

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
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Project Title	Preventing Volcanoes National Park from Going to the Dogs: Reducing and Controlling Feral and Free Ranging Dogs in and around Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda
Application ID	30849-1
Grant Amount	£5940
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1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Trapping feral and free roaming dogs in and around the National Park using humane methods to reduce their numbers mostly in the National Park.				During this project a total of 39 dogs were captured including puppies and adults. Captured adult dogs which were displaying feral behaviour were humanely euthanised. Four free ranging domestic dogs were trapped and reunited with their owners after engaging them and soliciting their commitment to the welfare of their dogs and their movement restriction. Additionally, a number of puppies ranging from 1-3months old were adopted by the interested households and new dog owners were educated on animal welfare and how to prevent dog roaming. The exercise of feral dog trapping in the Volcanoes National Park (VNP) is still ongoing in partnership with the park management and other stakeholders we engaged during the project implementation
Conducting a questionnaire survey among dog owners living in the vicinity of the park to assess the motivations and reasons for keeping dogs and reasons why dog owners allow them to go feral.				The survey was conducted in Burera, Musanze and Nyabihu districts all neighbouring the park and involved 11 sectors directly adjacent to the park. 290 households owning dogs voluntarily participated in the survey. Most of the respondents were household heads (n=204, 70.3%) and had lived in the area for over 10 years (n=275, 94.8%). The results from the survey showed that the major reasons for keeping dogs were for guarding (n=157, 54.1%) and crop protection (n=129, 44.5%). Most of the respondents reported dog-wildlife interaction in and around the park and the common interaction reported was dogs chasing away the wild animals. Detailed results will be shared in the report.

Conducting community outreach activities to sensitize dog owners on the dangers of allowing dogs to go feral and their impact on wildlife and public health.				Community outreach activities were not conducted. This was due to COVID-19 related restrictions and SOPs in the country which initially strictly prohibited such events and continue to prevent people from congregating unless tested. This in itself was costly. However, as we were undertaking interviews within the households, we took advantage to educate the respondents on some dog management hacks including problem behaviours and animal welfare issues.
Training rangers who will be at the forefront of monitoring and trapping feral and free ranging dogs mostly in the national park during and after the project timeline.				Park rangers received field training on trapping dogs using live cages. They were trained on setting traps, monitoring them and proper removal of the captured dogs and non-targeted species. Also, rangers were trained on how to map hotspots of where dogs roam and recording death incidents of wild animals caused by feral dogs.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

The project begun at a time when our country was working around the clock to contain the spread of COVID 19 pandemic. Due to COVID-19 restriction and SOPs which were put in place, some of the project activities did not occur according to our original plans. For example, community outreach activities were not conducted. Another challenge that emerged in the early stage of the project, as opposed to our initial expectations, it was a bit difficult to capture feral dogs living deep inside the park as they seemed shy with the traps and with prey abundance, they had refused most of baits used. However, we introduced a new type of bait (canned sardine) and we eventually managed to capture some dogs. For instance, a total of 12 dogs were captured at two sites deep inside the park. Of the 12 dogs captured at these two different sites, only three were adults and the rest were puppies captured physically by hands and which were adopted by interested people.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- One of the most important outcomes of this work is that wildlife deaths as a result of feral dog attacks in and around the park have reduced. This is because the number of feral and free roaming dogs has also reduced because of the trapping efforts.

- The capacity of park rangers to set traps and monitor them and respond where necessary was enhanced through the training under this project. This is considered a great achievement for continuity of the project.
- We gathered critical information about dog ownership and community perceptions about dogs. Additionally, the pictures captured by camera traps at the edge of the park show evidence of dogs entering the park from its surrounding communities, and this prompted the park to share these findings with local government authorities which resulted into the initiation of stray dog trapping within the communities. This was an unexpected and exceptionally positive aspect of our work.

4. What do you consider to be the most significant achievement of this work?

5. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

The local community involvement has been limited due to the pandemic related measures and guidelines. However, we were able to conduct a survey where 290 households representatives participated and provided much needed information that is crucial for the accurate management of free roaming and feral dogs in and around the park. It was during this survey that we got information on the common areas being used by the feral dogs and we set camera traps at the selected park entrances where we documented evidence of free roaming dogs regularly entering the park from the communities. We had always suspected this but this time we have evidence, thanks to the community involvement.

As we were undertaking interviews within the households, they took advantage to ask questions/clarifications of the issues they didn't quite understand, regarding for example the potential zoonotic disease transmission from their domestic dogs, the reproductive management of dogs, etc. The dog owners, however, still lack essential services including dog neutering to prevent unwanted reproduction, regular deworming, etc., mostly due to unavailability of veterinary services in the area as well as lack of means to afford the service.

6. Are there any plans to continue this work?

This work has proven very essential to reduce wildlife damage caused by free roaming and feral dogs in and around the park, and therefore it remains of critical importance and should continue. We aim to continue looking for funding to continue trapping the feral dogs inside the park, conduct the awareness campaigns to educate the communities and provide spay and neuter services to reduce and prevent the unwanted reproduction which is regarded as the source of free roaming and feral dogs.

Additionally, there is a need for regular deworming of owned domestic dogs. There is also a need to study zoonotic pathogens of domestic and free-roaming dogs in the vicinity of VNP and their impact on public health and wildlife conservation in VNP ecosystem. This is very essential because this area is home for endangered

mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) that are known to be susceptible to zoonotic diseases that might originate from humans and domestic animals.

7. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

The results are regularly being shared mainly with stakeholders operating in and around the VNP including the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), Rwanda Agricultural Board (RAB) and non-governmental conservation organisations through presentations and meetings. We also plan to make a publishable document from the results obtained from the surveys with local communities.

8. Timescale: Over what period was the grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The initial planned implementation period for the project was 11 months. However, given the time we received the funds and due to COVID-19 pandemic our implementation plan was interrupted severely, and the project has been implemented over a much longer period (17 months) than it was initially anticipated. However, the longer the period, the greater the number of feral dogs captured throughout different areas and seasons and this extension gave us ample time to gather more information about feral dogs in this ecosystem.

9. Budget: Provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Questionnaire survey	200	180	-20	We saved 20£ from the social survey budgeted costs
Stakeholder's meeting	470	350	-120	We got the venue at 100£ and therefore saved 100£. 20£ were saved from buying soft drinks and snacks for the participants.
Report production	150	100	-50	
Community awareness campaign	650		-650	Community awareness campaigns did not take place because of COVID19 related restriction that prohibited social gatherings in the country. The

				amount meant for these activities was diverted and used in dog trapping activities to facilitate our field team (used for Transport and meals).
Field training for park rangers	350	410	+60	We incurred other unanticipated costs while conducting field training for the rangers. We hired 3 porters who assisted us in carrying the project equipment. The additional 60£ was obtained from what was saved from the stakeholder meeting costs in the budget.
Dog capture/trapping operations	1200	1900	+700	Dog trapping operations in and around the national park are ongoing and continue to yield tangible results. The budgeted amount for these activities was insufficient, however, we used the amount which was meant for community outreach activities and the amount which was saved from the reporting cost to continue carrying out these operations. This amount has been used in transporting and feeding our dog trapping team.
Purchase of 8 traps	2720	2800	+80	Each trap costed us 350£ as opposed to 340£ we had budget for to procure the traps. We used additional amount (80£) saved from the stakeholder meeting and the questionnaire survey.
Permit from the Conservation Department	200	200		
Total	5940	5940		

10. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

- As most of the respondents agreed that their dogs had contact with neighbours' dogs or other free roaming dogs as well as with wildlife in or outside the park; and in addition to that, most of the respondents (95.2%) never dewormed their dogs and even the ones who dewormed their dogs,

most of them dewormed only once in a year, it is therefore very crucial to conduct awareness of dog owners about gastrointestinal infection as well as other zoonotic pathogens by developing an educational programme which should include information on regular deworming, proper feeding of dogs, population control of dogs and restraining of dogs, etc.

- It is also very important to conduct research to understand the pathogens circulating among domestic and feral dog populations and their implication on wildlife conservation as well as public health.
- As evidenced on the photographic captures of the camera traps, true feral populations are probably generally low, compared to free roaming domestic dogs accessing the park from its surrounding communities and which most probably are the major cause of damage to wildlife in terms of direct kill as well as disease transmission. There is a need to engage the local leaders and authority in charge to sensitise them on the negative impact of free roaming dogs on wildlife conservation in the park as well as public health. All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that the dog does not roam out of control in a manner that would pose a problem to the community and/or the environment.
- Controlling reproduction in domestic dogs would help prevent the birth of unwanted puppies, and hence reduce the free roaming and feral dogs' population.

11. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

We used RF logo on materials we used during the project implementation.

12. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Nacirema Gaspard: Was the project PI. Coordinated all project activities and managed funds. He was also in charge of working with stakeholders.

Adrien Twalib: Assisted with field activities specifically trapping and training rangers on how to set traps.

Safari Gabriel: Assisted with conducting a questionnaire survey among dog owners' households.

Joseph Monaragala: Assisted with field trapping

13. Any other comments?

- I would like to express my sincere appreciation to RF for funding this very important and impactful project.

- Some challenges encountered during project implementation prevented us to complete the project on time according to our original plans and prevented some activities to happen but on the other hand the longer the period we used, the greater the number of feral dogs captured throughout different areas and seasons and this extension gave us ample time to gather more information about feral dogs in this ecosystem
- As the pandemic start winding down, it remains critically important to continue this work especially involving the local community being regarded as the source of free roaming and feral dogs.