



Uganda

Improving Nature Conservation Through Public Health

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Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Chief Executive Officer, Conservation Through Public Health

Background of the organization

Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH) came into being to address the daily challenges facing many impoverished families living around protected areas in Uganda and in other parts of Africa. In these areas, land encroachment, competition for food, and the spread of disease between people, livestock and wildlife pose a threat to the survival of communities, wildlife and their respective habitats.

Twenty-two years ago, Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Chief Executive Officer of CTPH, started working as the first veterinarian for the Uganda Wildlife Authority in Bwindi, a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to half of the world's population of mountain gorillas. One day, she was called to check on a group of gorillas that had contracted a fatal skin disease. She discovered that the disease had come from the local populace – who lived in communities that had very limited health care or social services. This was the catalyst for starting CTPH in 2003: to implement projects addressing health care, family planning, income generation and education within communities living around protected areas, while simultaneously improving their interaction with local ecosystems and wildlife.

Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH) in Uganda. CTPH uses an integrated approach to improve human, animal and ecosystem health. The organization won first prize in the Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) in 2013 and received a grant of \$30,000. After assessing the outcomes of this first prize, in 2015, CTPH was awarded \$200,000 through the Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) to further upscale the project.

GDN application

In 2013, CTPH decided to apply for a Global Development Network award to help scale up their project in Bwindi. “We had seen great success here by increasing social services locally through an approach which combined the creation



of Village Health and Conservation Teams (VHCTs) with a Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA)."

Using the MIDP grant, the approach was replicated in another district in a different part of the forest, where similar issues with gorillas and communities existed. "We used the opportunity provided by GDN to re-engage communities we had previously worked with to start income generating activities. We had noticed that VSLAs [were] an essential part [of making] these projects sustainable. GDN gave us the opportunity to include this in our projects." The JSDF grant that followed, allowed CTPH to scale up their activities. As Kalema-Zikusoka explains: "In Bwindi relations were greatly improved between [the] community and [the] park. Family planning [was working] and women were more liberated. We saw we could do more and that our model could work in other areas. We chose Mount Elgon in Uganda and Virungas in the Democratic Republic of Congo as new project sites."

"Without GDN funding we would not have been able to create a more robust, but also more broadly applicable model that could be used in other areas in Uganda to reduce issues between communities and national parks."

Balancing family budgets and protecting the ecosystem

The project outcomes have been very positive. People in these areas have limited access to social services and education, and often do not see the benefits of

changing their practices. Using local volunteers to engage and educate communities has proven to be a very successful and sustainable way of changing social norms.

"We thought that if we could make communities see the connection between protecting their own health and the health of their surroundings, they would understand, and it worked! Nutrition has improved greatly in project areas and people have started planting trees now," says Kalema-Zikusoka. Great progress was made, particularly in family planning: "We really found a way to reach the men in the villages and tell them to balance the family budget. One of our best testimonies came from a lady with three girls, who decided not to have any more children after engagement [in] our project. She has a shop now and serves as a role model within her community."

The GDN grant has also led to new ideas and directions within CTPH: "Our GDN advisor, under the JSDF grant, suggested we strengthen our approach with social enterprises in the area of ecotourism, which has already led to tourists visiting the community homes in Bwindi."

At the GDN conference: "I was very nervous, but I got a lot of great feedback."

For Kalema-Zikusoka, being involved in the GDN activities and network was a unique professional experience: "I learned a lot from both GDN as well as



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my fellow finalists, who came from completely different backgrounds. I learned to present myself and my project to a wider audience and started to recognize that what we are doing has an essential link to economic development. I realized that our approach is not only important in the health and conservation sector, but that we were also addressing inequality, inclusive growth and social protection. This gave me a lot of confidence in our work.”

Family planning: getting the word out in Uganda

The JSDF grant has enabled Kalema-Zikusoka and her organization to become actively involved in advocacy groups that lobby the Ugandan Government. As a result, they have been invited, on several occasions, to discuss their approach to family planning: “I was invited by [the] Ministry of Health to talk about family planning from a conservation perspective, during a meeting where religious leaders were present as well. The government acknowledges the need for family planning and has started to look for ways to get it accepted as a social norm. Currently only 30 percent of women in Uganda are taking measures in this area. Within our project [area]

only 20 percent of the women were doing so, but this [increased to] 60 percent after our involvement, which has sparked great interest.” Government officials from Uganda (from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the Ministry of the East African Community) as well as from neighboring countries, still regularly visit the project site.

Changing the way international development looks at conservation and health

Although the GDN funding for CTPH ended this year, the three projects continue to operate, and their success has attracted a new stream of funding from the Darwin Initiative. “The first time we applied for a fund there, they thought it was unrealistic to integrate health and conservation into one development approach. But the GDN award enabled us to prove that this combination has great potential in generating sustainable results and, moreover, a model that can be scaled up easily to other regions and countries.” The Darwin Initiative is now providing the funds to continue the Mount Elgon project and a new scaling up of the same model in Budongo Forest, Uganda. This new research aims



to provide further proof that there is great value in addressing health care and conservation together: “Whatever comes out of the research will go beyond the traditional view of conservation. When the results are ready, we [plan] to present them at international development fora and universities, such as Oxford [University]. [The] Darwin [Initiative] sees it as something that could greatly influence development approaches within both conservation and health.”

“You could say that GDN has helped us to grow the approach locally and that a new funder is now helping us to make it into an international approach to carry to different countries.”

By supporting CTPH, GDN has funded an approach that provides ample evidence of the interconnectedness between ecosystems, wildlife and human health. With the help of local volunteers, CTPH projects resulted in a change in social norms, both at the community level and within government, benefiting animals, communities and the environment alike. The potential of this approach – looking beyond the boundaries of traditional development disciplines – has been picked up by international researchers and recognized as an innovative way of addressing human development challenges within a wildlife conservation context.

This is one of nine stories produced in partnership with Aidenvironment to document the outcomes of GDN's awards and medals program, generously supported by the Government of Japan, the World Bank for implementation and a host of donors over the years for the medals.

About the Global Development Awards Competition

The Global Development Awards Competition is an award scheme that identifies talent, supports the career advancement of researchers in developing countries, and funds innovative social development projects, implemented by NGOs, to benefit marginalized groups in the developing world. Since its inception in 2001, the competition has supported more than 340 individuals, research organizations and NGOs with roughly US\$3.8 million worth of awards, placing it as one of the most important global competitions targeting development and research. It currently has three categories of awards: Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD), Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP), and Japan Social Development Fund Award (JSDF). The Medals for Research on Development (MRD), funded every year by a

Award

Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project, 2012 / Japanese Social Development Fund Award 2015

Sources

Kalema-Zikusoka, G. 2016. “Family Planning and the Environment in Communities.” In *Family Planning and Environmental Sustainability: Assessing the Science*, pp. 33-35. Published by Worldwatch Institute.

Interviewees

Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka

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Images

From first to last:

An adult male blackback gorilla of Habinyanja group in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Jo-Anne McArthur/Unbound Project.

A Human and Gorilla Conflict Resolution Team (HUGO) community volunteer being taught by CTPH team to collect gorilla fecal samples from a night nest, CTPH.

A Village Health and Conservation Team (VHCT) community volunteer preparing to give a family planning contraceptive injection to a client living in Bujengwe Parish adjacent to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Photo by Amy Roll, CTPH.

Village Health and Conservation Team (VHCT) community volunteers from Mount Elgon at a meeting to introduce the program, CTPH.

different pool of donors, were discontinued in 2015. Over the years, the competition has built a community of excellence among researchers and development practitioners. The Global Development Awards Competition receives annual funding from the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan. The World Bank manages the trust fund that makes these activities possible.

About GDN

The Global Development Network (GDN) is a public international organization that supports high quality, policy-oriented, social science research in developing and transition countries, to promote better lives. It supports researchers with financial resources, global networking, access to information, training, peer review and mentoring. GDN acts on the premise that better research leads to more informed policies and better, more inclusive development. Through its global platform, GDN connects social science researchers with policymakers and development stakeholders across the world. Founded in 1999, GDN is currently headquartered in New Delhi.

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