Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to assess the success of your project.

We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course, but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and to others who may be undertaking similar work—remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.

Please complete this evaluation report in English and refer to the reporting guidelines. We may ask for more information or a revised report if we have follow-up questions or feel information is missing. Note that edits may be made before posting on our website, so please provide the report in **MS Word format** (not PDF).

Your final budget should be submitted separately, using the Excel template sent with your offer letter.
Please email both the completed report and budget to jane@rufford.org.

Your Details	
Full name	WASSO SHUKURU Dieudonné
Project title	Applied Community-Based Approach and ICT Tool for Kahuzi Biega National Park Elephant Preservation
Application ID	45522-2
Project start date	23/12/2024
Project end date	15/01/2026
Date of report submission	21/01/2026

Outcomes, indicators and activities

1. **Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original expected outcomes. Include a brief explanation of the activities conducted and your key findings, providing specific, measurable outputs, based on the indicators in your project proposal (e.g. number of camera traps deployed).**

Expected outcome (as per project proposal)	**Level of achievement**	**Indicator (as per project proposal)**	**Summary of activities and outputs**
Comprehensive understanding of historical and current distribution of forest elephants in KBNP	Fully achieved	Number of scientific papers and reports reviewed; summary report compiled; field trip plan approved; number of permissions secured	Conducted literature review (Over 30 scientific papers, historical reports); compiled baseline report; obtained park permits; high-resolution GIS and MaxEnt habitat suitability maps (AUC > 0.8) developed.
Geolocation data on the current distribution of forest elephants	Partially achieved	Number of satellite images analyzed; accuracy of GIS maps.	Satellite images analyzed using freely available high-resolution datasets (CHIRPS, WorldClim, AFRICLIM); maps developed showing critical habitats, potential distribution, and priority zones for conservation. Due to the deterioration of security conditions in South Kivu from February 2025, the planned field trip with the Kahuzi Biega National Park (KBNP) patrol team could not be safely conducted.

			To ensure continuity, we adapted the methodology in coordination with KBNP authorities by using existing patrol data, GIS-based modeling, and remote sensing to assess elephant distribution. The funds allocated for the field trip were consequently not fully used and were reallocated to other key project activities. This adjustment was discussed with the Rufford Foundation management team, and the overall project budget remained within the approved grant amount.
Enhanced community engagement and establishment of multi-sectoral conservation committee	Fully achieved	Number of community members involved; attendance at events; sectors represented	We conducted two multi-stakeholder workshops. A total of 94 participants benefited from the workshops (47 in each), including local community members and park staff, enhancing technical skills and fostering inclusive engagement across all stakeholder groups. As initially planned, the first training was mainly for park staff (38 participants) and focused on wildlife monitoring and ways to work more closely with local communities to protect forest elephants. Additional participants (9 participants) from other groups (such as NGOs and community representatives) were included to reach 47 and to support the formation of the Community-Based Conservation Committee.

			The second training was primarily for community members (41 participants) and focused on raising awareness about the importance of conserving forest elephants. Again, other stakeholders (6 participants) were included to ensure an inclusive approach. We established a Community-Based Conservation Committee (CBCC) consisting of 10 members, with two representatives from each of the following groups: KBNP management, local community leaders, conservation NGOs, academic institutions, and indigenous groups. Efforts were made to ensure inclusive representation, with four women and three youth members included in the committee. We organized awareness campaigns reaching 500 schoolchildren. Fourteen schools were visited as part of the awareness campaigns, reaching a total of 500 schoolchildren, with an average of about 35 students per school.
User-friendly digital platform for monitoring elephant populations	Partially achieved	Platform functionality; feedback from users; organizations trained	Platform designed and pilot-tested; adjustments ongoing. Remaining tasks include the full operationalization in KBNP and integration of user feedback. The platform was pilot-tested with 12 users, including Kahuzi-Biega National Park technical staff and selected

			representatives from local stakeholders. These users were involved in testing key functionalities such as data entry, geolocation recording, and data visualization. The funds initially allocated to the digital platform (£1,500) were redirected to the audio advertisement, social marketing, and the sustainable livelihood programme, including the establishment of fast-growing tree plantations. These activities were successfully carried out and contributed to strengthening community awareness and reducing pressure on forest resources. The digital platform referenced here was therefore not funded through the Rufford grant but was instead developed through local contribution and strengthened through collaboration with KBNP. It represents added value to the project rather than a cost under the grant. The current focus is on its full operationalization within KBNP and the integration of user feedback.
Improved adoption of sustainable livelihood alternatives to reduce pressure on forest elephant habitats	Fully achieved	Number of tree seedlings planted; number of beneficiaries involved; survival rate of planted trees; level of community participation	A pilot sustainable livelihood programme was successfully implemented through the establishment of plantations of fast-growing and fruit-bearing tree species, including *Grevillea robusta* (210), *Mangifera indica* (255), and *Persea americana* (157). A total of 622 seedlings were distributed and planted with the active involvement of 300

			community members. The initiative aimed to provide alternative sources of income (fruit production and timber) and reduce dependence on natural forest resources for firewood and construction materials. A training session for 30 participants was conducted on tree planting, maintenance, and the ecological importance of agroforestry systems. Preliminary monitoring indicates a satisfactory survival rate (94%) of planted seedlings, supported by community engagement and follow-up visits. This pilot activity demonstrated the potential of integrating livelihood improvement with conservation goals, contributing to reduced pressure on forest elephant habitats and increased community support for conservation efforts.
Enhanced skills in wildlife monitoring and community engagement; trained MSc student	Fully achieved	Number of participants trained; evaluation scores; student progress	We trained 47 stakeholders in GPS-based monitoring, transect surveys, and digital data collection. Due to the security situation during the project period, it was not possible to organize a student conference as initially planned. However, student engagement was maintained through their active involvement in project activities, including participation in workshops, and awareness campaigns. In addition, one BSc thesis was

			successfully completed and an MSc student was supported throughout the project, ensuring continued academic capacity building despite the constraints.

2. If relevant, describe any other important or unexpected outcomes of your project. Feel free to include evidence (e.g. maps, tables and figures).

- ✓ Despite security and environmental constraints, GIS-based modeling allowed continuation of mapping activities.
- ✓ Community-based approach strengthened trust and coordination among previously hesitant community members.
- ✓ Unexpectedly, educational outreach increased youth interest in conservation careers.

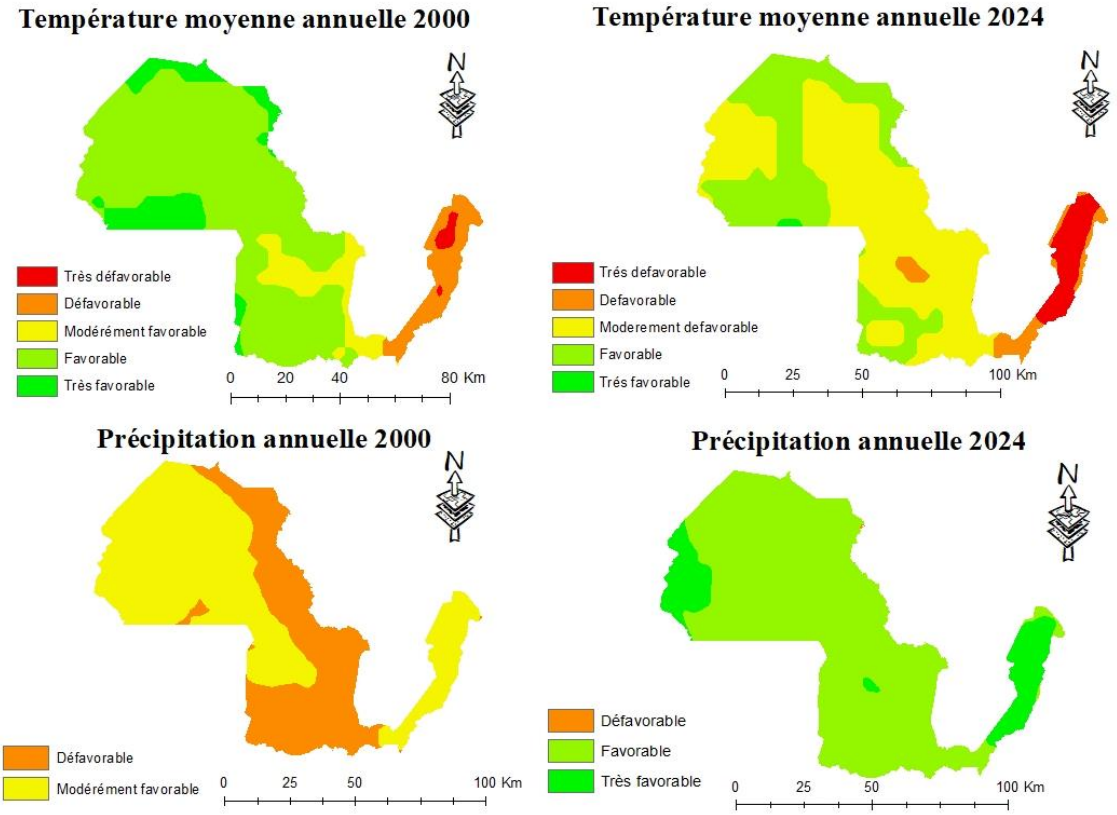

Figure 5. Characterization of forest elephant habitat based on temperatures and precipitation for the years 2000 and 2024 in KBNP.

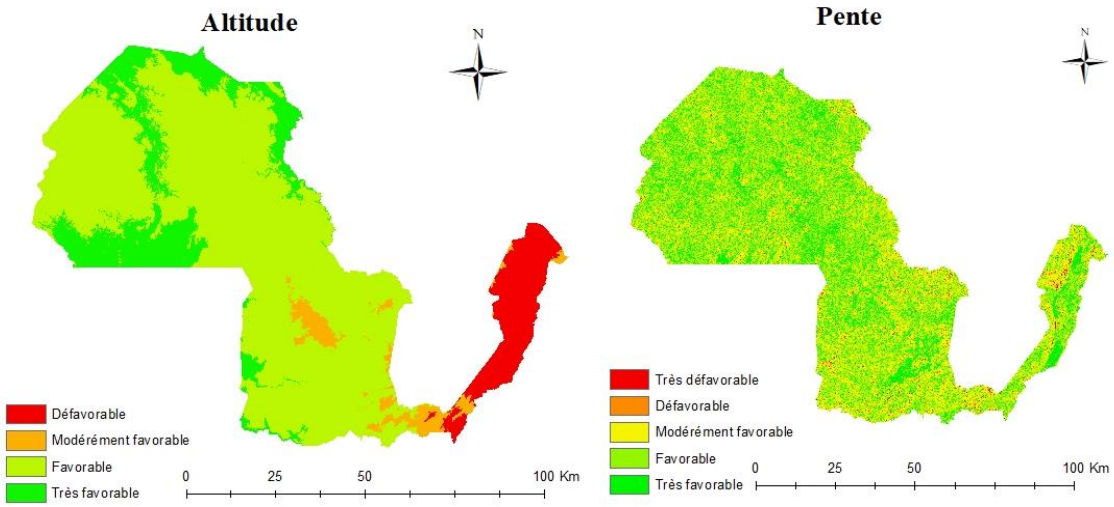

Figure 6. Static data over time: Elevation and slope

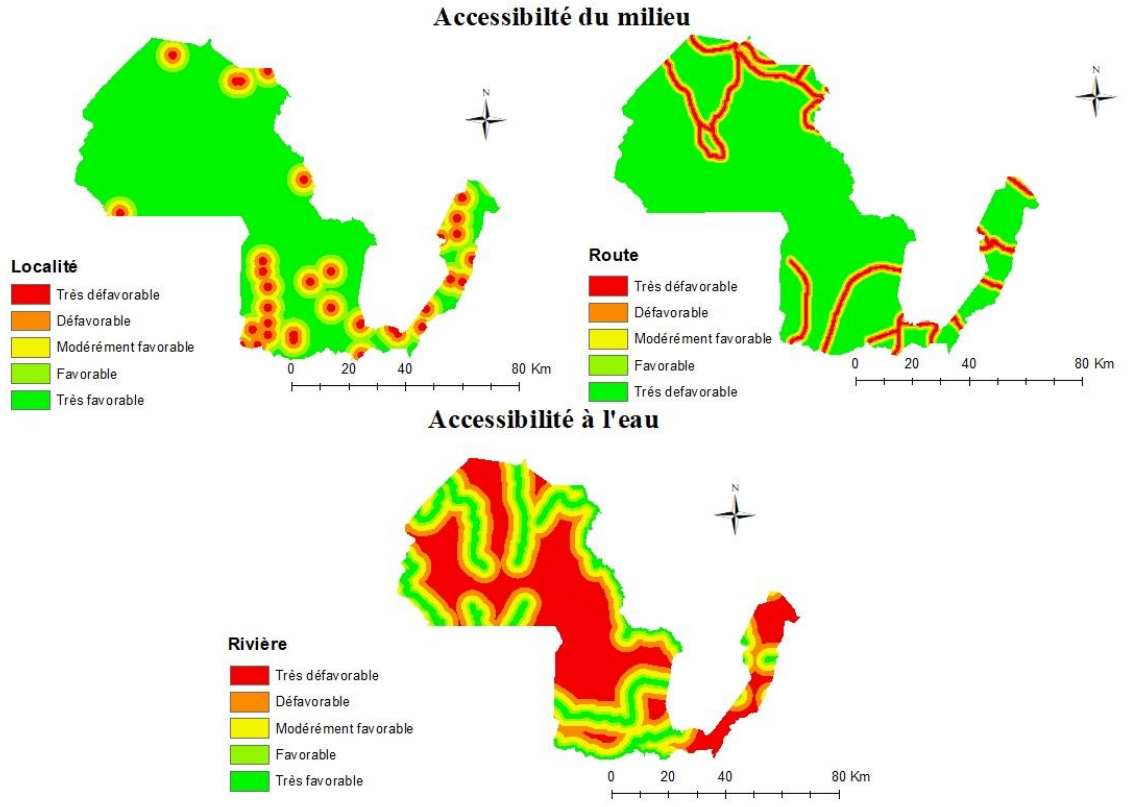

Figure 7. Static data over time: Accessibility of the environment and access to water

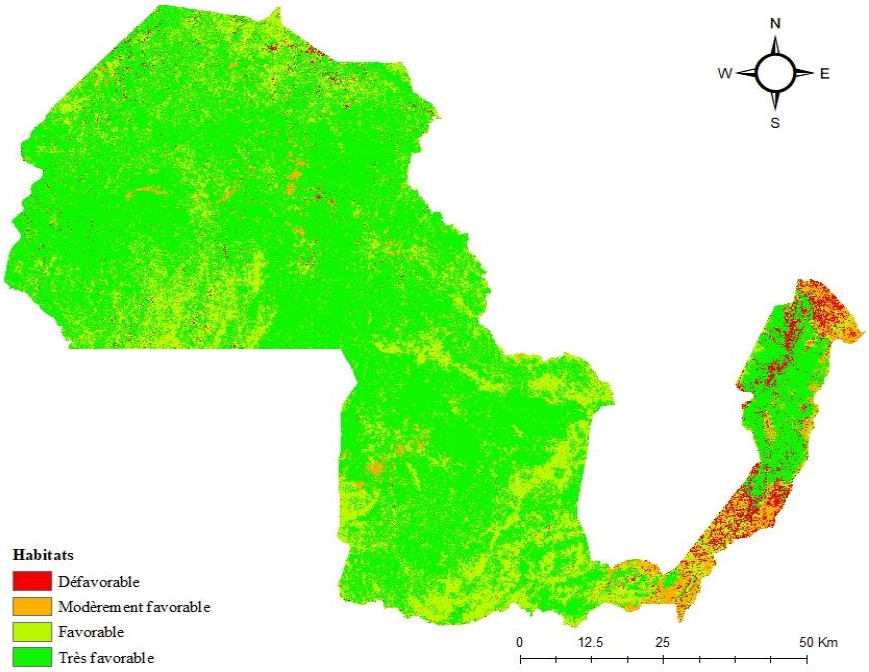

Figure 8. Habitat suitability for forest elephants

Figure 9: Group photo of participants at the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Science, UEA, symbolizing institutional collaboration and stakeholder diversity.

Figure 10: Photo of participants during the workshop.

Figure 11: Photo of participants during the workshop.

Figure 12: Simulation session: GPS parameter configuration and field equipment setup for geolocation data collection. © 2025 Wasso Shukuru Dieudonné. All rights reserved. Used with permission. Photo credit: Wasso Shukuru Dieudonné.

Figure 13: Participants conducting field simulations for data collection using GPS and transect-based sampling.

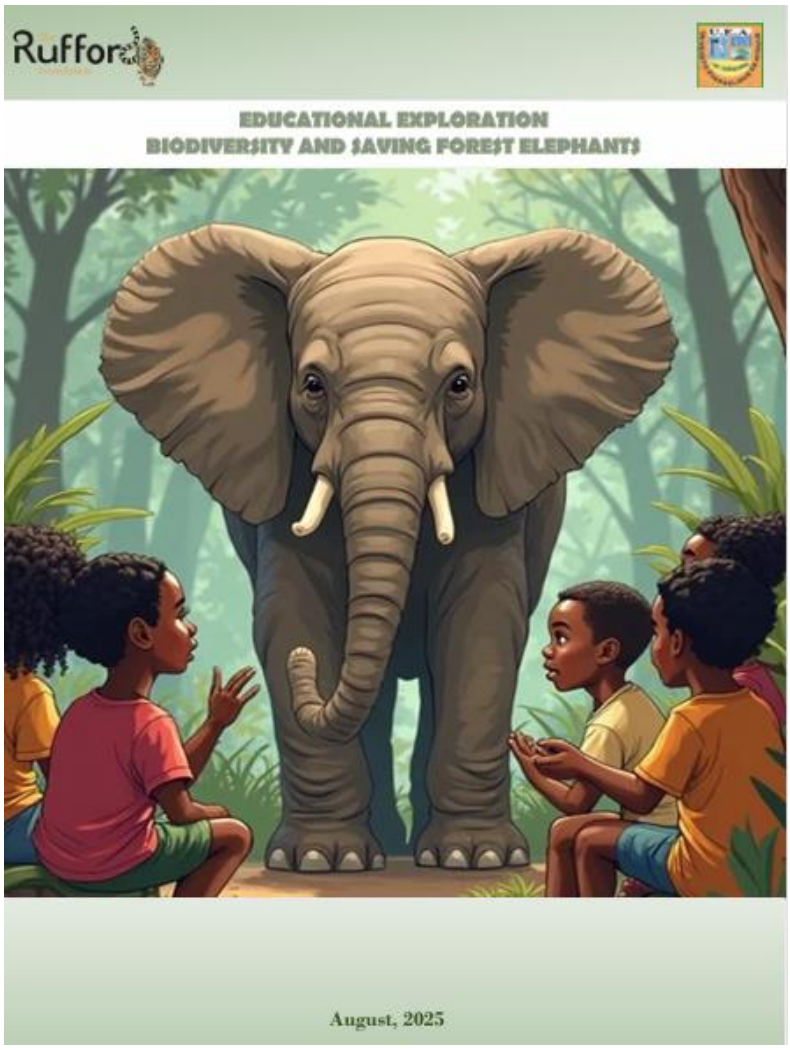

Figure 14: Cover page of the Educational material on Forest elephant ecology and conservation.

Challenges

3. **Explain any challenges that arose during the project (e.g. severe weather, broken equipment, delay in obtaining research permits, etc.). Were you able to overcome these? If so, please explain how.**

   a) **Security and access constraints:**

   One of the major unforeseen challenges encountered during the project period was the deterioration of security conditions in South Kivu from February 2025.

Heightened insecurity restricted physical access to certain areas of Kahuzi-Biega National Park and surrounding communities, limiting opportunities for direct engagement. To address this challenge, the project team maintained close coordination with Kahuzi Biega National Park (KBNP) authorities and relevant local stakeholders, prioritized the safety of staff and participants, and adopted flexible planning mechanisms. In response to access limitations, the team relied on GIS-based modeling, remote sensing analyses, and desk-based reviews to support project objectives without requiring direct field data collection.

b) Weather and environmental constraints:

Adverse weather conditions, particularly heavy rainfall and difficult terrain during the rainy season, further complicated mobility and the scheduling of planned activities. These conditions affected the organization of in-person workshops, trainings, and stakeholder meetings. To mitigate these constraints, activities were rescheduled to relatively stable periods, and logistical arrangements were adjusted accordingly.

c) Community engagement challenges:

Community engagement was initially constrained by prevailing security concerns, competing livelihood pressures, and the need to establish trust with local stakeholders. Some community members were cautious about participation due to uncertainty and ongoing socio-economic challenges. To overcome these barriers, the project team adopted an inclusive and adaptive engagement strategy, organizing focused meetings through existing local structures. Capacity-building activities were prioritized, including workshops, training sessions, and the distribution of educational booklets on the ecology and conservation of forest elephants. These approaches facilitated continued community involvement and awareness-raising while respecting security and contextual limitations.

4. **Were there any changes to the project plan or any activities that you were unable to carry out or had to adapt? (If these changes impacted your budget, please include amounts in the budget section only.)**

- ✓ Satellite images originally budgeted were replaced by freely available high-resolution datasets, reducing costs (£1,000 saved).
- ✓ Field activities had to be adapted due to security restrictions in some areas and heavy rainfall. GIS modeling, remote sensing, and desktop analyses were prioritized.
- ✓ Workshop subsistence costs increased due to unstable security and transportation needs.

Community and other stakeholder involvement

5. **Were any local community members or other stakeholders involved in the project (e.g. fishers assisting with data collection)? Please describe who and their involvement. Disaggregating gender data is important for highlighting diversity, equity and inclusion. When quantifying stakeholder engagement, please state how many women and men were involved.**

Local communities were actively engaged through workshops, awareness campaigns, and training sessions, involving a total of 94 participants, including 25 women and 69 men. Five students (Three females and two males) under the faculty of Agriculture and environmental sciences at Université Evangélique en Afrique served as members of the protocol teams during workshops and educational campaigns. Technical staff from Kahuzi-Biega National Park (KBNP) supported monitoring activities and data collection. Non-governmental organizations provided technical guidance and co-facilitated workshops. In addition, one MSc student and one BSc student were actively involved in project implementation.

6. **Describe if local communities and other stakeholders have benefitted from the project. Did local communities present any resistance to the project at any stage?**

Local communities and other stakeholders derived multiple benefits from the project. Community members enhanced their knowledge of forest elephant ecology, conservation challenges, and the importance of coexistence between humans and wildlife. Through targeted participatory workshops, communities also developed practical skills in basic conservation monitoring, environmental awareness, and participatory decision-making. These activities strengthened local capacity and fostered a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for forest elephant conservation initiatives.

At the outset, some resistance was observed among community members, primarily due to prevailing security concerns, competing livelihood pressures, and initial uncertainty regarding the objectives of the project. However, this resistance was progressively addressed through transparent communication, and inclusive, community-centered workshops. By working through trusted local structures and ensuring that community voices were actively considered in decision-making processes, the project was able to build trust, improve participation, and sustain stakeholder commitment throughout implementation.

7. **If you have observed any behaviour change by stakeholders as a result of your project, please explain the change and how you have measured this. We**

understand that behaviour change can take a long time, but any progress towards this is useful to include.

At this stage, the project has generated early indications of positive behavioural shifts rather than fully established behaviour change. Community members demonstrated increased willingness to engage in conservation-related discussions, participate in monitoring simulations, and collaborate with park representatives during workshops.

Progress toward behaviour change was assessed through active engagement during workshops, and practical involvement in monitoring exercises and reporting simulations. These indicators suggest growing awareness, improved attitudes toward elephant conservation, and readiness for longer-term behavioural change, which is expected to consolidate with continued engagement and follow-up activities.

Communications and results dissemination

8. **Have you or will you share your findings with relevant stakeholders? Please fill in the table below to explain who with and how.**

Type of stakeholder	Name of stakeholder (e.g. specific government entity or department)	What you have or will share (e.g. data, key results, recommendations)	How you have or will share this (e.g. reports, workshops, meetings)
Park or reserve management	Kahuzi Biega National Park	Technical reports, GIS maps, recommendations	Meetings, workshops, email reports
Local community members	Local communities, schools	Awareness materials, booklets, education on elephant ecology	School visits, workshops, distribution of booklets
Other	Universities, research institutions	findings, methodology	Peer-reviewed manuscript submission

9. **Do you plan to share your data or findings with the relevant IUCN Species Survival Commission Specialist Group? If so, which group?**

The project team plans to share the study findings with the IUCN Species Survival Commission African Elephant Specialist Group.

10. Do you plan to submit a manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal? If you have already published a paper/s relating to this or a previous Rufford Small Grant, please include the DOI link here.

A peer-reviewed manuscript focusing on the spatial ecology of forest elephants and conservation planning in Kahuzi-Biega National Park is currently in preparation and will be submitted to an Elsevier-published journal.

Two papers have been so far produced from my previous Rufford Small Grant [grant number 38797-1, 2023]. Their DOI links are below presented:

1. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejar.2025.12.001 supported by the Rufford Foundation [grant number 38797-1, 2023]
2. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoenv.2025.117953 supported by the Rufford Foundation [grant number 38797-1, 2023]

11. Have you or do you plan to present your project findings at any conferences?

I plan to present the project findings at the International Conference on Wildlife Conservation and Agritourism Synergies (ICWCAS-26), which will be held on 25-26 August 2026 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

12. Did you develop any outreach materials, and have you shared your project on social media, websites or through other media? Please fill in the table below and, where possible, provide links or images.

Item (e.g. poster, documentary, news article, social media post)	**Type of material**	**Target audience**	**Level of dissemination (i.e. number of products printed/number of social media followers/number of radio listeners)**	**Link (if relevant)**
Educational booklet	Hard copy	Schoolchildren and communities	500 copies distributed	N/A
Workshop materials (Handouts and T-shirts)	Soft copy	Community and park staff	94 participants	N/A
Manuscript	Soft	Scientific	Will be	N/A

	copy	community	disseminated through publication in a peer review journal	

Going forward

13. Are there any plans to continue this work? Outline the important next steps.

Yes. The project team plans to continue by integrating up-to-date, field-validated elephant presence data into the habitat suitability models to produce finalized distribution maps. Future activities will also focus on expanding community-based monitoring networks, and supporting long-term capacity-building and student research within KBNP.
In parallel, subject to the availability of additional funding, the project will promote more alternative income-generating activities to reduce pressure on forest elephant habitats and implement human-elephant conflict mitigation measures, including early-warning systems, crop-protection techniques, and safe coexistence practices.

14. Do you intend to apply for another Rufford Small Grant or funding from another donor?

The project team is planning to apply for a subsequent Rufford Small Grant to expand and sustain ongoing conservation activities within Kahuzi-Biega National Park in particular and in the Democratic Republic of Congo in general. In addition, efforts will be made to secure supplementary funding from other national and international conservation organizations to support long-term monitoring, community engagement, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at protecting forest elephants and their habitats.

Personal capacity and professional development

15. Has the project helped you personally or in your career?

a) **Experience** (e.g. time in the field, stakeholder engagement)**:**
b) **Skills** (e.g. technical skills, leadership skills, fundraising, proposal and report writing)**:**
c) **Qualifications** (academic or other)**:**

The project has significantly contributed to my personal experience and professional growth. Data collection, community engagement, and facilitation of stakeholder workshops have strengthened practical expertise in conservation project implementation. In addition, I gained valuable experience working with school children during the distribution of educational booklets on the ecology and conservation of forest elephants, which enhanced my skills in environmental education and outreach. Technical skills acquired include GIS and remote sensing, wildlife monitoring, leadership, and the preparation of reports and scientific manuscripts.

Other

16. **Which of the Global Biodiversity Framework 2030 Targets does your project address? List as many as applicable (e.g. Targets 2 and 4).**

The project contributes to several targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework. By engaging local communities in participatory monitoring and habitat conservation activities, it supports Target 2, aiming to restore degraded ecosystems within Kahuzi-Biega National Park. It also addresses Target 4 by directly contributing to the conservation of forest elephants through community-based monitoring and awareness initiatives that help reduce human-elephant conflicts and safeguard genetic diversity. In addition, the project aligns with Target 13 by promoting knowledge sharing with local communities, educational institutions, and stakeholders through workshops, and educational booklets, ensuring that the benefits arising from biodiversity research are accessible and equitably shared.

17. **Did you use the Conservation Evidence website when planning your project, and was this helpful? If your project provides useful information about what worked or did not work, please consider sharing it through Conservation Evidence.**

The Conservation Evidence platform was used as a key resource to inform planning and implementation. It provided evidence-based guidance on effective conservation interventions, helping the project design community-based strategies, educational activities, and monitoring protocols that are grounded in proven practices and adapted to local ecological and social contexts.

18. **Did The Rufford Foundation receive any publicity during your project (such as including the Foundation logo on outreach materials)? If yes, please describe how.**

Yes. The Rufford Foundation was acknowledged in project materials (such as T-shirts used during training workshops, and educational booklets on the ecology and

conservation of forest elephants, distributed to school children), as well as presentations, and during training workshops and community engagement activities. Participants were informed of the Foundation's support, ensuring visibility and recognition of its contribution to forest elephant conservation in KBNP.
In the manuscript that will be submitted soon for publication, the Rufford Foundation is acknowledged for the financial support that enabled the execution of the project from which the paper' results originated.

19. Provide a list of all the members of your team and briefly describe their role in the project.

- ✓ **Dr. Espoir Bagula Mukengere (PhD)**-Technical Advisor, responsible for GIS-based analyses, community engagement, and delivery of training activities.
- ✓ **Prof. Ayagirwe Basengere (PhD)**- Academic Supervisor, providing overall academic oversight, methodological support and institutional coordination.
- ✓ **Prof. Daud Kassam (PhD)**-Research mentorship, offering scientific guidance, methodological support, and leadership in manuscript preparation and write-up.
- ✓ **KBNP technical staff**-Contributing to training delivery, supporting monitoring-related activities, and ensuring coordination with park management and operational structures.
- ✓ **Prof. Akilimali Itongwa Justin (PhD)**-Scientific advisor, providing expertise in methodological design.
- ✓ **Mr. BARAKA BALOLA Jérémie,** BSc student under the project.
- ✓ **Mr. KWAKANABA MWEZE Adolphe**, MSc student, who served as a facilitator during the distribution of educational booklets and awareness-raising sessions, contributing to improved understanding of forest elephant ecology, conservation challenges, and the importance of peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife.

If not already provided, please include some photos from your project, along with brief captions and copyright information.

Please ensure you also submit a final budget, using the Excel template sent with your offer letter.