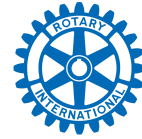




Glacier National Park  
CONSERVANCY



Parks Canada  
Parcs Canada



## International Gorilla Conservation Programme Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration

Anna Behm Masozera

Email: [abehm@igcp.org](mailto:abehm@igcp.org)

Phone: +250 782332280 (voice messages can be left at +1 802 999 4958)

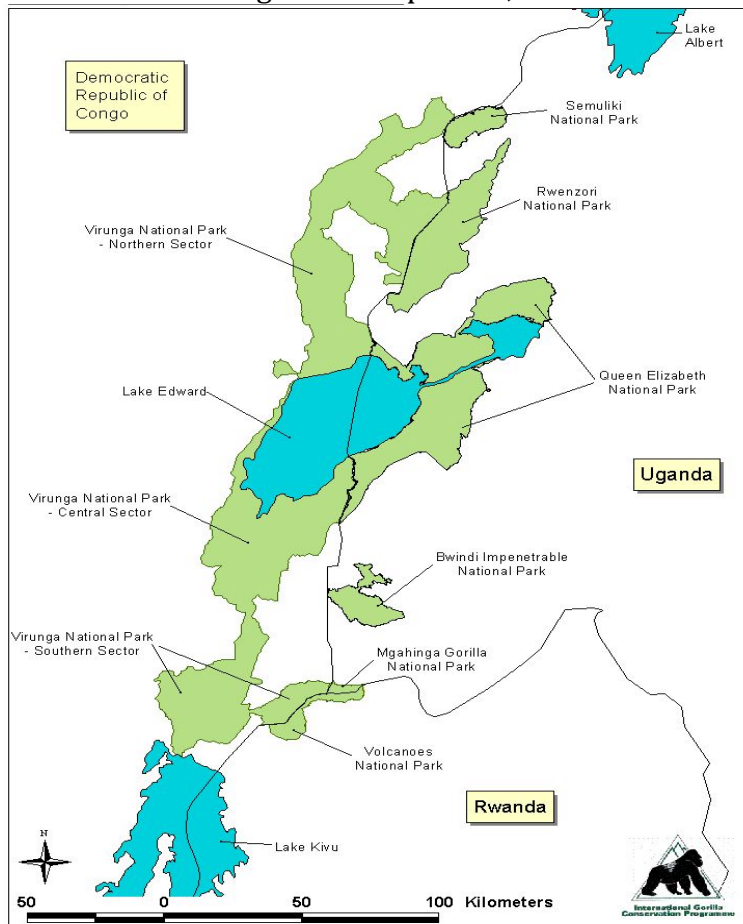
[www.greatervirunga.org](http://www.greatervirunga.org)

[www.igcp.org](http://www.igcp.org)

Central Albertine Rift: Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda.

Size: Mountain gorilla habitat = 796.4 km<sup>2</sup>

Protected Areas in the Greater Virunga Landscape = 11,826.7 km<sup>2</sup>



Participants in coordinating the ongoing transboundary cooperation:

National Government:

- Ministry of Environment Nature Conservation, and Tourism (DRC)
- Ministry of Trade and Industry (Rwanda)
- Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (Uganda)

Local Government:

- North Kivu Province and Orientale Province (DRC)
- many Districts (Uganda and Rwanda)

Protected area administration:

- Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (DRC)
- Rwanda Development Board (Rwanda)
- Uganda Wildlife Authority (Uganda)

International NGOs:

- Wildlife Conservation Society
- WWF
- International Gorilla Conservation Programme (coalition of Fauna & Flora International and WWF)
- Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project/Gorilla Doctors,
- Diane Fossey Gorilla Fund International

### **Objectives:**

- 1) To promote and coordinate conservation of biodiversity and related socio-cultural values within the Greater Virunga protected area network;
- 2) To develop strategies for collaborative management of biodiversity;
- 3) To promote and ensure coordinated planning, monitoring, and evaluation of implementation of transboundary conservation and development programmes;
- 4) To promote and coordinate tourism development programmes in the Greater Virunga Landscape;
- 5) To secure sustainable funding for collaborative management of the Transboundary Protected Area Network to promote biodiversity conservation and tourism development in the Greater Virunga Landscape;
- 6) To enhance and harmonise the generation and sharing of knowledge, experience and best practices for evidence-based decision making;
- 7) To promote and support safety and security of wildlife resources and tourists within the Greater Virunga Landscape.

**Values and importance:** The Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL) contains more terrestrial vertebrate species and more endemic and threatened species than anywhere else on the African continent<sup>1</sup>. The GVL includes a great diversity of landscape features from

---

1 Plumptre *et al.* 2003. The Biodiversity of the Albertine Rift. Albertine Rift Technical Report No. 3. 105 pp.

mountains and volcanoes to vast plains and lakes which host a wide range of forests, savannahs, wetlands and other types of ecosystems. The contiguous transboundary system is important for 13 large-bodied landscape species like the mountain gorilla, elephants, and lions<sup>2</sup>. Further, more than 4 million people<sup>3</sup> are dependent upon this landscape for largely subsistence living. The Greater Virunga Landscape falls on a recurrent geopolitical hotspot.

**Aspects of transboundary cooperation:** Within the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, higher level cooperation on policy development and implementation of a transboundary strategic plan is guided and governed by a Board as well as a Council of Ministers. The GVTC Treaty recognizes four regional technical committees comprised of representatives from government and academic institutions as well as non-governmental organizations: landscape management, tourism development, community conservation, and law enforcement. In addition, Chief Park Warden consultative meetings are convened by GVTC upon request/as needed to assess and take decision on joint actions supported by the GVTC framework for improved management of the transboundary system, especially related to coordinated anti-poaching efforts. The cooperation extends to transboundary surveys, coordinated under the landscape management committee.

**Stage in the process:** Heads-of-State Agreement (Treaty) signed October 30, 2015, currently undergoing process of ratification by the three States.

**Date Established:** October 18, 2005 by Ministerial Tripartite Declaration

**Official Protected Area Designation:**

Virunga National Park (DRC) – UNESCO World Heritage Site  
Sarambwe Nature Reserve (DRC)  
Volcanoes National Park (Rwanda) – UNESCO Biosphere Reserve  
Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (Uganda)  
Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (Uganda) – UNESCO World Heritage Site  
Queen Elizabeth National Park (Uganda) – UNESCO Biosphere Reserve  
Rwenzori Mountains National Park (Uganda) – UNESCO World Heritage Site  
Semuliki National Park (Uganda)  
Kibale National Park (Uganda)  
Kasyoha-Kitomi Forest Reserve (Uganda)  
Kalinzu Forest Reserve (Uganda)  
Kyambara Wildlife Reserve (Uganda)  
Kigezi Wildlife Reserve (Uganda)

**The Catalyst:** The catalyst for transboundary collaboration in the Greater Virunga Landscape was the transboundary population of mountain gorillas in the 451 km<sup>2</sup> Virunga Massif which straddles the border of DRC, Rwanda and Uganda. To protect the small, fragile

---

<sup>2</sup> Plumptre *et al.* 2007. Transboundary conservation in the Greater Virunga Landscape: Its importance for landscape species. *Biological Conservation* 134 (2): 279-287.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated four million people live within one day's walk of Virunga National Park in DRC.  
<https://virunga.org/virunga-alliance/>

population of global significance, and local, national and regional cultural and economic importance, individuals and institutions needed to work together, even through periods of armed conflict. The process grew from the grassroots informal level through ever-higher formal channels to encompass a larger area and larger mandate from the original catalyst of the mountain gorillas. The process of formalisation and institutionalisation continues.

**History:** Having its origins during a period of violent ethnic and political conflict in the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration grew from an early focus on non-political, technical problem-solving at a local level. Over several decades of positive results and subsequent building of trust, the informal and local-level contact and facilitation has fostered an enabling environment on which more formalised and strategic transboundary collaboration was initiated and adopted.

**Barriers, challenges, obstacles, or constraints:** The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration is simultaneously an emerging and already established institution. The challenges to GVTC as it moves forward in completing its institutional development through the ratification of the Treaty, is to successfully transition from an NGO-State model of transboundary collaboration, with leadership from the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (a coalition of Fauna & Flora International and WWF) and Wildlife Conservation Society, to a State-led model with leadership from a recognized Secretariat. With this transition, there is a possibility to lose the strength and benefits to more informal channels of communication and collaboration, in favour to more binding but politically-vulnerable and bureaucratic processes. The institutionalization and functionality of the formal regional technical committees will be key to this transition, as well as ensuring the continuity of broader regional meetings for information sharing. Financial sustainability is a current constraint.

## **The Governance and Management Structures**

- **Cooperative relationship:** The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration is a non-binding agreement at Heads of State level (Treaty), signed and currently pending ratification.
- **Legal basis for cooperation:** The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration currently operates a Secretariat based on the Ministerial Tripartite Declaration of October 18, 2005, and has a Headquarters Agreement with the Government of Rwanda for the legal operations of its Secretariat based in Kigali, Rwanda.
- **Governance structure:** The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration is governed by a Summit (Heads of State), Council of Ministers (Ministerial level), and Board (Ministerial and Protected Area Authority level).
- **Cooperative management arrangement:** The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration is currently implementing a revised and agreed Transboundary Strategic Plan (TSP) for the period 2013 – 2018. The implementation of the TSP is guided by the Secretariat as well as formal regional technical committees.

**Results:** The most recognized results to date which can be attributed to transboundary collaboration within the Greater Virunga Landscape are the two populations of mountain gorillas, the only two populations, which have been recorded to have a positive population trend over the last two decades. Most notably, the population of mountain gorillas in the Virunga Massif.

Other achievements made possible through the collaboration include improved conservation effectiveness through joint and coordinated patrols, regional meetings, collaborations to fight against poaching and trafficking, data sharing and improved transboundary monitoring, transboundary surveys, and coordinated efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict<sup>4</sup>.

### **Lessons Learned**

- 1) Building trust and institutional willingness to cooperate takes time (decades) and can be built from small shared actions – a joint patrol for example – to more involved negotiations.
- 2) Regular and informal face-to-face meetings and encounters, which build open lines of communication and trust, can and must compliment formal meetings and committees.
- 3) Consistent fairness and commitment in leadership plays an important role in achieving trust and cooperation, especially when political events threaten to undermine this<sup>5</sup>.
- 4) Effective engagement and coordination of local government, security organs, immigration/customs, and civil society is as important as engagement and coordination of protected area managers, especially in order to contribute to conflict transformation and peace building.
- 5) Clarifying and agreeing to roles of different actors as well as the rules of engagement is important, especially while in the process of institutional development and evolution.

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin *et al.* 2011. Lessons Learned: Transboundary Natural Resource Management. Pages 59-89 in 20 Years of IGCP: Lessons Learned in Mountain Gorilla Conservation. Kigali, Rwanda. International Gorilla Conservation Programme. 137 pp.

<sup>5</sup> Taken directly from Martin *et al.* 2011.

## For More Information

Name	Title	Organization	Email	Phone
Dr. Muamba Tshibasus Georges	Executive Secretary	GVTC	<a href="mailto:geomuamba@greatervirunga.org">geomuamba@greatervirunga.org</a>	
Fidele Ruzigandekwe	Deputy Executive Secretary in Charge of Programmes	GVTC	<a href="mailto:fruzigandekwe@greatervirunga.org">fruzigandekwe@greatervirunga.org</a>	
Grace Kyomuhendo	Deputy Executive Secretary in Charge of Finance and Administration	GVTC	<a href="mailto:gkyomuhendo@greatervirunga.org">gkyomuhendo@greatervirunga.org</a>	
Dr. Andy Plumtre	Director Albertine Rift Programme	Wildlife Conservation Society	<a href="mailto:aplumtre@wcs.org">aplumtre@wcs.org</a>	

- Treaty on the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration on Wildlife Conservation and Tourism Development  
[http://www.greatervirunga.org/IMG/pdf/gvtc\\_treaty\\_oct\\_30.2015.pdf](http://www.greatervirunga.org/IMG/pdf/gvtc_treaty_oct_30.2015.pdf)
- Martin et al. 2011. Lessons Learned: Transboundary Natural Resource Management. Pages 59-89 in 20 Years of IGCP: Lessons Learned in Mountain Gorilla Conservation. Kigali, Rwanda. International Gorilla Conservation Programme. 137 pp.  
[http://www.igcp.org/wp-content/themes/igcp/docs/pdf/IGCPLessonsLearned\\_English\\_web.pdf](http://www.igcp.org/wp-content/themes/igcp/docs/pdf/IGCPLessonsLearned_English_web.pdf)