

Wildlife Conservation Society- Rwanda Program

Program description

Title: Conservation Education and Outreach Program

Funded by: USAID, USFWS

Partner institutions: RDB, ARECO, Districts

Overall term: 2010 to 2013

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Context: Nyungwe National Park lies within a human-dominated landscape. Members of communities living around Nyungwe National Park are often the people mainly involved in various illegal activities that threaten the park's biodiversity, yet simultaneously suffer the greatest impact with regards to infringement on economic activities and livelihoods. The Education and Outreach Program aims to supplement law enforcement efforts to reduce threats to Nyungwe National Park by imparting knowledge about the value of Nyungwe's biodiversity to these communities. These efforts are intended to help community members change destructive behaviours while encouraging sustainable livelihood alternatives and a shift in attitude towards a greater appreciation for conservation.

Through education and outreach in local communities an improved understanding of the values and importance of conservation can lead to a reduction of illegal activities thereby reducing the level of threats faced by, Nyungwe National Park. The Education and Outreach Program is an important conservation effort intended to address the root causes of illegal activities in Nyungwe National Park by working with communities to curb illegal activities and build a more sustainable appreciation for the region's biodiversity, resources and ecosystem services.

Objective of the program:

The Education and Outreach Program aims to protect Nyungwe National Park in the short- and long-term by promoting human behaviors and attitudes that support conservation efforts. The main objectives of the program are to: 1) Promote human behaviors that help to reduce immediate threats to Nyungwe National Park; and 2) Develop a constituency in support of the conservation of Nyungwe National Park to prevent and/or mitigate future threats. Specifically, three main threats are addressed through this program: 1) poaching; 2) fire; and 3) bamboo cutting.

Approach:

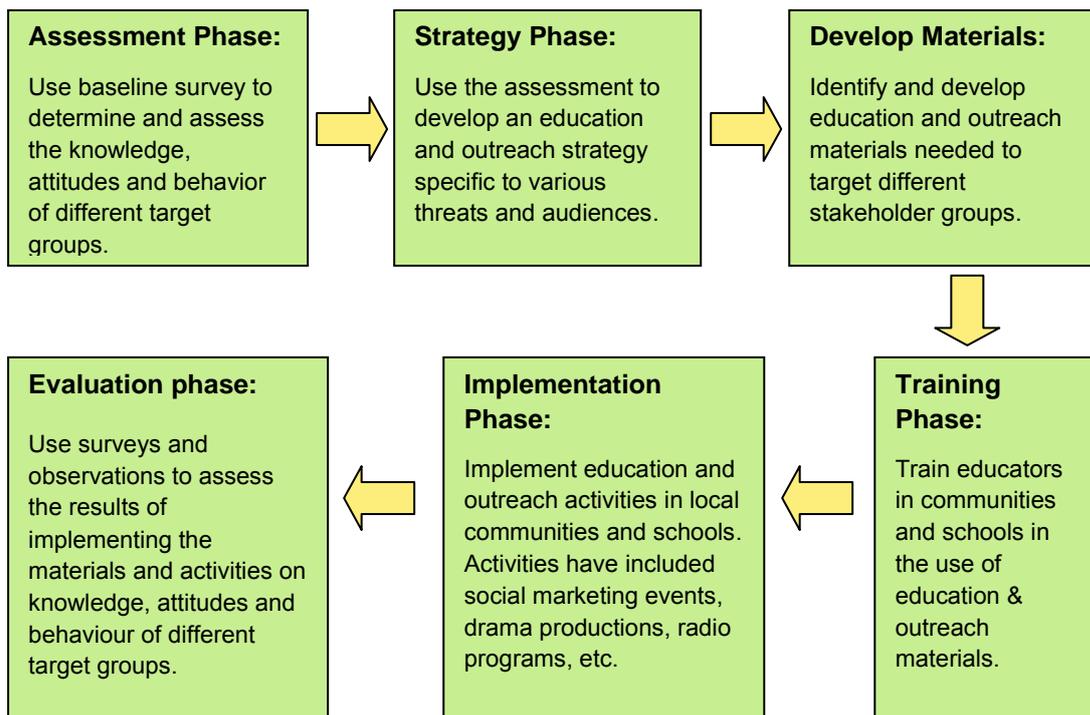
The Education and Outreach Program targets two main audiences that generally include educators, students and community members. These are divided into two strategically different target audiences as follows:

1. **Primary Audience:** People whose behavior is responsible for the threat, including poachers, bamboo cutters, fire makers, etc.
2. **Influencing Audience:** People whose behaviors may affect the behavior of the primary audiences, including educators and communicators in the community such as local authorities, teachers, students and future generations.

To implement the Education and Outreach Program we are guided by a strategy developed from baseline data collected in 2011 from interactions with students and community members. Implementation activities highlight the main threats, partners, and actions.

An additional aspect of the Education and Outreach Program is to foster the exchange of knowledge and education techniques between teachers and community educators. For example, through the program, teachers visit other schools primary and secondary schools in the region to exchange information, reinforce each other's capacity and ultimately become trainers in conservation education themselves. This, in turn, provides a method for sustaining the program as teachers and educators become skilled in independently providing continued training to additional educators.

Implementation approach to education and outreach activities:



Achieved Results:

The Conservation Education and Outreach program is on-going with multiple projects being undertaken simultaneously. To date, a number activities and events have been conducted. WCS has conducted baseline surveys to assess the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of different target audiences. This data has been collected from students and other target groups in local communities and has been used to develop a conservation education and outreach strategy for Nyungwe National Park. The following results have been achieved:

- Developed the Nyungwe Conservation Education and Outreach strategy in collaboration with local partners such as teachers, District Environmental Officer's (DEOs) and RDB staff.
- Conservation education materials such as posters, films, books, and playing cards have been developed and provided to about twenty schools in communities around Nyungwe. WCS has also designed various activities for use in education programs, including drama productions, games and park visits, all with conservation information that is being taught and used in local schools and communities.
- Trained a variety of different educators in use of the aforementioned materials to achieve improved implementation, greater sustainability and reach a larger audience. These educators have included over 30 teachers, 5 DEOs, several Animateurs de Conservation (ANICOs), who will in turn reach out and train their audiences.
- Conducted visits to Nyungwe National Park with over 256 students, 8 teachers, 53 ANICOs and 235 local authorities in an effort to raise awareness about Nyungwe conservation. These visits were intended to improve their familiarity with ecological interactions and biodiversity in Nyungwe National Park. Furthermore, several students, teachers, ANICOs and DEOs have visited chimpanzees to gain an appreciation for this species, the threats it faces and promote their role in its conservation. Chimpanzee education materials also include information on their ecology, behaviour, and taxonomic position in the animal kingdom.
- Trained several ANICOs, DEOs, and park rangers in conflict resolution surrounding wildlife-human related conflicts. This training was intended to build the capacity of rangers, ANICOs, DEOs to effectively and sustainably resolve park-community related conflicts. The training helped participants understand how a conflict can be analysed and solved, which has helped them in their daily activities when encountering human-wildlife conflicts in the field.



Photos (left to right): Education in schools, Children dancing, Training of ANICOs