 1995 by the massacre of four gorillas in the park's Kyaguliro research group. Habituation was not discussed again until mid-1996; by this time, emigration had reduced the size of Katendegere group to four and it had ceased to be a viable tourism group. UWA (then-named Uganda National Parks, UNP) and IGCP thus decided that a third Bwindi gorilla group would be habituated. The choice of which group to habituate would depend on a number of factors, including: park zonation, infrastructure, staffing requirements, ease of access for tourists, concerns about crop raiding, the home ranges of other gorilla groups and the potential distribution of tourism benefits to neighbouring communities.

Following a lengthy research process, Nkuringo group in the south of the park was selected for habituation. Central to this decision was the fact that the group's home range did not overlap with that of Mubare group, which centered around the town of Buhoma on the park's western edge. Nkuringo group's home range lay contiguous to the two Kisoro parishes of Nteko and Rubuguri. Of the two, Rubuguri is the commercial centre, while Nteko—as the natural entry point to the park—stood to benefit the most from gorilla tourism. With no habituated group on the southwest side of the park, many people in the area thought that Nkuringo habituation would finally help local communities benefit from BINP. Habituation thus began in July 1997.

¹⁵ IUCN (1994) 'World Heritage Nomination – Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (Uganda)', IUCN

Reports indicated that by mid-1999 the group was habituated, but, by that point, the Nkuringo gorillas had begun spending a considerable amount of time on a small section of community land (approximately 4.2 km²) outside of the park boundary. It was observed that these incursions had increased with the habituation process, as the group became less fearful of humans. With the gorillas feeding on secondary vegetation in the bordering valley and occasionally destroying crops and causing human injury, this presented a challenge to park management; not only would tourism be impossible on community land (being both unattractive to tourists and not operated on public lands), but the increase in human-gorilla-livestock interactions would in turn increase the risk of disease transmission among the three groups.

The delays and problems with opening up the Nkuringo group to tourism generated a considerable degree of resentment from the Nteko community; residents had already witnessed the positive socio-economic impact of gorilla tourism on the Buhoma community, and were eager to see similar results in their region. Recognizing this, park management and IGCP convened in late 1999 to discuss the pressing issues surrounding the potential opening of Nkuringo group to tourism. Based on these discussions, field staff then prepared a report for UWA senior management, presenting it for resolution in January 2000. The report's recommendations included: exploring the opportunity of buying off critical land surrounding the park from willing owners; devising methods of encouraging Nkuringo group to stay inside the park; strengthening HUGO (Human-Gorilla Conflict Resolution Programme) operations; and organizing the community (with IGCP's help) to help it benefit from the Nkuringo tourist program.

In July 2000, the Nkuringo group was diagnosed with scabies. This disease transmission, which was attributed to the group's continued excursions outside of the park, prompted UWA to suspend tourist visits until a solution was found. Initial efforts through HUGO yielded few results; while the HUGO volunteer task force could drive the gorillas back into the park, the animals typically returned the following day. Therefore in late 2000, IGCP and UWA¹⁶ launched a plan to purchase the land between the park and the community in the hopes of reducing human-gorilla conflicts; this buffer zone purchase and its subsequent management are the central focus of this case.

4.2.2 Description of IGCP intervention

Lands within Nteko parish were identified as those suffering the most from incursions by gorillas and other park animals¹⁷; as such, it was here that the proposed buffer zone was to be situated. IGCP and UWA field research indicated that in order to successfully reduce human-gorilla conflicts, a 12km stretch of land adjacent to the park, at a width of 350m, would be required. While the gorilla group had at times ventured 800m from the park's boundary, its preferred range when outside of the park was within 350–500m of the edge of BINP.

The lands within the proposed buffer zone were acidic and not particularly productive, but were nonetheless used for agriculture and owned by 274 families spread throughout the two parishes. The cultivation of annual crops like sorghum, maize, millet, beans, Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes,

¹⁶ This was undertaken under the direction of the 'Nkuringo Committee', a group made up of UWA field and headquarter staff, IGCP, ITFC and CARE.

¹⁷ Including baboons, monkeys and wild pigs.

along with timber cultivation, earned the families enough income to help them meet their domestic needs.¹⁸

When in October 2000 UWA and IGCP brought the proposed land purchase plan to the affected communities, it was found that an overwhelming majority (93.3 per cent) were in favour of selling.¹⁹ IGCP and UWA then spent a year consulting with the 274 land-owning households about the proposed land purchase plan. During these consultations, which included the six villages directly bordering the park, UWA and IGCP helped prepare beneficiaries for the sale, detailing how the money would be transferred and how the proceeds could be invested (i.e., in more land, homes, etc.).

With community buy-in, UWA-IGCP then engaged an independent valuation/surveying team to demarcate and value the plots of land with the participation of local leaders, land owners and their neighbours. Once complete, the coalition offered the owners government rates for the lands, i.e., rates significantly higher than local market values. Funds for the purchase were raised by UWA-IGCP from FFI, WWF and IUCN, among other sources. Once transferred, most sellers used the proceeds to buy secondary plots to continue their agricultural activities, along with investments in livestock and housing.²⁰ To reduce the chance that large cash transactions would make the sellers targets for theft, UWA and IGCP set up bank accounts in the sellers' names for all transfers exceeding UGX 300,000.

In all, 274 households were directly affected by the land purchase. Final payments were transferred in September 2003; six months later, sellers needed to be off the land. The process largely went smoothly, although some tensions did arise. One respondent to IGCP field research indicated that he had been coerced by the community to sell his land for the greater good. In other instances, it was unclear how the proceeds should be divided among family members for inherited plots. These cases were typically resolved in the local judicial system. The creation of the buffer zone also required the purchase of government lands, and some disputes did arise between district and sub-county levels of government as to how the money should be shared.

4.2.3 Buffer zone management

Once purchased and vacated, the buffer zone would have to be properly managed to guarantee its effectiveness. The 200m of the buffer zone contiguous to the park boundary was to be cleared of exotic species and returned to scrub land—this portion was to be managed by UWA. The remaining 150m zone, which was closest to the villages, was to be jointly managed by UWA and the communities, and used for pasture and/or cultivation of crops to which gorillas/baboons/wild pigs

¹⁸ Annual incomes differed depending on the quality of the plot; field research by IGCP notes that while one farmer earned UGX 70,000 from one acre in the proposed buffer zone, another farmer earned UGX 100,000 from eight acres in the same area.

¹⁹ Other plans rejected by the involved parties included a) UWA remitting a certain portion of their tourist receipts to the community if community lands were used in the tracking of gorillas, and b) UWA subleasing the land from the community.

²⁰ In some cases, the proceeds from the sale were squandered on celebrations, however the community maintains that this was the exception rather than the norm. If the money was squandered, it was more due to the seller's excitement at having a lot of cash than to poor planning and implementation from IGCP and UWA.

were averse. By co-managing the buffer zone, decision-making became transparent and participatory, helping communities meet some of their own needs while UWA worked to achieve its conservation objectives. To facilitate this arrangement, IGCP and UWA encouraged the creation of the Nkuringo Community Development Foundation (NCDF), a cross-parish group designed to effectively engage with park authorities and to organize the joint management activities of the buffer zone.

Created in 2003 during the land purchase process, NCDF is run by a seven-member executive and a 27-person board. Each of the 23 villages spread throughout the parishes of Nteko and Rubuguri is represented on the board and each is assigned one vote (four executive members also sit on the board). NCDF, together with UWA, hold the land titles for the buffer zone. Villagers over the age of 18 from either parish can join NCDF for a one-time fee of UGX 1000,²¹ and members can bring projects to the executive for their support. These projects, known as inter-community enterprises (ICEs), are managed by NCDF (with financial and technical support from IGCP) and run in and around the buffer zone; ICEs to date have included wheat and Artemisia cultivation, the planting of Mauritius thorn to act as a natural barrier to gorilla/animal incursions, bee-keeping for honey production, handicrafts for sale to tourists, and the planting of pasturelands. IGCP helped promote the latter by distributing eight heifers and two bulls to the villages adjacent to the park; benefiting families were chosen on the basis of need, the amount of damage park animals has caused their property and their ability to care for the cows. Any calves born to these heifers are in turn given to other families in the villages. It is believed that park animals will fear crossing the open land used for pasture, creating another natural barrier between them and the surrounding community.



Photo courtesy of IGCP.

Before the ICEs were launched, many area families either could not afford to send their children to school, or were compelled to keep them at home to help scare roaming park animals back into BINP. It is hoped that by investing ICE profits into a scholarship program that will subsidize school fee payments, NCDF and its management of the buffer zone can offer a partial solution to both problems. In addition, IGCP has continued to support the HUGO volunteer task force. Should gorillas cross into the buffer zone, HUGO members are alerted and come to chase the gorillas back into the park. While not financially compensated, HUGO volunteers do receive a certain amount of equipment (boots, rain gear, etc.) for their work.

Barrier initiatives such as the planting of pasturelands, non-palatable crops and Mauritius thorn remain in their infancy, but gorillas are still crossing the buffer zone. Factors such as the presence of exotic palatable crops (wild banana, sweet potato vines) in the buffer zone and beyond, the presence of remnant forest patches, a home range close to the park boundary, and the secondary growth of

²¹ This money contributes to the operating budget of NCDF. Currently, the Foundation has more than 1,000 members.

vegetation in previously cleared areas and habitats²² have resulted in Nkuringo group continuing to move out of BINP, to the detriment of local communities and the gorillas themselves.²³ In addition, some community members feared that the regeneration of the UWA portion of the buffer zone effectively expanded both the gorillas' habitat and the park boundary.²⁴ With Nkuringo group still spending 50 per cent of its time outside of BINP and HUGO volunteers spending over half of their time chasing the gorillas back into the park, it is evident that more needs to be done to manage the buffer zone and to reduce human-gorilla conflict.

In March 2007, NCDF and UWA, with the support of IGCP, AWF, the Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC) and the district, sub-county and parish governments, prepared the Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan (2007–2012), the first plan of its kind for the zone since its inception in 2003. Designed to consolidate the interventions in the buffer zone in a more focused and organized manner, the overarching goal of the plan remains true to that of the initial land purchase, namely: “Reducing human-wildlife conflict while protecting the critically endangered mountain gorilla and contributing to improved community livelihoods.” To accomplish this goal, NCDF and UWA recognize that community involvement is key; as it stands, there is little wider community participation in the zone's management, and awareness of the benefits of the buffer zone remains quite low. The plan therefore lays out a framework plan for better including the local community, civil society, the private sector and government institutions in the zone's management.

The Nkuringo community is currently resting many of its economic hopes on the construction of a tourist eco-lodge, which started in September 2007. As it stands now, tourists typically stay in Kisoro and come to Nkuringo for the day to view the gorillas. The eco-lodge, constructed and run by the Uganda Safari Company, will rent land from NCDF and contribute US\$30/guest to the community. In return, the lodge, through NCDF, will receive a set number of the area's gorilla permits; NCDF has reached an agreement with UWA to purchase up to six gorilla permits per day for the Nkuringo group. Community members hope that with the construction of the lodge they will benefit directly through new jobs (both in construction and as lodge staff) and expanded markets for local produce, milk and handicrafts. In addition to this income, 20 per cent of the BINP park entry fees will feed back into the community through the existing revenue sharing program. It is hoped that this combined income can be invested into promoting alternative livelihoods in the area.

4.2.4 Peace and conflict impact: Nkuringo land purchase

Community members in both parishes who sold land to UWA-IGCP for the Nkuringo buffer zone had largely positive experiences throughout the process. By voluntarily selling land of low productivity to the coalition at higher-than-market government rates, they were able to invest in lands away from the gorilla/vermin incursions, reducing both their individual crop losses and the need to keep their children out of school to chase off the animals. Conflicts among land sellers were minimized by the engagement of an independent valuation/surveying team, which worked in

²² NCDF, UWA & IGCP (2007) ‘Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan (2007–2012)’, March.

²³ Fecal samples analyzed in 2005 and 2006 indicate that disease transmission continues to be a problem in the area, and that Nkuringo group had the greatest percentage of samples with parasites. Source: NCDF, UWA & IGCP (2007) ‘Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan (2007–2012)’, March

²⁴ NCDF, UWA & IGCP (2007) ‘Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan (2007–2012)’, March

conjunction with local leaders, land owners and neighbours to properly demarcate property boundaries; in the event of a dispute, the local judicial system was relied upon for resolution. A lengthy consultation and sensitization process, including the provision of bank accounts for the sellers, helped ease the transition from private to communal ownership and gave sellers the time and support to pursue responsible investments, which most did. Finally, the land transfer changed the Nkuringo human-gorilla conflict from being a household problem to being one addressed by both the community and the parks authority, strengthening both the ability to respond and the conservation goals of the region. While there were some reports of coercion to sell, land speculation to exploit information asymmetries and disagreements on revenue sharing, the process was largely a smooth one. And although it has not yet stopped gorilla incursions onto community lands, it is hoped that the buffer zone management plan will address these.

Table 3 summarizes the observed peace and conflict impacts of the IGCP-brokered Nkuringo land purchase. Central to the intervention's success was its planning process: consultations with the community were lengthy and carefully thought out, beginning at the proposal stage and continuing beyond the ownership transfer as residents participated in the buffer zone management plan. Additionally, the benefits flowing out of the agreement were seen as equitable and even generous: offers for the land were higher than the market prices, residents would still be able to work the land they had sold, and the goal remained a mutually-beneficial reduction in human-animal conflicts. Finally, efforts were made to reduce the chance of conflict by valuing and demarcating land in a transparent way, through community agreements guided by an independent valuation team. Should conflict arise, residents were assured the support of a local judiciary to resolve their disputes in an objective way.



Photo courtesy of IGCP.

Table 3: Peace and conflict impacts of Nkuringo land purchase

Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
Conflict management capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * forum for addressing human-gorilla conflicts in a coordinated manner, from individual/household level to community-level * effective use of local judicial system for conflict resolution among community members * community consensus built through independent land valuation/surveying * ability to manage a sensitive process from private to communal land ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * expectations raised yet unable to completely stop human-gorilla conflicts,, undermining confidence on HUGO and other measures to address the problem
Militarized violence and human security	N/A	N/A
Institutional structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * improved relations between protected area authorities and community through sale of land and plans for buffer zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * disagreements over revenue sharing of state-owned lands between different levels of government * tensions between government authorities and NGO partners, as the former perceive the latter as usurping local power *some tensions between protected area authorities and community members who spent their profits from the land purchase and found themselves without additional income OR land
Economic structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * local livelihoods improved through the sale of land using government rates * increased capacity to save and manage money through the establishment of bank accounts * enhanced protection of gorillas, increasing tourism potential of Nkuringo group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * some speculative land purchases, allowing wealth to be concentrated within the community * some mismanagement of money, leaving several households without net profits or land
Social empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * increased community participation in conservation activities * increased community awareness of conservation benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * danger of community coercion to sell land 'for the greater good'

4.2.5 Peace and conflict impact: Buffer zone management

Despite the establishment of the buffer zone, the Nkuringo gorilla group continues to spend a large portion of its time outside of the park, either in the buffer zone or on community lands. This is in part due to the fact that buffer zone activities designed to contain the animals have not yet matured: the Mauritius thorn barrier is currently maturing and the management team and community continue to experiment with non-palatable crops. However despite these challenges, since its inception, NCDF has had a positive impact on conflict avoidance in the region.

Perhaps most importantly, NCDF, with its elected executive, broad membership base and low entry requirements, facilitates widespread engagement for community members with the protected area authority on the management of the buffer zone. NCDF's joint management of the zone with UWA and the district government increases the transparency and accountability in park management. By recognizing the mutual benefits of cooperation rather than competition, the Foundation has also brought Rubuguri and Nteko parishes together to work for a common goal. Additionally, the collaborative arrangements established around the buffer zone between UWA and NCDF will soon begin to accrue economic benefits to the surrounding community; an agreement has been reached whereby NCDF is guaranteed six gorilla permits per day in addition to 20 per cent of park entry fees, to be invested in the community. By allowing NCDF to use these permits to align itself with a private tourism operator (the Uganda Safari Company), it is hoped that any community resentment for the park will dissipate as it begins to benefit from the tourism receipts. Finally, human-gorilla conflicts are directly addressed through a number of initiatives, such as NCDF's continued support for HUGO; the distribution of heifers and the establishment of pasturelands; and the implementation of ICEs designed to keep the gorillas within the park boundaries (through the cultivation of non-palatable crops). Because of their support for NCDF, by extension these are all IGCP-supported activities.

Consultations with stakeholders did, however, expose some of the weaknesses present in the current management of the buffer zone. Perceived delays in the arrival of economic benefits from gorilla tourism continued to create frustration and resentment towards BINP and UWA, although the imminent construction of an eco-lodge in Nteko parish had begun to silence some of these complaints. In fact many community members were seen to be relying too much on the expected benefits of the eco-lodge; it was commonly presented as a solution to all of the area's economic problems. This overdependence on a narrow, unproven revenue stream could stall efforts to diversify livelihoods in the region, and could be problematic should Nteko be faced with a migrating gorilla group similar to that of Nyakagezi group in Mgahinga Gorilla National Park. In addition, tourism is an unstable income source given the history of insecurity in the region; should conflict break out in the area, tourist numbers will fall, so it is better for communities not to rely completely on these revenues. Some community members are also concerned with the vegetation regeneration in UWA's sub-zone of the buffer area. Unable to influence this sub-zone's management, they see the regeneration as an expansion of both the gorilla's habitat and the park boundary; more must be done to effectively (and transparently) manage this ecosystem.

While the management plan was only formalized in 2007, its precedent in the creation of NCDF in

2003 established its strongest peace impact: a participatory approach to managing the local park boundary wherein the community is fully integrated into the planning, execution and benefit-sharing of conservation interventions. By creating a forum (i.e., the elected officials of NCDF) through which area residents can engage with the parks authority, the intervention increases trust between the two groups and strengthens the community's hand in negotiations on the economic benefits of the park (NCDF negotiating for the community the agreement on gorilla permits, for example). Not all impacts of the management plan are positive, of course; as in many situations involving the distribution of conservation benefits, some groups may lose out.

Table 4. Peace and conflict impacts of NCDF's buffer zone management plan

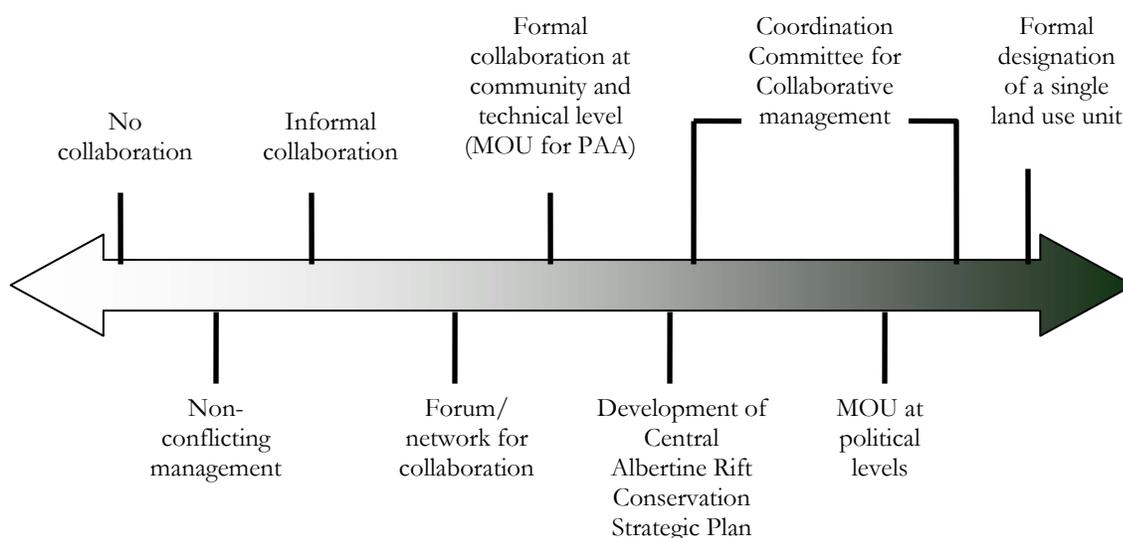
Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
Conflict management capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * participatory forum for discussion and negotiation established * forum for discussing problem solving options, including alternate or complementary strategies to HUGO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * potential management clashes surrounding the 200m sub-zone at the park's edge (solely owned and managed by UWA) * secondary vegetation regeneration in the buffer zone and the perceived expansion of gorilla habitat
Militarize violence and human security	N/A	N/A
Institutional structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * increased transparency in how UWA manages the park through NCDF collaboration * opportunity for the district government to actively engage with UWA and communities in the buffer zone management plan * increased cooperation across parishes * widespread engagement with parks authority due to NCDF's broad membership base and few entry requirements * 1 village, 1 vote Board system ensures representation across parishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * potential resentment created through uncertain benefit-sharing among parishes * potential resentment between the community and the parks authority due to perceived unequal work-sharing in the buffer zone
Economic structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * opportunity to earn revenue from tourism due to UWA-NCDF agreement on gorilla permits * collaboration with the private sector, including them in the buffer zone management strategy (i.e., Uganda Safari Company) * opportunity to diversify livelihoods and reduce human-gorilla conflicts through heifer distribution scheme * opportunity to communally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * resentment and impatience from perceived delays in the arrival of economic benefits from tourism * continued lack of compensation for damaged crops * potential dependence on the expected future benefits of ecotourism * impatience surrounding the uncertainty of which crop to use in the buffer zone, conflicts continue * the six permits offered to NCDF

Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
	accrue and distribute economic benefits from ICEs in the buffer zone while reducing human-gorilla conflicts	created tensions and conflicts between NCDF and the Kisoro District local government, with the latter claiming to represent broader community issues. The District claims that the permits to NCDF hampered competition and would lead to more benefits going to the Uganda Safari Company * communities demanding a share of the revenue from tracking when done on their fields, creating conflict between UWA and NCDF individuals
Social empowerment	* increased community participation in buffer zone management through the elected NCDF executive	* Concentration of HUGO activities and location of Eco Lodge in Nteko parish leading to feelings of resentment among community members in Rubuguri parish

4.3 Case Study 3: Transboundary collaboration

Since its establishment in 1991, IGCP has supported a regional approach to achieving its goal of mountain gorilla conservation. While largely motivated by an integrated, ecosystem-level understanding of the threats and opportunities related to gorilla conservation, this approach has also attracted a lot of attention and financial support for IGCP. The profile and appeal of transboundary conservation has grown in recent years, and much of the focus has been on transboundary protected areas, particularly so-called ‘peace parks.’²⁵ In fact, the Virunga Volcano region is commonly cited as a prime candidate for peace park status. Yet IGCP has always understood regional conservation as a process along a continuum, which ranges from the absence of transboundary collaboration at one end to the formal designation of a transboundary protected area at the other (see Figure 2 below). IGCP’s regional or transboundary conservation activities fall into the middle of this continuum, and include ecological monitoring and surveillance; tourism development; joint training, communication and sharing of experiences; planning; community initiatives; and management planning.

²⁵ IUCN defines a peace park as an area where there is a clear biodiversity objective, peace objective and where cooperation between at least two countries or jurisdictions is a characteristic.

Figure 2: Continuum of transboundary collaboration

4.3.1 Description of conflict context for IGCP's transboundary work

Unlike the previous two case studies, where the peace and conflict impacts of a particular conservation intervention were localized and more or less directly linked to the establishment or management of the intervention itself, understanding the impacts of IGCP's transboundary collaboration work requires an understanding of conflicts at different scales and among different types of actors, particularly at the national and regional level. The previous case studies required a detailed understanding of the local community context, while analysis of IGCP's transboundary work requires a broader understanding of the regional conflict among the Great Lakes countries, and some of the conflicts within and among institutions involved in park management in the region.

A) Regional conflict among and within Great Lakes countries

Conflict among and within the Great Lakes countries (i.e., Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda) has defined much of the region's post-colonial history, particularly since 1990. Without entering into a detailed discussion of the complex evolution—and devolution—of conflict in the region, it is worthwhile to summarize a few key issues and events. The region has traditionally been inhabited by different groups, including hunter-gatherers, cultivators and pastoralists. Group divisions were not established along racial or ethnic lines, but more along political and economic relationships. During the colonial period, however, these divisions became ethnicized or racialized and used as a basis for both direct and indirect rule. The ensuing polarization of ethnic Hutu and Tutsi identities led to a series of violent clashes (mostly in Rwanda) between these groups that resulted in significant refugee movements to neighbouring countries in the second half of the 20th century. Questions around citizenship and national identity, which were already being asked following the resettlement of tens of thousands of people of Rwandan origin ('Rwandaphones') in eastern DRC for work during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, were compounded. Combined with

the establishment of influential ethnic diasporas in the region, a climate of tension and insecurity prevailed.

As violence against Tutsis continued from the late 1950s to the 1970s, Uganda was gripped by political chaos and economic crisis under the Obote and Amin regimes. The emergence of Yoweri Museveni as President and new state-builder in the mid-1980s reinforced national identities but also precipitated conflicts in the northern and eastern parts of the country, which eventually spilled across international borders. The 1990 invasion of Rwanda by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi-dominated militia group based in Uganda, set the stage for perhaps the most dramatic chapter of the regional conflict. Fighting between the RPF and Rwandan army continued on and off until June 1994, when Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana was assassinated. His death triggered a 100-day genocide where up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed. As the RPF took control of Kigali in July 1994, over two million Rwandans, mostly genocide perpetrators, Hutu civilians, and members of the defeated army, fled to neighbouring Burundi, DRC, Uganda and Tanzania. Over one million of these refugees settled in eastern DRC alone, many living in refugee camps and forming military and political groupings intent on recapturing control of Rwanda.

The presence of Hutu extremists in these camps resulted in the camps being used as bases for incursions against Rwanda, now under Tutsi control, as well as against Congolese Tutsis. Because of this persistent threat, and President Mobutu's lack of response to (or latent support of) this continued violence, in October 1996, Rwandan troops launched an invasion of DRC (then Zaire) with an armed coalition led by Laurent-Desire Kabila known as the Alliance des Forces Democratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire (AFDL). Supported by both Rwanda and Uganda, the AFDL's goal was to oust Mobutu and, after seven months of warfare, Kabila marched into Kinshasa and declared himself president of the newly-renamed country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Shortly thereafter, relations with Rwanda and Uganda deteriorated and the two countries turned on Kabila, launching a second war in DRC that officially lasted until 2002. Both countries backed the Congolese Rally for Democracy (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie, RCD), an anti-Kabila rebel group formed in Goma, but eventually the two allies fell out and Uganda went on to sponsor its own rebel movement, the Congo Liberation Movement (Mouvement de Liberation du Congo, MLC), as well as breakaway factions of RCD. In addition to the continued military security threats from Hutu armed groups based in the east, territorial aspirations and resource control fuelled this war. The country ended up being split into three main sections, with government forces occupying the southern tier of the country, MLC controlling a swathe of the north, and RCD and the Rwandans controlling much of the eastern and central part of the country. Troops from Angola, Burundi, Zimbabwe and Namibia were drawn in to support government forces, bringing the number of countries fighting in this second Congolese War to seven.

Following president Laurent Kabila's assassination in January 2001, his son, Joseph Kabila, was sworn in to replace him. After a number of failed attempts at dialogue and negotiations, a formal peace agreement was signed in late 2002. A transitional power-sharing government was installed in 2003, a new constitution adopted in late 2005, and democratic elections held in November 2006, formally consolidating Kabila's power. Fighting in the eastern part of the country continues to this day, however, as the presence of Hutu militias along the Rwandan border persists, drawing in

different armed groups and warlords based in the region.

In many ways, the conflicts in the Great Lakes region have dual characteristics. They are both local/national and regional, latent and violent.²⁶ Conflicts at the local level have frequently fuelled and been fuelled by regional conflicts, and the direct violence often portrayed in international policy and media outlets belies the structural violence that has led to massive human suffering and loss. The sources of conflict have been historic but dynamic, and often mutually-reinforcing. As indicated above, they include:

- a) **Legacies of colonialism:** French, Belgian, German and British interests characterize the colonial history in the region. Arbitrary political borders, the construction and/or manipulation of ethnic identities, predatory governance regimes, weak institutions and destructive socio-economic policies resulted from colonial rule. These directly contributed to the intensification of social divisions and tensions and the absence of a nation-building process, leading to (especially in DRC) the state being a source of insecurity rather than a provider of security.²⁷ The post-colonial era has been witness to a great deal of social upheaval, and external interventions in economic and political affairs continue, particularly in DRC. Current regional and extra-regional actors include many African, Asian, North American and European countries with interests in diamonds, coltan, oil and other rich mineral resources.
- b) **Polarization of identities:** With the exception of the Batwa people, who are considered to be a significantly different ethnic group, ethnic issues in the region are exceedingly complex. Hutus and Tutsi identities, which were by many accounts entrenched by colonial rulers seeking political control, have in reality become blurred by centuries of intermarriage. Yet ethnic clashes have plagued the region, leading to population displacements and complex relationships among ethnic diasporas and minority groups across the borders of Rwanda, Uganda and DRC. Identities—whether they are ethnic, racial, national, etc.—are often a rallying point for conflicts, mobilizing groups to take up arms and defend their interests.
- c) **Poverty and underdevelopment:** Both a cause and symptom of the other root causes of conflicts, chronic poverty and underdevelopment continues to characterize much of the Virunga-Bwindi region. This is not to discount the very small, elite part of the population that enjoys a disproportionate amount of resources and services. Part of the poverty and underdevelopment problem is economic disparity, which seems to grow at the expense of a rapidly expanding poor population. Resource scarcity is also a major contributing factor as this population expands while land availability stays the same. Such conditions can become a basis for creation and escalation of grievances, especially where they are perceived to be the result of government apathy, unaccountability or discrimination, and the existence of these conditions constitute a threat to local livelihoods and cultural identities.

²⁶ Ewald, J., A. Nilsson, A. Narman, and P. Stalgren, (2004). *A Strategic Conflict Analysis for the Great Lakes Region*. Sida (Department for Africa).

²⁷ Ibid.

d) Poorly defined, conflicting and weakly-enforced resource rights regimes: Finally, and perhaps more directly linked to many natural resource-related conflict issues at all scales, are tensions among different resource rights regimes. National policies impose a certain set of standards and regulations dictating access and use of resources—such as land, forests, and water—which may be in direct opposition to customary or informal resource rights that have governed local livelihoods for generations. Protected areas are often associated with statutory (i.e., government) resource rights policies, as the state seeks ways of protecting and controlling the use of natural resources. Yet in countries crippled by weak governance and the absence of social services, adhering to or enforcing these policies is challenging. In some cases, government authorities violate statutory policies for their own personal gains (i.e., ‘protectors become destroyers’), opening resource-rich areas to exploitation by both local and international actors.

B) Institutional conflicts

Understanding the peace and conflict impacts of IGCP’s work also calls for a look at conflicts among and within conservation institutions in the region—i.e., ICCN in DRC, UWA in Uganda and ORTPN in Rwanda. After all, they are the principal actors in transboundary collaboration, and any strains in their capacity or willingness to communicate, negotiate, and cooperate will ultimately undermine regional collaboration, perhaps creating new conflicts.



Photo courtesy of IGCP.

Conflicts among the different protected areas authorities are in some ways a microcosm of the politics in the region. Ugandan and Rwandan park authorities are emerging from a period of restructuring, where capacities have been increased to better manage parks and the tourism industry. While problems persist, the protected areas authorities are overall better supported and integrated into the national governance framework. ICCN in DRC, on the other hand, continues to struggle with an absolute lack of resources (physical, financial, and technical). Because of the country’s recent (and in some areas, ongoing) history of violence and state collapse, the government is unable to support its protected areas authority. ICCN has in many ways become wholly reliant on external support (from bilateral and multilateral donors, NGOs) to maintain function.

This situation has translated into discernable differences in support and capacity among the three protected area authorities in the region. These differences can be in terms of salaries and equipment, technical knowledge of conservation issues, work ethics, as well as levels of corruption. In some cases, this has led to frustration and tensions among the park authorities, as some may be perceived as not ‘pulling their weight’ in regional collaboration, or alternatively, unrealistic in terms of expectations and results.

Also, conflicts within each of the institutions can have implications for transboundary collaboration. Whether they are conflicts at senior management levels, between headquarter and park authorities or among personnel at the different park stations, these conflicts can demoralize conservation efforts within and among countries.

4.3.2 IGCP’s transboundary work

Within this multi-layered and shifting context of conflict and peacebuilding, IGCP has been undertaking a number of activities to support and enhance collaboration among conservation actors in the three Virunga-Bwindi countries. The last remaining habitat of the mountain gorillas are divided into two forested blocks: the Virunga volcanoes straddling eastern DRC, northwestern Rwanda and southwestern Uganda, and Bwindi Impenetrable forest 30 km north in Uganda (adjacent to Sarambwe reserve in eastern DRC). Each forest block is surrounded—and limited—by densely populated human settlements. While gorilla habitat expansion is not possible, human settlement expansion into gorilla habitat is a real threat. The survival of the mountain gorilla therefore depends on maintaining the integrity of the remaining forest, which itself calls for a coordinated, ecosystem-approach to forest management.



Ministers’ meeting. Photo courtesy of IGCP.

Recognizing this need for regional collaboration and coordination, IGCP has been working to strengthen the capacity of each of the protected areas authorities to effectively manage the forested parks as a regional ecosystem. Referring back to the continuum described at the start of this section, IGCP strives to push transboundary collaboration towards the right hand side—i.e., the formal designation of a transboundary protected area—but recognizes that much can and needs to be done before realizing this goal. Drawing from the idea of a continuum or a gradual approach to transboundary collaboration that builds on itself, IGCP has articulated a phased approach to developing a regional strategy for collaboration in the Virunga-Bwindi region:

- **Phase I: Field-based coordination and collaboration**, where the focus is the development of informal mechanisms of collaboration that allow for regular communication and interaction between wardens and staff of the different protected areas. Information sharing, as well as joint planning, surveillance and implementation of other conservation activities would contribute to the harmonization and coordination of management approaches.
- **Phase II: Formalization of regional collaboration**, that ensures the principles driving field-based coordination and collaboration are institutionalized and not solely dependent on individual relationships. While decades of conservation experience in the region has demonstrated that improved management is mostly a function of field-based collaboration rather than official agreements (i.e., formally designated protected areas are not always effectively protected on the ground), formalizing field-based collaboration by defining a structure and set of principles for this work, as well as identifying mutually agreed upon set of activities that can be allocated resources, will help ensure the sustainability of the collaboration.
- **Phase III: Formal designation of a transboundary protected area**, probably culminating in the signing of a formal agreement among the three national governments for the establishment of a transboundary protected area. Such an agreement would be backed by legislative support as well as well defined political structures and modes of operation for regional collaboration.

Until 2001, the bulk of IGCP's regional work fell within the contours of Phase I type mechanisms for collaboration. But in October 2001, IGCP's foray into Phase II activities was solidified with the signing of a tripartite declaration expressing the intention to create a transfrontier protected area. In January 2004, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed, committing the three protected areas authorities to developing a transboundary strategic plan. This was followed by the October 2005 ministerial declaration on The Transboundary Natural Resource Management of the Transfrontier Protected Area Network of the Central Albertine Rift, which recognizes the eight national parks in the Central Albertine rift as a single transboundary ecosystem shared among Rwanda, Uganda and DRC, and pledges support for its effective, collaborative management. And in May 2006, a trilateral MOU on monitoring and benefit-sharing on transboundary gorilla tourism groups was signed, and the Transfrontier Strategic Plan (TSP) adopted.

Three elements of IGCP's transboundary collaboration program were selected for analysis in this study, two of which fall under Phase I-type approaches and the third under Phase II. These were:

- a) **Surveillance (Phase I):** Consisting of regular joint surveillance and anti-poaching patrols, this activity has been a pillar of IGCP's regional approach. Typically, park staff from two adjacent parks will meet up at an agreed-upon time and location along the border and undertake a joint patrol of defined area to monitor threats to the park, including poaching and other illegal activities. IGCP's role is to provide support in coordinating and undertaking these patrols—i.e., help park authorities be in touch with each other beforehand, provide rations and equipment to patrol rangers, analyze information collected from the surveillance and avail them to park authorities, etc. These patrols can last several days and represent one of the riskier transboundary conservation activities, as insecurity still plagues the border regions of the Bwindi-Virunga complex. Because of this inherent risk, military personnel have become involved in the patrols, both to offer protection to rangers but also use the patrols as an opportunity to conduct military surveillance.
- b) **Regional meetings (Phase I):** Organized by IGCP every three months, these meetings involve representatives from the three protected area authorities, local and international NGOs active in the region, researchers and other relevant consultants working on conserving the Virunga-Bwindi complex. The main purpose of the meetings is to share information and coordinate park management, but each meeting also has a different theme (e.g., gorilla health, enterprise development, tourism, etc.), allowing for joint learning and training opportunities. These meetings are usually preceded by regional Wardens Coordination Committee meetings, where only the wardens from the Virunga-Bwindi parks meet to discuss joint park management and security issues.
- c) **Trilateral revenue sharing agreement (Phase II):** In May 2006, the heads of the protected areas authorities in DRC, Rwanda and Uganda signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the 'Collaborative monitoring of and sharing revenues from transfrontier tourism gorilla groups.' The MOU reiterates the continued commitment to regional collaboration on the monitoring of gorilla groups and spells out a revenue-sharing arrangement among the three countries. Specifically, it states that for those gorilla groups that have been habituated in one country but have subsequently migrated to a neighbouring country, where they are being used for tourism, the fees from gorilla tracking permits will be shared equally between the 'origin institution' (i.e., the protected area authority in the country where the group was habituated) and the 'host institution' (i.e., the protected area authority in the country to which the group has migrated). The MOU goes on to specify mechanisms for implementing and managing this arrangement.

The selection of these three activities offers a nice cross-section of IGCP's transboundary program. The coordinated patrols represent a very practical, field-based activity with tangible results. The regional meetings highlight a higher-level form of collaboration that involves field-level actors but also includes more political players. And finally the trilateral agreement represents the culmination of a political process, facilitated by IGCP, of formalizing regional collaboration.

4.3.3 Peace and conflict impacts of IGCPs transboundary work

Looking again at the analytical framework for this study, each of the selected transboundary activities demonstrated both peace and conflict impacts. The peace impacts were mostly associated with the fostering of communication and cooperation at different levels, which provide a basis for trust-building and construction of shared identities around conservation issues. The conflict impacts were related to the potential for inadvertently emphasizing politically sensitive differences among groups, trade-offs between peacebuilding at different levels or between conservation and peace/conflict interests, and perceived inequities. These are discussed in greater detail below.

- a) **Surveillance:** The conservation actors interviewed for this study all agreed that **joint or mixed patrols** were useful and effective, particularly for catching poachers, and should be continued as part of the regional approach to gorilla conservation. Some felt that the combined personnel and experience in these patrols resulted in better conservation outcomes, as larger sections of the landscape could be surveyed and more data collected. A few mentioned appreciating the opportunity to track gorilla groups that once resided in their park but migrated across the border. Others felt that the real value in these patrols lay in the relationships established through the pursuit of common interests and goals. Some stakeholders noted that having a shared mission and an opportunity to eat, live and work together, even if only for a few days, provided enough of a distraction from prevailing political dynamics to allow for a minimum level of cooperation and trust-building to take place.

There were, however, problems with these mixed patrols. In spite of being provided with the same rations for and basic equipment to undertake surveillance activities, mixed patrolling sometimes emphasized institutional differences in resources and capacities, creating feelings of frustration and in some cases resentment among rangers from different protected areas authorities. More importantly perhaps were the legal and political questions around the safety, security and neutrality of conservation actors. Legislation does not allow armed individuals or groups, including park rangers, to cross international borders, unless with prior special dispensation. Moreover, given the volatile political context in the region and the presence of different armed groups in the parks, joint DRC-Rwandan paramilitary patrols, for example, which were sometimes accompanied by official military personnel, put rangers in difficult (even compromising) situations.

In response to these legal restrictions and the escalating climate of insecurity in the region, protected areas authorities and their NGO partners replaced mixed patrols with **coordinated patrols**. Rangers from two countries would meet at an identified location along the shared boundary and agree upon a patrol plan, which would keep them on their respective sides of the forest. They would plan to meet up a few days later at another location along the border to exchange information. The entire patrol would then take place along the border areas of the shared ecosystem, but would not involve any rangers crossing international borders (to the extent possible, as some stakeholders noted that international boundaries are not clearly demarcated in the forest, which could also allow for some flexibility). While these coordinated patrols may have assuaged some of the legal and security concerns associated with mixed patrols,

it has come at a cost. Many of the rangers interviewed felt that unless these patrols were very well coordinated, where rangers on either side of the border were in constant communication, they did not produce useful conservation results. Unfortunately, cross-border communication is often hampered by incompatible radio frequencies, meaning rangers must use mobile phones, which depend on reliable network reception and cost much more to operate. Some stakeholders also noted that they would meet up with a ranger group from a neighbouring country for a few minutes at the beginning of a patrol, go off and conduct their activities, and never see the other rangers again, not knowing if they had fulfilled their part of the surveillance plan. Finally, having fewer opportunities for direct interaction and sharing of experiences has decreased levels of ‘constructive dependency’ and trust-building that can foster cooperation and peacebuilding among groups.

Thus, in some ways, by replacing mixed patrols with coordinated patrols, some of the peacebuilding mechanisms at the field-level have been sacrificed in favour of peacebuilding considerations at a higher, state-sanctioned level. This is understandable and we do not suggest that the broader legal or security concerns should be ignored and mixed patrols maintained. But understanding the **peacebuilding costs** of an intervention—or adjusted intervention, in this case—might highlight the need to compensate for these costs. For example, by recognizing that valuable peacebuilding opportunities have been lost by suspending mixed patrols, can these opportunities be created in other areas of IGCP’s work program?

Finally, in addition to considering the peace/conflict impacts of adjusting the modalities of transboundary surveillance patrols, one must also look at the **limitations** of this activity. Some stakeholders noted that as useful and constructive as mixed or coordinated patrols can be, their potential effectiveness—both in terms of conservation and peacebuilding—may never be realized due to differences in institutional capacities (among ICCN, ORTPN and UWA), incompatible or conflicting national policies (on conservation law enforcement, for example), and regional politics (especially national and ethnic affiliations). While coordinated patrols have taken place between DRC and Ugandan rangers, as well as between Ugandan and Rwandan rangers, interviewees noted that a DRC-Rwanda patrol had not taken place in over a year. Both sides claimed to have submitted requests for a patrol, which were subsequently ignored or dismissed. This was attributed to the ongoing insecurity and political sensitivities between Rwandan and Congolese governments, including the protected area authorities at the field level. IGCP and other conservation organizations in the region are trying to address these limitations, particularly the institutional capacity deficiencies and the need for policy harmonization. Perhaps recognizing and emphasizing their direct links of these activities to peacebuilding in the region will encourage conservation actors to dedicate more resources to this type of work.

Table 5 summarizes the observed peace and conflict impacts of the transboundary patrols—Mixed Patrols (MP) and Coordinated Patrols (CP)—supported by IGCP.

Table 5: Peace and conflict impacts of mixed and coordinated patrols

Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
Conflict management capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * opportunity for communication, dialogue, sharing of experiences, (MP) * opportunity to jointly identify, define and address problems * establishment of personal relations that can form the basis for informal and formal networks of cooperation (MP mostly) * introducing flexibility and compromise by trying to safeguard the spirit of transboundary collaboration while respecting legal and political sensitivities (CP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * reduced opportunities for communication, dialogue, sharing of experiences (CP) * potentially weaker networks of cooperation (CP)
Militarized violence and human security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * informal and formal networks of communication and collaboration provide a basis for sharing security information and support, enhancing protection of park rangers (MP, CP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * perceived compromised neutrality by collaborating with rangers from other countries or military personnel (MP)
Institutional structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * accumulation of cooperative field experiences and data to facilitate collaboration at higher political levels (MP, CP) * enhanced capacity of protected areas authorities to organize and conduct patrols, increasing the success of transboundary collaboration (MP, CP) * regular dialogue among protected areas authorities, providing a basis for harmonizing relevant policies and modes of operation (MP, CP) * dialogue among protected areas authorities and military, as well as civil society (MP, CP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * perceived disregard of legal and political frameworks dictating cross-border movements (MP) * inability to conduct patrols a reminder of political sensitivities and dynamics that fuel conflict (MP, CP) * patrols a reminder of differences in capacity and resources among protected areas authorities (e.g., ICCN weaker, under-resourced compared to UWA), which can create feelings of jealousy and frustration (MP mostly)
Economic structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * direct: patrol rangers provided with rations and equipment to assist them with their livelihoods (MP, CP) * indirect: monitoring of illegal activities in parks may provide basis for sanctions, weakening war economies (MP, CP) * indirect: improved surveillance of gorillas and their habitat can protect and increase the tourism potential in the region (MP, CP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * rations and equipment may make rangers targets for attacks by armed groups, particularly in DRC (MP, CP) * perceived differences in capacity and resources among PA authorities may be (either legitimately or unjustifiably) attributed to preferential treatment by NGOs and donors, fuelling resentment (MP, CP)
Social empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * creation and/or reinforcement of shared conservation-related identities, rather than identities defined by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * incidents of poor coordination and inequitable patrol performance may create and/or reinforce negative

Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
	gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc. at field implementation level (MP, CP) * opportunity to foster a spirit of professional respect (MP, CP) * planning and implementation of patrols a demonstration of participation, inclusion (MP, CP)	feelings / stereotypes about the other group (MP, CP)

- b) **Regional meetings:** Despite operating in a volatile environment, regional meetings allow actors from different sides to come together to identify and discuss matters of mutual interest. Issues related to security and conflict inevitably creep into many of these discussions, since parks continue to be held hostage to patterns of violence and political discord in the region. But holding these discussions under the rubric of gorilla conservation provides a buffer against interactions that might otherwise deteriorate into politicized and polarized debates, undermining both conservation and peacebuilding efforts. As mentioned with the transboundary surveillance activities above, these meetings allow actors to identify, define and address problems using their shared identity as conservationists. That is, their participation in the meeting is defined by *what they do* rather than where they come from, which political parties they support, and other labels that often divide individuals and groups in the region.

The stakeholders interviewed for this study all agreed that the regional meetings are not only instrumental to establishing a basis for transboundary collaboration, but that they enhance conservation activities and professional capacities on all sides of the border. This has fostered a joint feeling of progress and collaboration, where successes can be shared and challenges tackled together. Interviewees often cited the importance of exchanging conservation ideas—e.g., on revenue sharing, law enforcement, human-wildlife conflicts—with peers



Photo courtesy of IGCP.

from neighbouring countries. As the Virunga-Bwindi countries have recently emerged (or are trying to emerge) from periods of protracted violence and state failure, conservation policies tend to be weak, outdated or poorly enforced. Thus, sharing experiences and lessons with countries that share not only an ecosystem but similar socio-political contexts can be very helpful. Understanding UWA's experience in implementing its national revenue-sharing scheme,

for example, was seen as influencing the development of Rwanda's own revenue-sharing scheme (although the two appear to be very different).

The regular timing of these meetings allows relationship to be established, and a 'constructive dependency' among individuals, organizations and political authorities to develop. As personal relationships grow and people become more familiar with each other, participants can start to feel more comfortable discussing some of the political causes and implications of conservation-related problems, such as corruption, lack of leadership, weak state institutions, etc. This is not always the case, however, and the level of openness is often influenced by the prevailing political climate at the time of the meeting. Regular contact among groups at these meetings can also form the basis for bilateral discussions, which may be more appropriate when negotiating some aspects of regional collaboration.

The inclusion of other relevant conservation actors in the region in these regional meetings, such as local and international NGOs enhances information exchange and the overall spirit of regional cooperation. Moreover, their participation can help to diffuse tensions among nationally-affiliated actors (i.e., representatives from the three protected area authorities), since they represent non-national entities and their agendas are overtly less political.

Thus, as summarized in Table 6, the greatest contribution of these meetings to peacebuilding is the simple, yet crucial, provision of a forum in which to identify problems and develop solutions. None of the stakeholders consulted for this study could identify major conflict impacts associated with regional meetings—if there were any negative comments, they mostly related to the limitations and challenges of holding these meetings. Some interviewees reiterated the earlier point about regional politics impeding progress towards transboundary collaboration. The climate of intolerance, distrust and aggression that has often characterized relations among the Virunga-Bwindi countries can ultimately undermine or set back efforts to meet, communicate and jointly implement conservation activities. Even when meetings are possible, politically-sensitive conservation issues (such as the presence of foreign armed groups in the park) cannot be discussed, augmenting feelings of frustration and distrust among participants. While this may not be fair, given the somewhat limited mandate of these regional meetings and IGCP's restricted role and capacity in addressing less conservation-focused issues (i.e., IGCP is not in a position to tackle the threatening presence of foreign armed groups in parks), this feeling of frustration points to several things: a) that conservation issues do have links to broader regional politics, therefore addressing conservation threats may in some cases require navigating tricky political waters that are outside the traditional conservation comfort zone; b) these politically-sensitive conservation issues may need to be discussed or tackled in other forums IGCP should not facilitate but should contribute to; and c) ultimately, some regional meeting participants want a forum to discuss these more politically-sensitive conservation issues. Other observed frustrations included the periodic delay of regional meetings (often due to security concerns or logistical constraints), which, in a more positive light, can be interpreted as an indication of the perceived importance of these meetings.

Table 6: Peace and conflict impacts of IGCP's regional meetings

Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
Conflict management capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * establishment of a forum to discuss mutual interests and concerns, resolve problems * development of personal and professional relationships that form the basis of informal and formal networks of collaboration * exchange of experiences and ideas for addressing conservation-related conflicts * formal training in conflict analysis and management skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * inability to discuss politically-sensitive conservation issues raises doubts about the value of regional meetings in managing or resolving conflicts.
Militarized violence and human security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * improved understanding of regional security situation and dynamics * development of networks of collaboration offering support and protection, particularly for field staff during times of insecurity * exchange of experiences and ideas for dealing with militarized violence /armed groups in parks 	
Institutional structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * increased communication among national authorities (i.e., park staff) * participation and communication with/among local authorities (customary chiefs) * forum for crafting regional/joint responses to emerging priorities and crises in conservation, which may lead to more state-sanctioned collaboration * opportunity for indirectly or informally discussing politically-sensitive issues such as corruption, weak institutions, etc. * rotating location of meeting in three countries, encouraging official cross-border travel and signaling a truly regional approach * enhanced dialogue and coordination among conservation organizations, providing a basis for improved and more transparent management decisions * perceived role of IGCP as neutral arbitrator / facilitator enhances positive perceptions and role of conservation NGOs as partners in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * non-participation at meetings construed as a political statement * role of IGCP as arbitrator / facilitator of regional meetings perceived as political, even opportunistic, undermining its perceived neutrality and the spirit of openness and cooperation

Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
Economic structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * information sharing on illegal resource use in parks, encouraging coordinated monitoring and management to address it at a regional level * training and information sharing on local enterprise development and other livelihood diversification mechanisms, which addresses some of the economic drivers of park-related conflicts * discussion of tourism activities, providing a platform for mutual learning and potential coordination of regional-level tourism initiatives 	*
Social empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * enhanced understanding of other groups' challenges, hopes, fears through frequent and regular interactions * constructive interactions based on shared, relatively apolitical, conservation-based identities * diffusion of national identity-based tensions through the inclusion of international NGOs, civil society * cross-border travel, which can enhance peoples' appreciation of different contexts as well as socio-cultural similarities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * poorly coordinated and/or moderated meetings can create or reinforce negative perceptions of other parties * difficulties in discussing politically-sensitive conservation matters reinforce feelings of frustration and distrust among groups

- c) **Trilateral revenue-sharing agreement:** The signing of the MOU in May 2006 was hailed as an important milestone in regional collaboration. Moving beyond political declarations, it was a tangible step towards transboundary management of natural *and financial* resources. The move was important not only in terms of its political signal, which recognized shared roles in resource stewardship and economic interdependence of the three countries, but diffused some of the mounting tensions over gorilla tourism. In recent years, many of the tourism gorilla groups have moved across to Rwanda. For neighbouring countries who had invested time and resources in habituating and monitoring these groups, seeing Rwanda reap the profits of their work was perceived as unfair. Due to the politically sensitive climate characterized by rumors and mutual distrust, this led allegations of Rwanda taking deliberate measures to keep tourism gorilla groups on their side of the border. The MOU therefore was a statement of cooperation, sharing and good faith in managing this important resource.

The MOU may pave the way for future collaboration over conservation and/or tourism activities, since gorillas are not the only resource shared among the countries. This may create additional economic opportunities, injecting some much needed investment and prosperity into the region. The greater Virunga ecosystem is recognized as having a lot of potential for other tourism activities—particularly adventure tourism. However, the current security situation makes it difficult to promote a broader Virunga tourism experience, although discussions and planning

is already underway. The trilateral revenue-sharing scheme may also offer a unique and profitable basis for promoting tourism in the region. For a region widely known for its recent (and ongoing) struggles against conflict and violence, highlighting the contribution of tourism and natural resource management to transboundary cooperation and sharing may be appealing to potential tourists.

There are also a number of potential (or existing) problems. First, while there is a discrete dispute resolution article in the MOU, it is somewhat vague, instructing signatories to settle disputes through existing mechanisms (e.g., Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Great Lakes Peace Agreement, etc.). This may be entirely appropriate, but given the somewhat unique nature of the MOU, a discrete dispute resolution body designed to address conflicts over regional gorilla tourism revenue sharing and management may be a more efficient way of minimizing delays and frustrations. Also, while developed in response to tensions over perceived inequities in gorilla revenue distribution, the MOU has generated some new reservations. Interviewees in each of the countries suggested that the MOU might encourage protected areas authorities to encourage tourist to visit gorilla groups habituated on their own country to maximize profits. Related to these doubts are the transparency and accuracy of financial records—how can countries be sure that they are receiving what they are owed? The MOU stipulates that protected areas authorities in the country of origin (i.e., where the transfrontier gorilla group was habituated) must be notified each time a ‘shared’ gorilla group is to be visited in the host country (i.e., country to which the gorilla group has migrated). This way, they know how much revenue to expect, and the tourism activity can be verified through different means of communication and field visits. But weak institutions and management capacities, along with continued corruption, cannot guarantee this takes place. Superimposed over a prevailing climate of mutual suspicion or distrust among the three countries, even the most trivial doubts can escalate into serious allegations. Yet allegations and rumors are almost inevitable in the Virunga-Bwindi region. Measures to communicate intentions and expectations clearly and inclusively must be taken to minimize the spread of misinformation.

The management of revenues after they are shared among the three countries is another point of concern in transboundary revenue-sharing. The MOU makes explicit mention of the respect for national laws and does not dictate the management of revenues once they are received by a national institution. However, the revenue-sharing arrangement has exacerbated some tensions among national authorities and within national institutions over revenue management. For example, some interviewees alleged that the revenues collected by a representative from one of the three protected areas authorities have never reached the institution, or were distributed to a select few for personal gain. This has created tensions with the other protected area authorities. Others have noted that even if revenues are institutionalized, they tend to stay at head offices in the capital cities and very little, if any, of the money goes back to the gorilla parks. Again, this has led to tensions, as wardens and staff at the gorilla parks feel they are not adequately compensated or supported in their efforts to protect and manage one of the region’s most profitable tourism resources. While these tensions over revenue sharing and management are a direct result of institutional weaknesses rather than the MOU *per se*, the implementation of the MOU may risk exacerbating these weaknesses if some additional forms of accountability and reporting measures are not considered and eventually incorporated. And while the negotiation

and implementation of the MOU is ultimately left to national authorities and out of IGCP's purview, IGCP's recognized and valued role in facilitating trilateral discussions may be an (admittedly modest) opportunity to contribute to peacebuilding.

Thus, many conservation actors have recognized the MOU as a positive contribution to cooperation and peacebuilding in the Virunga-Bwindi region. However, by tying this cooperation to the distribution of economic

resources, the stakes have been raised. Any signs or suspicions of preferential treatment (of domestically habituated tourism gorilla groups), false or inaccurate permit reporting, or revenue mismanagement threaten to impede or reverse advances in trust-building. As a result, the process of managing the MOU must be done carefully, using mechanisms that ensure transparency, accountability and sustainability in bank transfers, financial reporting and dispute resolution.



Photo courtesy of IGCP.



Photo courtesy of IGCP.

Table 7: Peace and conflict impacts of the IGCP-facilitated MOU on trilateral revenue-sharing

Area of Impact	Peace Impact	Conflict Impact
Conflict management capacities	* dispute resolution article included in MOU, providing at least a basis for addressing potential conflicts	* the generic dispute resolution provisions in MOU may be inadequate to address the specific needs of the trilateral agreement
Militarized violence and human security	N/A	N/A
Institutional structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * political symbol of tangible regional collaboration * political acknowledgement of positive achievements in transboundary collaboration at lower political (field) levels * legal basis for regular interaction among government institutions (i.e., PA authorities) * demonstration of commitment to transboundary conservation <i>action</i>, thus building trust with other conservation organizations (NGO partners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * intra-institutional tensions, as revenues are received by institutional HQ in capital cities and not always shared with provinces/districts/park sectors that host the gorillas. * mismanagement of revenues by signatory creating tensions with other signatories * mismanagement of revenues that enables a select few to profit financially, undermining leadership and governance * mismanagement of revenues, straining relationships with other conservation organizations (NGO partners)
Economic structures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * state-sanctioned incentive to better protect and manage important tourism resource * formal recognition—and operationalization—of economic interdependence among three countries * equitable, mutually agreeable sharing of economic resources * shared economic arrangement may build confidence and attract additional tourism (and non-tourism) investment to the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * no assurance that all permits and associated revenues are reported, and therefore shared according to actual tourist demand, fuelling distrust * lack of legal provisions ensuring accountability / transparency for transfer of revenues * no provisions for following the money after it is received, potentially leading to misuse of revenues and corruption within one or more of the countries
Social empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * promotion of equitable sharing of benefits * demonstration of commitment to regional cooperation * contribution to positive communication / interaction among groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * raising the stakes of transboundary collaboration— any setbacks or tensions will have more serious political and economic implications * allegations of revenue mismanagement may reinforce negative feelings / stereotypes of other groups

Overall, IGCP's transboundary work is perceived to have contributed to peacebuilding in the region, although challenges remain and there are limitations to this approach. The existing and potential economic value of mountain gorillas, along with growing international attention to their struggle for

survival in a hostile environment, has certainly provided incentives to adopt a spirit of regional cooperation. Yet the sense of responsibility to protect these animals for purely conservation reasons and/or to uphold national and regional identities cannot be underestimated. The protected areas authorities and staff interviewed for this study all recognize mountain gorillas as a resource belonging to all three countries, and responsibility for protecting them is understood as shared and interdependent.

The linkages established and fostered through IGCP's transboundary activities have contributed to peacebuilding along both avenues identified above by Conca and Dableko; That is, these activities have been used to: (i) create minimum levels of trust, cooperation and transparency among actors, thereby helping to offer an improved 'contractual environment' for addressing conflictual situations; and, looking at broader social dynamics, (ii) deepen trans-societal linkages, regional identities and encouraging state institutions to become more accountable. At its simplest, people from different—and depending on the context, conflicting—sides of national borders have been brought together for dialogue and joint action. Forums for discussion and debate have been established. Both formal and informal networks of communication and implementation exist, allowing people to build relationships, share information and plan together. And more recently, political recognition and acceptance of regional collaboration has legitimized these field-level mechanisms of cooperation.

It is worth noting that a number of concerns were raised over IGCP's role in regional cooperation. While all interviewees agreed that IGCP has been instrumental to the coordination of transboundary activities (indeed, most of these activities would not have started or continued without IGCP support), several questioned the organization's political neutrality and role as facilitator. Some people perceived IGCP as having a strong Rwandan affinity, a view largely attributable to the Executive Director's Rwandan nationality and the relative strength of IGCP's program in that country. Others felt that IGCP had become dangerously indispensable to the transboundary process, positioning themselves to possibly control the flow of information among regional partners and the overall implementation of gorilla conservation activities in the region.²⁸ While these are allegations based on politicized perceptions not always founded on fact or reason, IGCP must be made aware of them, as they influence behaviours and relationships. As such, IGCP should consider the political and practical implications of these perceptions when dealing with partners in the region.

4.4 Summary of lessons learned

Looking at how IGCP's work has contributed to both peace and conflict at the community and transboundary levels, some general lessons can start to be drawn on how to conflict-sensitize conservation. The first point that should be emphasized is that almost all conservation interventions—just like other development interventions—can have peace **and** conflict impacts, even at the same time. Because conservation interventions are inherently conflictual or are in many ways about resolving conflict (i.e., over resource control and access), the aim is not to render them *conflict-proof* but *conflict-sensitive*. That is, understanding the peace and conflict impacts of a particular activity or program will not necessarily mean that all conflicts will be avoided. Yet understanding the

²⁸ It should be noted that the transboundary process will be managed by a Transboundary Core Secretariat under the new Strategic Plan. This arrangement had not yet been initiated at the time of the research, but it may provide some distance between IGCP and the transboundary process, thereby tempering perceptions of IGCP's indispensability.

potential or observed peace and conflict impacts of a conservation intervention may serve to avoid some conflicts entirely, prevent others from escalating and becoming (even more) destructive, or in some cases help to resolve them. ,

IGCP's success in promoting peace at the local level has depended in part on the organization's ability to enlist communities as active partners in their conservation strategies. This **participatory approach** means including communities in park management decisions to increase the transparency and trust among them and protected area authorities. The **planning** of interventions is also crucial: deliberately paced projects, consisting of lengthy (though not excessive) consultation and sensitization processes with the community, followed by sustainable interventions run by local residents (i.e., Nkuringo's ICEs), were viewed as a success by those involved, whereas rushed interventions without careful consideration of conflicting goals, expectations, messages and processes failed or exacerbated local conflicts (i.e., MCDO). To address such conflicts requires the presence of an unbiased **local dispute resolution mechanism** to mediate between parties should disagreements arise. Finally, strong **communication** both among and within stakeholder groups is essential to aligning interests and reducing information asymmetries.

The factors contributing to peacebuilding at the regional level are similar to those promoting peace at the local level. **Sustained communication and direct interactions** have been essential, as opportunities for bringing together different groups to exchange ideas, identify common problems, and develop solutions have created a basis for building relationships and trust. These have also contributed to the establishment of **formal and informal networks** of actors who can start to depend on each other for support in regular activities (i.e., monitoring) or during times of crisis. This '**constructive dependence**' enables different sides to see that tangible benefits can result from collaboration. The fact that these links are formal and informal, practical and political, environmental and economic, as well as personal and professional has introduced a certain amount of **flexibility** into transboundary cooperation. If/when one avenue for cooperation is temporarily blocked (e.g., at the institutional or political level), there may be scope to build on other avenues to maintain cooperation and resolve the blockage. Finally, IGCP's transboundary work allows individuals and groups to work together under a **shared conservation-related identity**, de-emphasizing divisive identities based on nationality and ethnicity.

Issues that were identified as potentially contributing to conflict—among individuals, institutions (i.e., protected areas authorities) and governments—are not too different from factors that undermine the success of development projects in general. **Lack of participation, poor communication, inequitable benefit-sharing, non-transparent processes**, as well as **unsustainable and poorly planned interventions**, can fuel distrust and even anger among different parties. The **absence of mutually-supported conflict resolution mechanisms** (e.g., joint dispute resolution committees, third party arbitrators, etc.), can lead to the escalation of negative feelings and damage relationships. Moreover, prevailing **political sensitivities** can raise the stakes of seemingly innocuous activities such as gorilla monitoring, thereby posing serious limitations to transboundary conservation efforts, a reality that in itself can exacerbate tensions and frustrations.

Finally, **IGCP's own reputation and (perceived) role** has contributed to the peace and conflict

impacts of its work. In some cases, its longstanding presence in the region—particularly during the height of the regional conflict in the 1990s—has earned IGCP the reputation of being a dependable organization with an intimate knowledge of regional dynamics. Its role in helping to build and reform institutions such as UWA and ORTPN has won the trust of high-level political actors in Uganda and Rwanda, respectively. Moreover, IGCP’s sustained efforts in brokering transboundary collaboration at all levels have given it the credibility to take the lead in coordinating these types of activities. With this kind of political capital, IGCP has been able to bring together communities, conservation professionals and national politicians to work on conserving the region’s mountain gorillas and its habitat. Yet for some actors, IGCP is far from being a neutral, apolitical conservation actor. Its relatively strong affiliations to Rwanda—both in terms of leadership and program activities—have created suspicions among some groups, particularly in DRC. While this may be an inevitable result of prevailing regional politics, it is an issue that IGCP should take into account when planning or managing interventions in the region.

5.0 Recommendations: Integrating conflict sensitivity into IGCP’s work

Having recognized some of the factors that contribute to peacebuilding and conflict, a number of entry points can be recommended for integrating conflict sensitivity into some of IGCP’s conservation interventions. That is, the understanding of the peace and conflict impacts described in Section 4 can now be considered in the way IGCP’s interventions are designed, implemented and monitored. For example, joint forums for discussion are recognized as having a peace impact in regional meetings; is IGCP maximizing opportunities to include them at other levels of its transboundary work, or even in other types of conservation work? Similarly, non-transparent revenue management schemes can have a conflict impact—what mechanisms can be put in place to minimize this impact? Recommendations will first look at the opportunities—or entry points—for integrating these considerations into the project or program cycle, and will then identify entry points based on the types of activities IGCP undertakes in its conservation work. Both are described below.

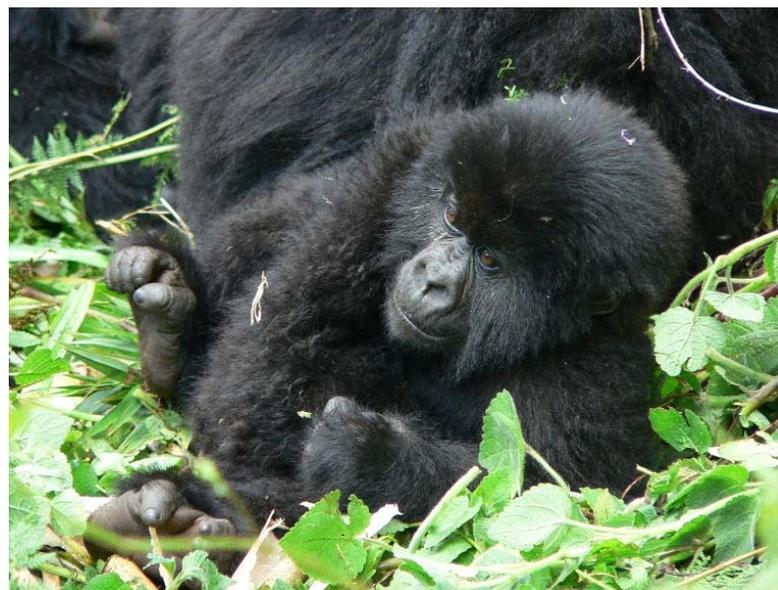


Photo courtesy of IGCP.

Whether integration is done using the project or program cycle, or through types of activities, the first step is conducting an analysis of the peace and conflict context. The analysis will depend on the location and scale of the intervention—that is, a regional-scale intervention would warrant a regional-level analysis looking at

national actors and dynamics, while a community-scale project would require a more localized analysis. In each case, the context should be analyzed in terms of the causes/sources of conflict; the interests, needs, and capacities of actors; the relationships among identified actors; and prevailing conflict dynamics. There are a number of conflict analysis methodologies available, and a summary can be found in the Resource Pack at

http://www.international-alert.org/conflict_sensitivity/resource_pack/chapter_2_266.pdf

5.1 Integrating conflict sensitivity into the project or program cycle

Following a peace and conflict analysis, IGCP staff can then apply the results of the analysis to different stages in the project or program cycle. These are discussed in detail in the Resource Pack at http://www.international-alert.org/conflict_sensitivity/resource_pack/chapter_3_267.pdf, but can be summarized as follows:

- **Project planning.** The stage at which (conservation) problems are defined, causes identified and potential solutions developed. Using the conflict analysis, IGCP staff members need to first decide how it relates to the objectives of the proposed project. That is, will the intervention explicitly address conflict or simply avoid exacerbating it? For example, if corruption is identified as a major contributor to conflicts among protected areas authorities, does IGCP want to tackle the problem of corruption directly, or simply make sure they are not somehow contributing to it?

Once the objectives of the intervention vis-à-vis the conflict situation are clarified, project planners can go on to look at how the selection of beneficiaries, project staff, and partners might impact the peace and conflict context—i.e., are certain groups profiting more than others? If so, can this be justified and properly communicated? Are project staff members from the region and do they speak the local languages? If so, does this compromise their perceived neutrality or, conversely, does this make them a more trusted player, better able to broker relationships? What is the reputation of project partners—are they helping to resolve or contribute to the conflict in any way?

In addition to the *who* question in conflict-sensitive project planning, the *where* and *when* must also be considered. The question of which geographic region to target for project work is an important one for IGCP, since its work has a strong regional profile and seeks to build trust and cooperation among three different countries. Perceived preferences for one country may create tensions. Even at the local level, the geographic location of an intervention matters. For example, benefit-sharing among parks and surrounding communities continues to be highly contentious. Not all surrounding communities are likely to profit from a single scheme, making the selection of the beneficiary village, parish or district even more sensitive. Again, the selection criteria must be defined in a participatory manner, and the results communicated widely and transparently.

Finally, the timing and duration of an intervention must be considered in terms of its links to the peace and conflict context. Is the timing right—for example, are people ready to support and participate in a transboundary dialogue? Moreover is the proposed duration of the project

appropriate given the context?

Apart from looking at the what, who, where and when questions, IGCP staff should also build in contingency plans to respond to a shifting peace and conflict context, as well as an appropriate exit strategy, to help manage expectations throughout the course of the intervention and avoid undermining the sustainability of project or program results.

- ***Project implementation.*** The stage at which activities are undertaken to achieve defined objectives. Conflict-sensitive implementation involves managing, monitoring and adjusting project activities according to an understanding of the peace and conflict context.

Setting up the operational aspects of a project, from opening an office, to negotiating contracts, or sourcing materials, or establishing administrative and financial structures, and accessing sites, must all be done with an awareness of how they are linked to the peace and conflict context. Being sure that activities are coordinated with other organizations, preventing duplication and competition, is also important. Then monitoring developments in line with the peace and conflict context (see below) should be undertaken to allow for adjustments to be made as needed.

- ***Project monitoring and evaluation.*** The stage at which an interventions outputs and impacts are assessed against objectives, providing a basis for adjusting implementation activities or drawing lessons for future interventions. Making sure the monitoring and evaluation is timed appropriately (i.e., relative to political developments or seasonal shifts, both of which may have peace and conflict implications) is one way to make this stage of programming conflict-sensitive. Otherwise, this stage involves assessing changes in the context, the project both in terms of its intended and actual implementation, and the interaction between the project and the context.

Indicators will need to be developed for monitoring and evaluation. These can be both objective and perception-based indicators and should be developed at the outset of an intervention, and in a participatory manner involving project staff, park authorities, community members and any other stakeholders. Table 8 provides a sample of peace and conflict indicators for IGCP's local conservation interventions, as well as its transboundary work:

Table 8: Sample objective and perception-based indicators for assessing the peace and conflict impacts of IGCP's conservation work in the Virunga-Bwindi region

IGCP Category of Activity	Objective Indicators Indicators of communication, collaboration, participation and responsiveness	Perception-based Indicators Indicators of feelings, interests, hopes, fears
Local conservation interventions Including: ■ Establishment of buffer	* number of land purchases taken to adjudication * establishment of a park-people dispute resolution mechanism (e.g., identification of a third party)	* fairness of land purchase price * appropriate and/or acceptable management of land purchase process * effectiveness of buffer zone in

IGCP Category of Activity	Objective Indicators Indicators of communication, collaboration, participation and responsiveness	Perception-based Indicators Indicators of feelings, interests, hopes, fears
<p>zone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing human-wildlife conflicts 	<p>arbitrator for conservation-related conflicts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * amount of time gorillas spend on community land * approximate amount of time HUGO volunteers spend managing human-wildlife conflicts * average annual crop loss due to animal incursions * number of meetings held among intervention-related stakeholders * type and rate of disease transmission between humans and gorillas 	<p>reducing human-wildlife conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * appropriate management of the buffer zone * tensions among members within a village, among parishes, among communities and park staff over conservation costs and benefits * fairness and impartiality of local judicial system in resolving conservation-related disputes * honesty and openness of institutions operating on communities' behalf
<p>Transboundary cooperation</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional surveillance ▪ Regional meetings ▪ Trilateral agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * number/frequency of requests for patrols * number/frequency of patrols undertaken * availability and type of communications equipment on patrols * establishment and frequency of review of transboundary surveillance plan * number/frequency of regional meetings * number of representatives from each country participating in regional meetings * number of times communication is initiated among regional partners (at different levels) * identification and review of national conservation policies * establishment and updating of shared conservation database for regional monitoring (of gorillas, habitat change, illegal activities) * production of surveillance maps and reports for regional monitoring * establishment of regional conservation dispute resolution mechanism * number/frequency of disputes reported to the regional conservation dispute resolution mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * ranger impressions of value and utility of patrols * ranger impressions of cross-border colleagues, in terms of capacity, commitment, efficacy * ranger impressions of adequacy of communication—in terms of logistics and willingness—with cross-border colleagues * PA staff impression of transboundary surveillance plan * participant impressions of the value/utility of regional meetings for conflict resolution and peacebuilding * openness, inclusion and fairness demonstrated at regional meetings * progress in reconciling or harmonizing national conservation policies * usefulness of database and surveillance maps * effectiveness of regional conservation dispute resolution mechanism

5.2 Integrating conflict sensitivity into different types of conservation interventions

Apart from integrating conflict sensitivity into IGCP's project and programming cycle, other entry-points for integration can be identified based on the type and scale of conservation intervention. Below is a preliminary list of suggestions, which should be built upon depending on IGCP's own capacities and interests in the Virunga-Bwindi region.

- ***IGCP Strategic Plan:*** While this may still be under development or review by the IGCP board and senior management, the strategic plan presents an opportunity to institutionalize the concept of conflict sensitivity. By recognizing that their work may have conflict and peacebuilding impacts in a region already beset by conflict, and acknowledging that allowances must be made to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts, IGCP would formalize its commitment to the principles of peacebuilding. A closer look at the Strategic Plan would be needed to identify specific areas where conflict sensitivity could be incorporated.
- ***Conservation management planning:*** This could be at a local level, such as the Nkuringo Buffer Zone Management Plan, at the park-level, such as the Virunga NP General Management Plan, or at the regional-level, for the proposed transboundary protected area management plan. The process for developing these plans, as well as the resulting documents or plans themselves, should be conflict-sensitized. This can mean incorporating general peacebuilding principles (e.g., transparency, collaboration, and participation), addressing conflict directly (e.g., including emergency planning measures, conflict resolution structures), or designing policies that at least avoid creating or exacerbating conflict.
- ***Business/enterprise planning:*** As IGCP looks to expand its enterprise programming in the region, program staff may want to better understand how the process of planning for and implementing these types of activities may contribute to peace and/or conflict. Do the enterprises address some of the root causes of tension or conflict in the area? How are beneficiaries selected? What are the management structures how is power distributed? How are profits reported and managed? Are there structures and policies in place to resolve disputes? These are some of the questions that might be asked when developing a small business plan.
- ***Ten-year Transboundary Strategic Plan:*** While this document has already been developed and signed, it should be regularly reviewed and updated as needed. Indeed, flexibility is one of the key principles of conflict sensitivity. For example, the current plan does not make mention of how to handle disputes or conflict—this is something that might be addressed in the next iteration of the Plan.
- ***Draft principles for conflict-sensitive conservation in the Virunga-Bwindi region:*** While this type of initiative has not yet been developed by IGCP—or any other conservation organization operating in the Virunga-Bwindi region—it presents an opportunity for formalizing a commitment to conflict sensitivity by the conservation actors in the region. This

could be a set of principles for international conservation NGOs operating in the region, who work with the same local and national conservation actors, confront similar challenges, and pursue similar objectives. It could cover issues such as communication with each other and partners, contingency planning, project identification and selection criteria, as well as developing PCIA indicators for monitoring and evaluating conflict-sensitive conservation in the region. The process for developing these principles could provide an additional forum for improved coordination among conservation organizations.

Other entry points for conflict sensitivity in IGCP's work could include ranger-based monitoring policies, staff rules, and fundraising strategies.

6.0 Lessons Learned on Conducting PCIA Process

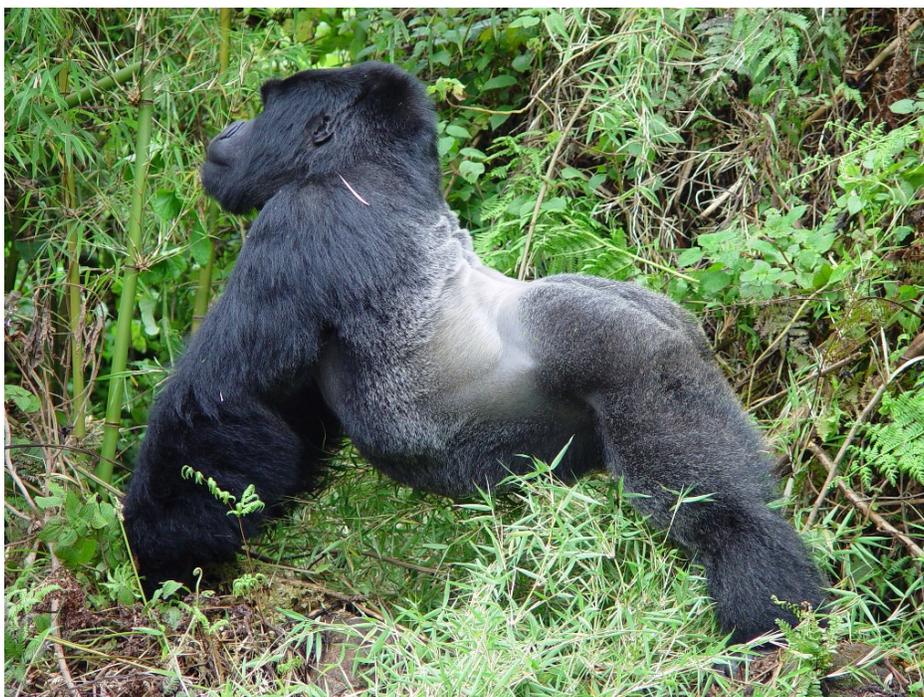


Photo courtesy of IGCP.

In addition to better understanding the links between IGCP's work and the peace and conflict dynamics in the Virunga-Bwindi region, study yielded a number of important lessons about the PCIA and conflict sensitivity process. These lessons can be brought to bear in future assessments, streamlining the process and leading to useful recommendations.

- a) **Find an institutional PCIA champion:** Due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues discussed during consultations, and the potential for drawing attention to internal organizational problems or weaknesses, the PCIA process needs a champion—i.e., somebody who buys-in to the principles of conflict sensitivity and is willing to promote them within (and outside) the

organization. The person(s) must be frank about the challenges and opportunities of working in a conflict zone, and not threatened by the process and results of a PCIA. Indeed, they would recognize PCIA as an opportunity to understand the impact of their organization's work through a different analytical lens. Ideally, this champion would be somebody in senior management who could mobilize support at other levels within the organization and ensure results will be reviewed and recommendations implemented.

- b) **Importance of language:** An obvious point, but important nonetheless—making sure that the people consulted during the PCIA process are able to communicate in a language in which they feel comfortable expressing themselves. This is especially important because of the relative sensitivity of the issues discussed—personal interests, feelings, impressions, opinions, etc. For this study, English was sufficient for consulting most IGCP staff in Uganda, Kenya and Kigali, but French was the preferred language in Ruhengeri and most of DRC. Thus, having a research team with at least one French speaker was necessary. When project team members consulted with local communities, local languages such as Swahili and Kinyarwanda were used, meaning the research team had to rely on translation services from project partners. Ideally, the research team would have included members who spoke local languages.
- c) **Define and explain your terms:** As expected, the word 'conflict' is laden with different social and political understandings. Any process that seeks to understand peoples' impressions of it must be accompanied by a clear explanation of what is meant by 'conflict'. For example, some stakeholders understood 'conflict' to be related only to violence and open war. Others associated it only with traditional park-people tensions, while others felt that problems among or within levels of government and agencies represented conflict. All of these were relevant to this study, which in some cases created confusion. Thus, workshops and consultations required an explanation of the definition of conflict, which types of conflict were relevant to the study, and some basic characteristics that tied all of these conflicts together. The same clarity was needed in discussing 'peace' and/or 'peacebuilding,' as many felt it was a condition or process characterized by the absence of war brokered at the state level. Others recognized that peace or peacebuilding was also about informal, local-level mechanisms that built relationships and trust. Again, both interpretations were relevant to this study, which needed to be explained.
- d) **Beware of other similar initiatives:** Conservation organizations in many parts of Africa—particularly in the Great Lakes regions—are being inundated with external experts and money for conflict-related work. Research and training in issues such as 'conflict management', 'conflict resolution', 'conflict mapping', 'conflict analysis' and 'conflict sensitivity' are certainly needed in the Virunga-Bwindi region, but coordination is essential. At the very least, researchers and consultants must be aware of other consultants and organizations that are working in their research area so they can minimize the risk of local research and training fatigue. Moreover, there is also the risk of sending contradictory messages and approaches to local partners, which can only confuse and ultimately undermine project results. The risk of creating conflicts through lack of coordination cannot be underestimated! Researchers, consultants and local partner organizations must therefore work together to make sure information is shared and synergies explored.

- e) **Maximize opportunities for informal consultations:** The PCIA process is ideally a combination of formal and informal interactions. Workshops can be important for bringing people together to achieve a joint understanding of PCIA-related concepts, and exchange ideas, build relationships. Workshops can also be used as opportunities for training, which can leave participants feeling that they have gained (and not only given) something to the process. Semi-structured consultations in communities can do the same. Moreover, the ‘formal’ nature of workshops and consultations can lend legitimacy to the process, sending the signal that certain institutions take the issues discussed quite seriously.

Nonetheless, workshops and consultations are not sufficient for a robust PCIA process. Research Team members took advantage of opportunities to have informal conversations outside of offices and capitals, where people felt more comfortable discussing sensitive issues. It was this anecdotal information that generally completed or clarified the ideas discussed in workshops, and helped Research Team members to better understand the complex links among conservation, peace and conflict.

- f) **Allow for steady, ongoing contact with PCIA partners:** Because the PCIA process was led by consultants and an organization based outside of the region, direct interactions with stakeholders in the region were irregular. Fortunately, the project budget allowed for regular field visits and Research Team members took advantage of additional opportunities to interact with project stakeholders during other, non-IGCP related trips to the region. However, even with this relatively frequent interaction, these visits did not make up for the benefits of having a Research Team based in the region.

There were a number of challenges and risks that resulted from not having this sustained presence in the region. Sporadic visits by external actors, no matter how frequent, may have sent the message that PCIA is an externally-driven, top-down process. Members of the field staff are already over-burdened, and PCIA research visits may have been construed as an additional burden. Finally, personnel changes in field staff weakened the continuity in the field research and increased the chances for miscommunication—a bigger risk in the absence of an institutional PCIA champion. Thus, in a case where the PCIA Research Team is based outside of the region and local institutional support for the PCIA process is lacking, efforts should be made to engage a locally-based consultant to act as a focal point for the project, somebody who can maintain regular contact with project staff and build this institutional support, monitor the dynamic peace and conflict context, and continue gathering relevant information.

- g) **Be aware of the working approach / culture of the organization:** In order to better ensure institutional participation in the PCIA process and uptake of PCIA results, researchers must be aware of the organization’s culture and *modus operandi*. This means understanding its management structure (hierarchical, or horizontal?), its project development and management processes (preferred funders? Emphasis on indicators?), the type of work it focuses on (management plans? Biological monitoring? Community-based conservation?), and its staff development policies (training opportunities?) Understanding these issues will also help to clarify the expectations around a PCIA process—does the organization hope that the PCIA process will demonstrate due diligence to their funders, or do they want to re-think programming priorities?

Knowing this will enable people to tailor the PCIA process and make it most useful to the organization in question.

- h) Be sensitive to the political realities that may challenge or limit the PCIA process:** Finally, people undertaking PCIA processes must accept that PCIA processes can be difficult, frustrating, and politicized. Conflict zones are dynamic and volatile, so researchers must be aware of changes in the context at all times so that their analysis is better embedded. They also need to be aware of the different forums or circumstances in which people feel comfortable talking about conflict or peace, and ensure that stakeholders do not feel they are putting themselves in a compromising position by participating in the PCIA process. For example, do members of the project staff feel insecure discussing issues that potentially criticize their organization? Finally, some participants in a PCIA process may see it as an opportunity to air grievances, advance personal agendas. While this may be in and of itself illustrative of the peace and conflict impacts of an organization's work, PCIA researchers should be aware of these underlying interests and consider them within the broader context of the study.