

THE

LIGHT  
MAGAZINE

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DECEMBER 2016

INAMA  
Y'IGIHUGU  
Y'UMUSHYIKIRANO



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## Rwanda seeks to end aid dependency

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Working with indigenous communities



### INTERVIEW:

Saving the African continent, President of AWF

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0788177000  
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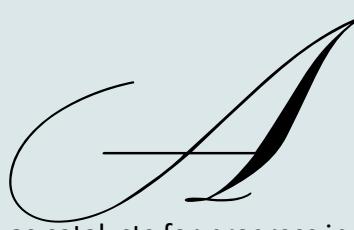


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As 2016 slowly comes to an end, we yet bring to you in this issue the development efforts of various development partners of Rwanda. Our December edition of The Light Magazine focuses on NGO's role in local development and as catalysts for progress in local communities.

Some of those highlighted include AEE which Evangelise through word and deed in partnership with the church, TROCAIRE whose work in Rwanda helps people to deal with the consequences of the 1994 Genocide, to develop sustainable livelihoods and accountable governance, SEVOTA that supports people to organise themselves in order to analyse their own problems and those of the community and find appropriate solutions. The President of the African Wildlife Foundation discusses conservation work his organization is undertaking on the African continent.

The annual two-day National Dialogue or Umushyikirano concluded following heated discussions on national issues with diverse participation of Rwandans from all walks from life. Those who attended included Rwandans in the country and also those from the diaspora as well as guests resident in the country and friends of Rwanda from different countries. In his closing remarks, President Kagame urged Rwandans on service delivery and self belief.

Rwandans like others across the world are preparing to join their families to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas. As a country with a majority Christian population, expectations are for greater celebrations on the day and more in the last week of the year. Enjoy this end of year souvenir copy while you are celebrating.

***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, 2017!***

THE **L I G H T**  
MAGAZINE

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**Coordination:**  
Ernest Nyetera

**Editor**  
Nsamaza Steven

**Contributors**  
Dr. Vince Sinining  
Mudugia Joseph  
Nsamaza Steven  
Nyetera Ernest  
Tuyizere Daniel  
Wakibi Geoffrey

**Marketing**  
Karangwa Augustine  
+250 788 412 083

**Administration**  
Umukumburwa Redempta  
+250 782 703 090

**Design / Layout**  
Erick M. SIBOMANA  
+250 788 554 350

**Contacts details**  
+250 788 568 331  
+250 788 306 472  
lightmagazinerwanda@gmail.com



@lightmagazinerw

[www.lightmagazine.rw](http://www.lightmagazine.rw)



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## Syria: Aleppo mass evacuations



Mass evacuations of areas under siege in north Syrian town of Aleppo resumed with people in some rebel-held zones allowed to leave. Eastern Aleppo had been held by the rebels since 2012, but Syrian forces squeezed them into ever-smaller corners of the city, along with thousands of civilians.

UN monitored mass evacuations started in mid-December but not without incident putting civilians at risk without access to food, shelter and almost no medical facilities. Diplomatic efforts to resolve the Syrian conflict have become 'paralyzed.'

**DID YOU?  
KNOW**



### The World's Tallest Building

Burj Khalifa, broke the world record for tallest building at 828 meters (2,717 ft) tall with 163 floors in 2010. Rising imperiously out of the sands of Dubai, Burj Khalifa stands at nearly 700 feet taller than the second tallest structure in the world. Dubai plans to remain home to the world tallest buildings after breaking ground to The Tower which will surpass Burj Khalifa.

### Most expensive skyscraper

Abraj Al Bait, located in the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia is worthy US\$15 billion becoming the most expensive skyscraper in the world. At a height of 601 metres, this building is the tallest hotel, has a floor area of 1,500,000 m<sup>2</sup>, and a 100,000-person capacity



# Rwanda seeks to end aid dependency

By Our Reporter

“We used to struggle just to survive. Now we struggle to thrive and prosper.” President Paul Kagame said during the concluded Umushyikirano that was held at Kigali Convention Center. The president told over 2000 participants at the meeting that they need to do more for developing the country.

The President also underlined a goal for Rwanda to set a deadline which the country will stop relying on donor funding. According to President Kagame, ending aid dependency is the ultimate goal that will further the development of the country.

Rwanda is gradually closing the gap, currently the country stands at 66 per cent in financing its own budget while donors fill the remaining 34 per cent.

As required by Rwanda’s constitution, Umushyikirano or National Dialogue is a two-day event held annually with attendance of citizens from different walks of life and invited guests. The meeting is aimed to make government more accountable to citizens and more responsive to their needs.

Addressing the participants this year, the president said that ending aid dependency should come sooner rather than later, after which Rwanda will no longer be waiting for what others hand out to us.

“We are at a point in our development where we can get this done if we really put our minds to the task.” Kagame encouraged citizens. “It is better to face things the hard way and go straight to the heart of any problem.”

Rwanda’s progress has had disruptions in some instances when donors stop aid money and the government is not able to finance some of its budget. Back in 2012 the country’s econom-



ic growth suffered disruptions after donors cut aid on grounds that Kigali was supporting rebels in eastern DR Congo.

President Kagame says that, depending on others is not sustainable because sometimes they choose to switch on or off.

During the 14th edition of Umushyikirano discussions centered on, ‘The Rwanda We Want’. Various people contributed with ideas of shaping a country that responds to their needs and aspirations.

Umushyikirano has been praised as one of Rwanda’s successful home-grown initiatives that brings leaders and citizens together to tackle the country’s challenges in an open and transparent manner

Government took the occasion to layout another strategic plan to guide the country’s development called Vision 2050. The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Claver Gatete outlined the highlights of the blueprint

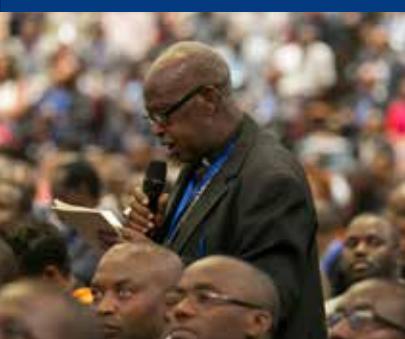
of the vision which emphasized on improved living standards, sustained food security, and access to quality affordable services in key sectors - health, education, finance, housing and infrastructure.

The blueprint’s five main pillars include; quality of life, modern infrastructure and livelihoods, transformation for prosperity, values for Vision 2050 and international cooperation and positioning.

The outlaid new plan comes three years before Vision 2020 which the minister says that achievements registered should pave way for further elaborate development programmes towards a more dignified Rwanda.

“As we walk towards reaching ‘upper middle income’ by 2035 and ‘high income’ by 2050, it will require us to double the current economic growth rates to an average annual growth of above 10%. This will help free the country from aid dependency and the international pressure that comes with it,” Gatete said.





# Christmas:

## *A Time to Celebrate!*

On 25<sup>th</sup> of December every year Christians around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, who they believe is the son of God. His birth date is unknown because there is little information about his early life. Christians celebrate Jesus' birthday on December 25 while Orthodox Christians celebrate on or near January 7 on the day of Christmas.

It is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing it with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular in nature. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends.

Around Christmas period has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many peoples rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight.

In Scandinavia, they celebrated Christmas from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which they would set on fire. People would feast until the log burned out, which could take as many as 12 days. The Norse (people from Scandinavia) believed that each spark from the fire represented a new pig or calf that would be born during the coming year.

The end of December was a perfect time for celebration in most areas of Europe. At that time of year, most cattle were slaughtered so they would not have to be fed during the winter. For many, it was the only time of year when they had a supply of fresh meat. In addition, most wine and beer made during the year was finally fermented and ready for drinking.

In Germany, people honoured the pagan god Oden during the mid-winter holiday. Germans were terrified of Oden, as they believed he made nocturnal flights through the sky to observe his people, and then decide who would prosper or perish. Because of his presence, many people chose to stay inside.

The word "Christmas" comes from the old English "Cristes maesse", or the mass of Christ. It is likely that the Christmas date of December 25 was chosen to offset the Pagan celebrations of Saturnalia and Natalis Invicti. It's also possible that the celebration of the birth of the "true light of the world" was set at the time of the December solstice because this is when the days in the northern hemisphere begin to grow longer. Christmas holiday customs derive from various cultures, including Teutonic, Celtic, Roman, West Asian and Christian.





# Aerial drone to monitor crops in Northern Rwanda

Potato farmers in Imbaraga Co-operative Federation located in Nyabihu, Burera and Musanze districts will get an aerial drone to monitor their Irish potato crops following the launch on December 7th, 2016.

USAID's Private Sector Driven Agricultural Growth Project in partnership with AgriLift Ltd launched an aerial drone to monitor crops for Irish Potato farmers in the three districts. The pilot drone-based crop monitoring technology will serve 2,000 potato farmers affiliated with 20 potato cooperatives in Imbaraga.

According to USAID Mission Director in Rwanda, Marcia Musisi-Nkambwe, the drone will take overhead images of growing crops at specific intervals and the images are then analyzed with an open-source computer model of plant growth, which was specifically developed for potato farms. The drone technology can identify the optimal maturity of potato plants for farmers, and can also spot nutrient deficient or diseased crops.

At the beginning of the September-January growing season AgriLift conducted its first

**the drone will take overhead images of growing crops at specific intervals and the images are then analyzed with an open-source computer model of plant growth, which was specifically developed for potato farms.**

drone test flights in Musanze. To date, 242 farmers' plots from four cooperatives have been registered for flights, with 114 of these plots owned by female farmers.

AgriLift's goal is to use this eye in the sky to provide local farmers and agribusinesses with rapid information on their crops, allowing them to take corrective measures almost immediately.

The aerial monitoring technology is intended to directly increase the income of small-scale Rwandan farmers.

The Private Sector Driven Agricultural Growth (PSDAG) program is a five-year (2014-2019) project aimed at increasing smallholder farmers' incomes by promoting private sector investments and to facilitate the transformation of agriculture into a market-oriented, competitive, and high-value sector.

# Rwanda launches campaign against HIV/AIDS



To mark the World AIDS Day that falls on 1st December, Rwanda launched a year-long campaign against HIV/AIDS at an event that was kicked off by a walk from Onatracom to Nyamirambo Stadium in Kigali.

Celebrated every year, the day is the moment when millions of people come together across the globe to commemorate people who lost their lives to the killer disease, applaud progress made in responding to the epidemic and recommit to ending it.

This year's theme was "Hands up for HIV Prevention," which is about reducing new HIV infections, discrimination and AIDS related deaths to zero through equal access to HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care.

The yearlong campaign will feature different activities including voluntary counse-

ling and testing (VCT), condom distribution as well as modern family planning interventions. Rwanda aims to use these campaigns to raise HIV/AIDS awareness to all citizens through comprehensive actions to reduce new infections.

According to Ndimubanzi Patick, the minister of state in the ministry of health, Rwanda has made significant progress in the fight against AIDS and the rate of new infections has declined by 50%, mother-to-child transmission rate at 18 months has reduced to less than 2%.

HIV remains a public health problem; new HIV infections are still occurring and it is very important to focus on HIV prevention through a combination of interventions; community mobilization, increased coverage and utilization of biomedical and treatment services in order to reach all individuals.



Rwanda has made significant progress in the fight against AIDS and the rate of new infections has declined by 50%, mother-to-child transmission rate at 18 months has reduced to less than 2%.



# Microsoft, Rwanda to promote ICT in schools

The Rwandan government and Microsoft entered a three-year partnership under which they will ensure at least two smart classrooms in every secondary school that will see about 1,500 smart classrooms set-up in the initial phase.

Intended to exploit technology in streamlining the delivery of education, the project falls under Microsoft's Rwanda connectivity programme that is supporting provision of affordable wireless Internet to schools.

Only 9 per cent or 531 schools in Rwanda currently have access to Internet and according to the Education Minister, Dr Musafiri Papias Malimba, the programme that is expected to

have reached more than three million students and 61,000 teachers across the country's 3,500 schools by 2020 will lower the cost of delivering the curriculum and learning materials to schools and improve learning outcomes.

Two schools — Lycee de Kigali and the School of Economics and Business at the University of Rwanda — participated in the pilot phase.

Under the partnership, the Rwandan government will pay just \$1.5 (Rwf1,217) for Microsoft software for each computer in the schools under the programme, discounted from \$70 (Rwf56,831). The government is meeting 20 per cent of the overall cost of the project with

Under the partnership, the Rwandan government will pay just \$1.5 (Rwf1,217) for Microsoft software for each computer in the schools under the programme, discounted from \$70 (Rwf56,831).

Microsoft picking the remaining 80 per cent.

On what schools the programme will cater for, Mark East General Manager of Microsoft Global Sales and Operations said, "All of our programmes are the same for private and public institutions."

The smart classrooms package consists of computers, content that is the curriculum in digital format and facilitation to teachers on how to use and disseminate the curriculum.

Rwanda is among the African countries Microsoft international has partnered with. The others in East Africa are Tanzania and Uganda which are also in the pilot phase.

# Electricity and water rates slashed for low income earners, industries

Rwanda through its regulatory authority, RURA slashed tariffs for electricity and rural water supply by 50 and 30 per cent, respectively. According to Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) prices for electricity will change effectively by January 1, 2017.

Residential households that consume less 15 kilowatts per month, will pay Rwf89, down from Rwf182, those in 15 – 50kWh per month bracket remain at Rwf182 while residents consuming more than 50 kWh per month will pay Rwf189.

Large industries are to enjoy more on the reductions of power where they will be paying Rwf83 per kilowatts, medium industries consuming between  $0.4 \text{ kV} < V \leq 15 \text{ kV}$  will pay Rwf90 per kilowatts while smaller industries were given a flat fee of Rwf126 per kilowatts.

The Director General of RURA, Patrick Nyirishema says, the electricity reductions will improve the country's competitiveness particularly for investors in the industrial sector. The new tariffs include the



demand charge, which incentivizes industrial customers to operate during off-peak hours between 11pm and 8am.

## Water

Tariffs for water were also slashed by RURA particularly benefiting rural populations. The new rates for water will start from Rwf8 per jerrican and Rwf338 /m<sup>3</sup> for water using gravity, water pumped using electricity will cost Rwf20 per jerrican reduced from Rwf30 while water supplied by diesel pumping will be the most expensive at Rwf25.

Officials say the reductions in electricity and water rates are intended to make social services accessible and affordable to the population. This is also aimed at attracting investments and promoting industrial development in the country.



# Nakumatt opens third outlet in Kigali



Regional retail supermarket chain, Nakumatt has opened its 3rd branch in Kigali, Rwanda. The latest outlet opened in a Kigali suburb of Kagugu, it's located at Merez Centre Kagugu and has space of more than 5,000square feet.

Now the regional chain has 64 outlets in East Africa with many in Kenya where it was founded and has remained as its base.

Nakumatt Holdings Managing

Director, Atul Shah said that, his firm's commitment is to deepen the value of the regional formal retail trade. "Deepening of the regional formal retail trade space through branch expansions and stocking of commodities sourced from the region, will play a key role in fostering meaningful regional integration," he said.

In Rwanda, Nakumatt opened its first Supermarket at UTC building (Union Trade Center) in 2008 fol-

lowed by an outlet in Kigali City Tower (KCT) in 2011. The firm is growing steadily and plans to open more next year.

With the opening of its latest branch in Kigali, Nakumatt now has a branch complement of 47 branches in Kenya, nine in Uganda and five in Tanzania. The move is part of Nakumatt's regional strategy to also source suppliers from different parts of East Africa.



# Changing Lives & Transforming Communities with AEE Rwanda

BY TOBIAS CLARKE

Rwanda, a tiny land locked nation in the heart of Africa, for many is only memorable for either the 1994 genocide, in which one million people died, or the fact that it is one of the few remaining countries which have mountain gorillas. But for those in Rwanda the country and future is so much more, the president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame was quoted as saying "Rwanda is no longer surviving. We have survived. We are moving forward and making things work for our people". Rwandans are full of hope and are striving for a better future and they are all working their hardest to make this hope a reality. One Christian organization that has been working hard at changing lives and transforming communities in line with this hope and dream is African Evangelistic Enterprise Rwanda, or AEE Rwanda for short.

AEE Rwanda started in 1984 but remained quite small until revamping and expanding to deal with the huge problems that faced the country post 1994.

AEE now works across the



 ©Tobias Clarke

**Before AEE brought us together in self-help groups, many people were living lonely lives and had no one to share with, now we have a feeling of community. The people here are now much happier, they can cultivate their land, feed their families, and generate income with the excess crops from their land" – Françoise a Self-Help Group Member**

country, both in the cities and in the rural areas with approximately 170 staff spread all across Rwanda. Her vision is that Rwanda becomes a country where God is honoured and people live together in peace and satisfaction of their daily needs. In 2015 AEE Rwanda was able to invest \$4.5 million into local communities impacting nearly 100,000 adults in 5,500 self-help groups and over 300,000 children to receive help through the work of AEE and its donors.

What AEE Rwanda does is mainly directed through and focused around the self-help group approach which is a powerful and empowering way to deliver life changing help to those truly in need. This self-help approach is founded on two key principles, firstly that "Every human has tremendous God given potential, and that when unleashed has the ability to transform lives and communities" and secondary that "As an individual the poor are voiceless, powerless and vulnerable, but together they have tremendous strength".

The self-help group



 ©Tobias Clarke

focuses on building strong and united communities by bringing together individuals and empowering them both individually but also more importantly as a team. These groups meet together weekly and contribute a minimum savings amount to a communal collateral and receive trainings on areas such as: savings and credit management, health and hygiene, agricultural practices, peace building, communications and small business creation.

Using this knowledge and the communal collateral each individual member is able to start small businesses which they can then use the profits for improving their social and economic livelihood as well as repaying their loan. The impact of these groups is seen in the self-worth of the group members, better school attendance rates, improved health and hygiene practices,

improved agricultural efficiencies and better family health. Through time the individuals become

**“With the knowledge I have gained from the self-help group trainings I can never be poor again.” – Nyiramajyambere**

more than just members, but friends. This allows the members to help each other in times of need but also helps restore the broken community fabric that has been damaged in the past.

An example of the power of change is from Dative a beneficiary in the Bugesera district, who joined a self-help group and was in severe poverty. The only available income for their family (parents and four children) was occasional labour that her husband could find. This meant that the family could only afford one meal a day, could not buy health insurance and supply the school supplies that children needed to regularly attend. She says that “joining the self-help group was a trigger that opened up my eyes to see

the opportunities that I never saw before” and she has now started a small business selling fruits and vegetables. With these profits, she can already afford two meals a day, buy medical insurance for the whole family and send her four children to school full time. She has dreams to start a bigger shop in the marketplace and strives to continue to improve the economic and social standing of her family, which intern will benefit the whole community.

Within these self-help group structures AEE Rwanda is able to implement other programs and strategies which intern increase the benefit for the self-help group members but also for the wider community. Some of these include organizing community wide water, sanitation and hygiene training and the building of community owned toilet facilities, bringing together



 ©Tobias Clarke



individual farmers into collectives so that they can work together to increase the profitability of their crops and again where community education is given on the need for a balanced and nutritious diet and then give practical cooking classes so that mothers can see how to achieve this goal within their own resources.

This self-help group

approach can be used across the age spectrum and across all sectors of the Rwandan society and economy as each group is made up of similar members that are dealing with the similar problems. This allows for groups to be formed in schools with students, with farmers, or with women who are at risk or who have HIV/AIDS.

John Kalenzi, AEE

Rwanda's team leader says "The secret is simple. You need meaningful local engagement. Money is important, but not sufficient". This is the key to what AEE does in all her work in community development to make sure that those who are receiving the help are actively engaged in the process. Because AEE has found that when one

is actively involved in the development of themselves they are more likely to continue to change past the end of the external support.

AEE Rwanda is keen to continue to strive towards improving what they do and continue to find the most effective way to deliver help to the most vulnerable children, youth and family in Rwanda

# AEE RWANDA AT A GLANCE: 2015 NUMBERS

- Year Founded 1984
- Type: Christian not for Profit
- Staff 170
- Projects: 49
- \$4.5million (US) invested
- 310,000 children directly benefited
- 73% of staff are based in the field



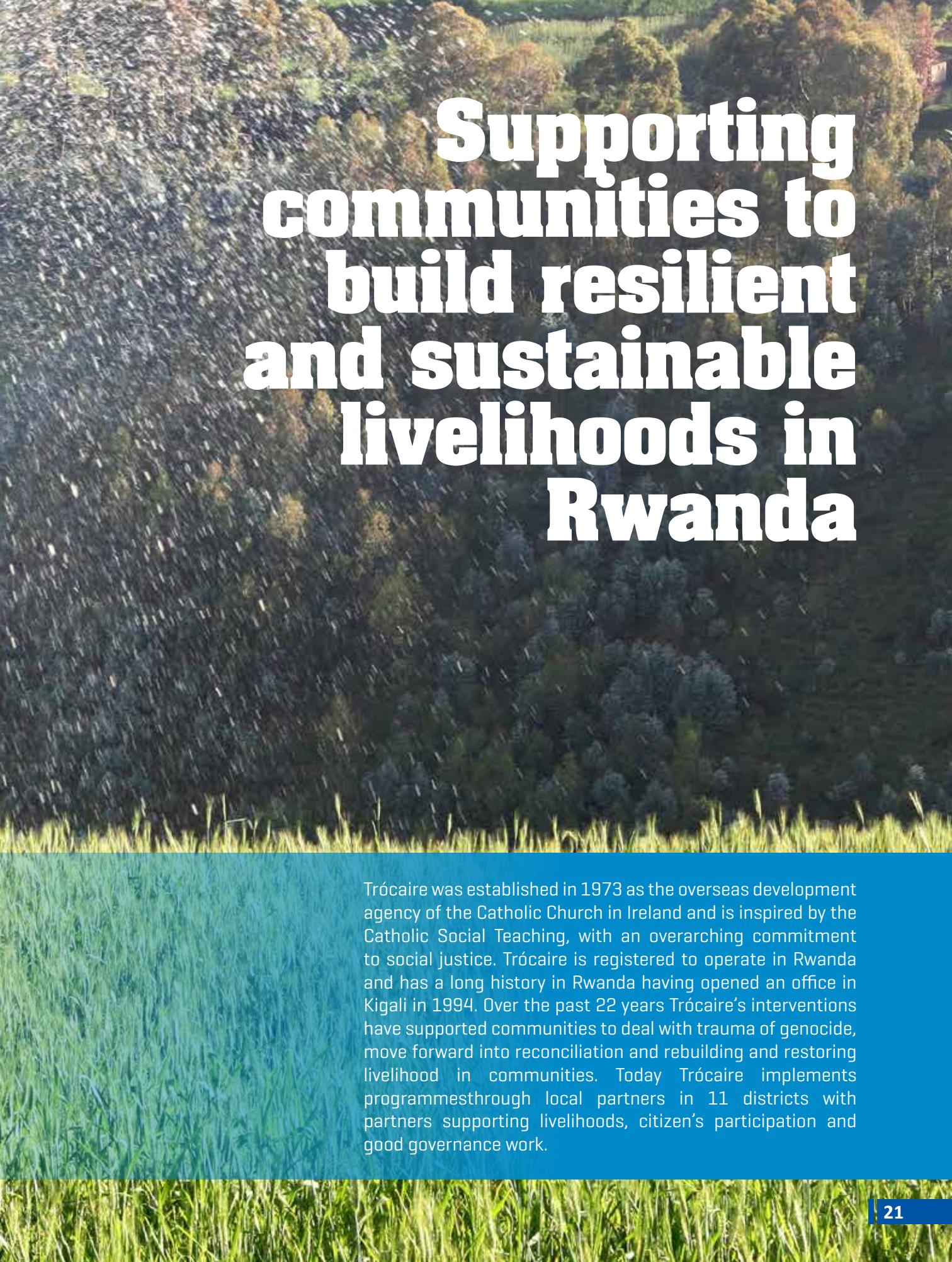
## MORE INFORMATION

WEBSITE: [WWW.AEERWANDA.RW](http://WWW.AEERWANDA.RW)  
 FACEBOOK: AFRICAN ENTERPRISE RWANDA  
 TWITTER: AEE RWANDA  
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# Trócaire

Working for a just world.





# Supporting communities to build resilient and sustainable livelihoods in Rwanda

Trócaire was established in 1973 as the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland and is inspired by the Catholic Social Teaching, with an overarching commitment to social justice. Trócaire is registered to operate in Rwanda and has a long history in Rwanda having opened an office in Kigali in 1994. Over the past 22 years Trócaire's interventions have supported communities to deal with trauma of genocide, move forward into reconciliation and rebuilding and restoring livelihood in communities. Today Trócaire implements programmes through local partners in 11 districts with partners supporting livelihoods, citizen's participation and good governance work.

In Trócaire's Global Strategy, covering the period of 2016-2020 strategic choices have been made to deliver on 3 areas of priority intervention and these are:

- Resource rights - Equitable Access to and Use of Natural Resources (land and water);
- Women's empowerment and
- Emergency Preparedness and Response.

In Rwanda, Trócaire recently launched its 5 year strategy focusing on resource rights, women's empowerment and preparing and responding to emergencies building upon the work we have done in Rwanda in the past. The country strategic plan (CSP) articulates the priorities of the country program in line with the Global Strategy of Trócaire 2016/20 as well as the development priorities of Rwanda. The key policies and development aspirations of Rwanda have been articulated in Vision 2020 as well as in the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS II).

The country program will continue to contribute to the achievement of Trócaire's vision: Trócaire envisages a just and peaceful world where people's dignity is ensured and rights are respected; where basic needs are met and resources are shared equitably; where people have control over their own lives and those in power act for the common goal.

Our work is also aligned to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Trócaire will work with other development partners, the government and civil society to contribute to the attainment of SDGs

in Rwanda. For example Trócaire will contribute to Goal 1- ending poverty in all forms everywhere through the livelihoods program and the humanitarian program. Trócaire Rwanda provides timely and needs-based assistance to people affected by emerging crisis and enables communities to prepare for and be more resilient to future crisis. More recently we have been responding to the Burundi refugee crisis in Mahama camp through Caritas Rwanda.

The Rwanda Country Program Theory of Change highlights that change happens at and across four key levels: individual, community, civil society and institutional. To enable to achieve lasting change, it is important that there are interactions between and across the four levels.

The change that Trócaire wants to bring about in Rwanda is to empower citizens especially women and resilient communities. Trócaire will contribute to this change through the pursuit of an integrated approach that seeks to tackle people's multifaceted vulnerabilities and needs at an individual, community, civil society and institutional levels, while ensuring that men and women are empowered in decision making processes that affect them and the society in general. At the same time, Trócaire will ensure that target groups and partners are prepared and respond to humanitarian needs and crises.

Our approaches to support development includes a rights based approach, program integration and empowerment. This is



*Dony Mazingaizo, Country Director, Trocaire Rwanda.*



*Modeste Sibomana, Project Manager, Trocaire.*

in line with our vision which ensures that we lift communities out of poverty while addressing the multifaceted vulnerabilities at the individual household level.

### **TRÓCAIRE OUTSTANDING ACTIVITIES**

Since 1994, the country program has registered success in conflict

transformation, entrenching citizen participation, and value-chain and microfinance development.

### **AGRICULTURE VALUE CHAINS**

In terms of agriculture value chains, we have contributed to the increase in the production of maize, soya and wheat. Trócaire has supported the establishment of SOSOMA and three other local agro-processing plants in order to add value to agriculture produce and provide access to market for small holder farmers.

### **MICROFINANCE DEVELOPMENT**

In the area of microfinance development, Trócaire has worked with four microfinance organizations including Umutanguha IMF, Duterimbere IMF, RIM Ltd, COOPEC Twizigamire. Trócaire partners with the financial institutions with a rationale to deepen financial services to small scale farmers, help to diversify income sources, as well as deepen financial inclusion. We have also worked at national level, contributing to the establishment of the national microfinance policy and the establishment of AMIR, the umbrella of microfinance institutions in Rwanda.





## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE

For many years Trócaire has been very active in the space of citizen participation in accountable governance working with local partners to ensure that citizens are actively engaged in development priorities that affect them and contribute to crafting solutions to problems that exist and hold duty bearers to account at various levels. At a policy level, Trócaire has been instrumental in the establishment of RCSP, an umbrella advocacy organization in Rwanda.

## FOCUS ON WOMEN

In targeting beneficiaries, Trócaire through partners has deliberately focused on women resulting in more than 60% of Trócaire beneficiaries being women. This is in line with the global SDG agenda to address gender inequality and close the gender gap. To deliver this Trócaire has worked with several women-led organizations such as ARCT Ruhuka, Benishyaka, Centre Igiti Cy'ubugingo, COCOF, Duterimbere IMF, IPFG and MMM Kirambi. We have now further strengthened this by having a dedicated

Women's Empowerment pillar to our country program focusing on participation and gender based violence. This will complement the government and other actors in this area.

Recently, Trócaire published a research on women empowerment entitled "Pushing the Boundaries: Understanding Women Participation". Though the research was commissioned in the DRC, India, and Nicaragua, the findings are very relevant to our work here in Rwanda and is already informing our programme strategy.

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES IN RWANDA TO LIVE WITH INDEPENDENT AND DIGNITY

The governance program has been contributing to the accountability and governance pillar of Vision 2020 and EDPRS II. The program has registered a number of achievements including increased level of participation of citizens and the civil society organization in decision making; increased level of interaction between citizens, CSOs and local leaders around local development issues and partners better equipped to influence public policies and development plans and their implementation, especially at local level.

Targeted communities have participated actively to peacefully manage and resolve disputes. Greater social cohesion has been registered in some communities as shown by the increase of reconciliation associations which bring together ex-prisoners and their families, and ex-soldiers. Work has been done by partners such as the Association Rwandaise des Conseillers en Traumatisme

[ARCT] and Capacitar Rwanda to increase capacity and handle trauma at community level.

The work done on conflict transformation and participatory and accountable governance [PAG] will be carried forward as strategies under the new country strategy. Strategic partners in this work such as ARCT and Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix [CEJP] will be retained with a focus on women's empowerment.

## OUR FUTURE

The future of peace, unity and justice in Rwanda requires a multi-stakeholder approach with citizens, civil society complimenting the efforts of government to ensure there is social cohesion, lasting healing, and sustained and shared socio-economic development where no one has been left behind in line with SDGs.

A lot of work has been done since 1994 which needs to be celebrated. It has not been a one day event but a process that takes ample time and more work needs to be done, building on the achievements registered over the last years. This is a journey that Trócaire has actively contributed to over the years and wishes to continue to be part of over the coming 5 years.

Trócaire recognises and is grateful for the support of their main donors, Irish Aid, European Union, SCIAF/Scottish Government, Comic Relief, the Bank of Ireland, and the Irish Public. We also commend the leadership and the partnership of the Government of Rwanda, without which the achieved successes could not be realised.



President Kagame and First Lady with members and stakeholders of SEVOTA

# SEVOTA restoring dignity of women and children

Twenty-two years ago Rwanda experienced the worst atrocities in the genocide against the Tutsi that did not only leave more than a million people dead but lives destroyed morally. Women and girls were raped, consequently this led to unwanted pregnancies of which children estimated between 2,000 to 5,000 were born.

Women victims of rape were affected by trauma and stress resulting from sexual violence and their born children became the “unwanted children”, often rejected by their mothers or relatives because they were identified or considered belonging to their father’s origin as the killers.

SEVOTA known from its French abbreviation means Solidarity for Blossoming of Widows and Orphans aimed at Self-Promotion and Work, was thus born out of the need to restore the destroyed human relations during the Genocide against the Tutsi.

SEVOTA was established in December 1994 at Taba in Kamonyi District, Southern Province as a non-profit making organisation.

Godelieve Mukasarasi, the Coordinator and one of founders of SEVOTA Rwanda says, “We work towards rebuilding the human relationships that was destroyed during the genocide against the Tutsi.” The organisation is currently working in nine districts across the country focusing on widows and orphans and has helped to contribute to the improvement of the situation

and living conditions of vulnerable households.

According to the Coordinator, the organisation has 3,216 direct beneficiaries and about 12,500 indirect beneficiaries who are supported through its various programs. SEVOTA focuses support on women who became pregnant out of rape during the genocide, their orphaned children and youth.

As the country continues to rebuild evident repair on the social front has been put to a certain level. Women rights in Rwanda are at a sound level, orphans as children have been given back their right to live, feed, educate, security against all forms of abuse, to mention but a few. “Our main mission is to bring back peace, dignity, development, unity and reconciliation in the homes of the widows and orphans,” Mukasarasi says. “We help our beneficiaries



Mutsokekazi Philomene, Legal Representative of SEVOTA giving-out grants to beneficiaries in Musanze.



SEVOTA staff and focal point members during a workshop on project management

to organise themselves in order to evaluate their own problems and those of the community and to find suitable solutions," she adds.

SEVOTA envisions a society where human dignity is valued and where men, women, and children support each other for their personal development. SEVOTA has the mission of contributing to an improvement of the moral, social, political, cultural, and economic living conditions of its beneficiaries.

The organisation's contribution has been applauded by different stakeholders and recognised by His Excellency, President Paul Kagame and the first Lady who met members of SEVOTA during the launch of a documentary film 'The Uncondemned' produced Michele Mitchell and Nick Louvel. This documentary is about the first time rape was prosecuted as a crime of war since 1919 when it was labelled as one but until 1997 when a group of prosecutors, activists and investigators went after the first conviction in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

SEVOTA has the overall objective of promoting activities relating to peace, reconciliation, and the promotion of human rights, specifically women's

rights and the policies concerning vulnerable children and youth, through the creation of a platform for dialogue and capacity-building.

The organisation is supported by Medica Mondiale, a Germany non-profit making organisation to promote programmes aimed at ensuring psychological, physical, and socio-economic integration of households of women and young girls who were victims of sexual violence in conflict-torn zones, and other vulnerable households faced with gender-based violence.

Through support to social groups, community mobilisation, Information, education, communication and participatory research and lobbying, SEVOTA empowers those social groups in different activities like farming, handicraft, capacity building, income-generating projects and post traumatic counselling.

They mobilise communities towards a culture of peace, active non-violence, and the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Through

re-instigating the positive values of Rwandan culture based on solidarity, mutual assistance and quality education for the young generation.

The improvement of care and education of orphans, vulnerable children and the youth born of rape is among the main goals of the organisation. Sustainable programs like building capacity and organising activities that encourage personal development and mutual support among traumatised women and victims of violence is also among the top targets.

Our main mission is to bring back peace in the homes of the widows and orphans. We help our beneficiaries to organise themselves in order to evaluate their own problems and those of the community and to find suitable solutions."

As Rwandans mark the liberation of their country when Rwandans were able to end the genocide, much should be learned from how the country has progressed in various sectors also calling for social justice in fighting crimes. Therefore, the International Community should call for adoption of a UN Security Council resolution on Children born of rapes committed in war and conflict-torn regions, which shall determine the roles of all actors, including governments in the protection of their rights.

# SINIYUMANGANYA choir to continue the Gospel



*By Daniel Tuyizere*

The spread of Gospel continues to be the main purpose of Siniyumanganya Choir; the Gospel choir located in ADEPR church, Ruhango District. It was established in 1986 by five members at Buhoro chapel, ADEPR Ruhango and has grown to 121 gospel singers.

Along the journey of spreading the gospel, the choir has contributed in various ways to the church. Currently, Siniyumanganya is building the ADEPR church at Ruhango parish through different concerts and contributions and were part contributors in the construction of Dove Hotel which is owned by ADEPR.

Siniyumanganya Choir on December 18th 2016 launched a gospel album at an event in Ruhango and celebrated the milestone.

Justin Sekamana, the choir president, said that it was a great mo-



ment to have people from different parts of the country coming to support the Choir in worship-

ing and praising God while they launched their album since their first calling is to spread the Gos-

Along the journey of spreading the gospel, the choir has contributed in various ways to the church.

Currently, Siniyumanganya is building the ADEPR church at Ruhango parish through different concerts and contributions and were part contributors in the construction of Dove Hotel which is owned by ADEPR.



their third album titled “Mfata Ukuboko” which is made of 10 songs.

1. Warakoze
2. Uba mu bwhisho
3. Nizeye Umusaraba
4. Siyoni
5. Iyo ndi mu bibazo
6. Ku iriba
7. Iririmbiire
8. Umunsi w'amakuba
9. Mfata ukuboko
10. Uko niko bizaba

This album is composed of three parts, the first part comprises of songs for praising and thanking God for what he has done for them, the second part are songs for preaching the Gospel and the last one is made up of songs of hope to people's hearts.

Siniyumanganya choir will continue to spread the Gospel in the country and outside as they plan to have two different journeys in Uganda and Kenya next year. The Choir plans to have more albums as a way of spreading the gospel to reach out to many people.

pel so that people could repent and be saved.

## Gospel Albums

With various challenges following the genocide against the Tutsi, Siniyumanganya choir became part of nation building through music and gospel, launching its first audio album in 2,000 titled

“Siniyumanganya” and later on in 2008 released, “Watubesjeho”. Now they have launched its third album and it's their first audio visual album.

Hundreds of gospel music fans and Christians from across the country were treated to memorable launch in Ruhango as Siniyumanganya Choir launched their third DVD titled “Mfata Ukuboko” which is made of 10 songs.

Hundreds of gospel music fans and Christians from across the country were treated to memorable DVD launch in Ruhango as Siniyumanganya Choir launched their third DVD titled “Mfata Ukuboko” which is made of 10 songs.

## INTERVIEW:

# **Africans can rely on the Congo Basin forests, which acts as the world’s “second lung” after the Amazon**

**KADDU K. SEBUNYA, PRESIDENT,  
AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (AWF)**

Members of Parties of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership in November gathered in Kigali to discuss problems facing Africa’s rich ecosystem and seed pathways to help solve them. One of these partners was the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Africa’s largest conservation organization initiating and engaging in wildlife and wild lands projects across the continent for 55 years.

According to the AWF President, Kaddu Sebunya, protecting the Congo Basin Forest, the biggest and diverse on the planet after Amazon is no easy task because the forest is increasingly threatened as development needs of member countries swells. In an interview with PAMACC News on the sidelines of the CBFP meeting, he says development and the protection of our ecosystems need not be mutually exclusive. While striving for growth, Africa must make better choices to minimize its consequences and the net impact on nature’s ecosystem



**We understand the African Wildlife Foundation is one of the international NGO's that has been fronting activities to protect wildlife and the ecosystem in the Congo Basin region. Can you give an overview of the activities AWF has been carrying out in the field?**

**Kaddu Sebunya (KS):** Let me start by saying that AWF works together with the people of Africa to ensure the wildlife and the wild lands of Africa will endure forever, and we articulate and promote a uniquely African conservation vision and voice for the whole continent. We envision Central Africa's governments and people as champions for the conservation of the Congo Basin Forest for current and future generations.

Our programs in the Congo Basin include supporting

the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) in implementing adequate protection and participative management in a portion of the Bili-Uele complex. AWF has been working in the Mbinga-Lopori-Wamba (MLW) landscape in DRC since 2003. We are working with a diverse group of partners on a holistic program to: conserve the MLW landscape through land use planning and protected area management; protect wildlife, including the bonobo and forest elephant; combat climate change through forest protection and REDD+ initiatives; stem the bushmeat trade by strengthening the scout networks on the ground; and enhance the lives of the forest dependent communities through improved agriculture and other enterprises. AWF successfully established two protected areas, the Lomako-Yokokala Faunal Reserve and the Iyondji Community Bonobo Reserve, and is working to establish a third. This program is in partnership with CARPE/USAID.

In Cameroon, we are working closely with the National Conservation Service in Dja (NCSD) to improve the overall management of the Dja Faunal Reserve (DFR). We signed an MOU with the Ministry of Forest and Fauna (MINFOF) for the conservation reserve we have a full-time technical advisor based in DFR. We are also working with the Service de Conservation to train and equip the rangers with Cyber Tracker to improve anti-poaching and ecological monitoring. All training is followed



by technical support either on-site or remotely.

### Of what significance is the Congo Basin Forest to Africa today?

**KS:** The Congo Basin Forest is cardinal to Africa's survival; it is the water tower in Africa. Congo Basin forests provide critical water catchment services to Africa. A third of the 100 largest cities in the world, Kinshasa, Libreville, and Kigali, included, depend on protected forest areas for their water supply. The Congo Basin Forest provides food and supports the livelihood of local communities who practice subsistence agriculture in the area. As we witness other continents suffering air quality issues from rapid development, Africans can rely on the Congo Basin forests, which acts as the world's "second lung" after the Amazon.

A forest is an extraordinary reservoir of carbon and biodiversity, and this explains while the Congo Basin Forest has become a center of attraction in the global challenge of climate change and conservation. Over 340 million dollars is spent in conservation efforts in the Congo Basin Forest today because of its importance to not only our natural ecosystems and the fight against climate but also in its role in the socio-cultural well being of the forest communities. Millions of people in the Congo Basin Forest and its immediate vicinity rely on the forest for subsistence, and this is crucial.

### But conservationists say the forest today is facing big challenges?

**KS:** Yes, and the big problem is our development drive. Africa's youthful population is growing, and urbanization swell is real. Because of changes are driven by business and trade in Africa today, we need to define precisely the role of Wildlife and Wetland in our economic aspirations. If we do

not do that, we are going to face the same problems faced by China, Asia, and other countries today in allocating land use.

However, development and the protection of our ecosystems need not be mutually exclusive. Without stopping the pace of development, we must make better choices to minimize the consequences and the net impact on nature's ecosystems. Fortunately, we have the knowledge and the technology to identify and determine, for example, sustainable infrastructure development, community's livelihood and wildlife conservation.

The exploitation of timber, oil, natural gas and rain forests is intensifying, and that means new infrastructure - roads and rail lines are opening up areas that were once difficult to traverse and putting increasing pressure on animal and plant populations.

This is a critical time for the people of the Congo Basin. Although, there are new and significant opportunities for economic growth and the quest for improved standard of living, the importance of preserving the basin's natural resources for future generation is also critical. Food and water security are ultimately impacted by how we manage our forests, combat climate change and cultivate our lands. The health of our bodies is tied to the health of the air we breathe, the soil in which we grow our food, and the water we consume.

### So how do you think these challenges can be addressed?

**KS:** AWF has been addressing issues supporting conservation efforts in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and entire francophone Africa. We are addressing various issues from technology to economic growth with their different challenges. However, we have to continue being innovative and tactical, factoring in new elements to better and improve how we man-

age our natural resources.

In the last 40 years, Africa has lost more than half of its land and animal, from Rhino, elephant, chimps and other species, Lake Chad is dwindling bringing hardship to the population that has continued to migrate in search of greener pastures. That is why as Africans, we have to look in the mirror and choose what we want to do. If we fail, others will define our priorities for us.

As conservationists, we have to change our mindset and talk with each other, work with other stakeholders to find lasting solutions. AWF has been working towards this, and that is why we do not limit our actions only with the forest. We intervene in other socio-economic sectors like schools, agriculture, etc.

### Why your passion for conservation?

**KS:** My passion for conservation is a passion for Africa if I did not have the passion for Africa, I do not think I would have a passion for conservation! I don't think I would be passionate, as I would be doing conservation outside Africa.

Africa is the best continent on this planet. When you see the mistakes we make on this continent, I cannot sit back and do nothing because of where I started from, how could I explain this to my grandchildren? That I did not do anything when I had the knowledge, the experience, I knew what was wrong and what might happen, and I did nothing!

Africa is one of the most beautiful places on the planet earth, and we cannot sit and try to think that we should change Africa to what Europe, or Beijing, or New York is, rather make the right choice for Africa.

**Interviewed by:**  
**Elias Ngalame and Steven Nsamaza**

# Working with Indigenous Communities to Protect DRC's Maringa-Lopori-Wamba Forest

By Steven Nsamaza

It is home rare and endemic species that include the endangered bonobo, the vulnerable forest elephant, golden cat, giant pangolin, Congo peacock, and numerous other rare primates, amphibians, reptiles and birds with over 300 known tree species. And environmentally, the Maringa-Lopori-Wamba forest landscape is known to be a critical carbon sink and biodiversity area found in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

This landscape is an invaluable resource for over 800,000 individuals in this remote rural part of DR Congo. However, due to the increasing population following the high fertility rate among inhabitants and immigrants, this landscape was already succumbing to pressure because the surging population depended on it for livelihood needs, including food, fuel, medicine, income and shelter.

However, following intervention by different players among them Africa Wildlife Forum (AWF) with support from USAID and active



involvement of local residents for the past 10 years, the Maringa-Lopori-Wamba forest landscape is slowly getting back to its natural position.

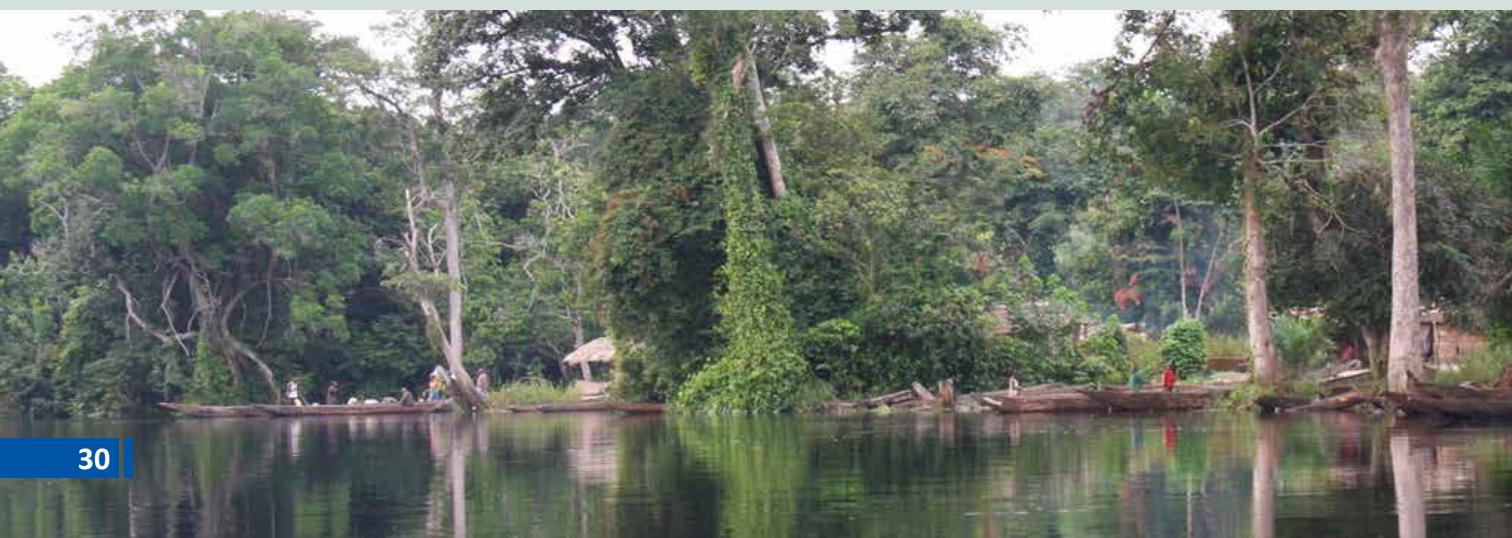
"We started with micro-zoning so as to create protected areas, then mapped all areas including community forests, areas for agricultural production, and logging concessions among others," said Hugues Akpona, the AWF country manager in the DR Congo.

However, to manage these

"We started with micro-zoning so as to create protected areas, then mapped all areas including community forests, areas for agricultural production, and logging concessions among others," said Hugues Akpona,

blocks sustainably, Akpona says, "our approach is to partner with local communities, leaders, organisations and everywhere we go we try to be part of all the decision making processes in raising the conservation agenda."

In the DRC, the Africa Wildlife Foundation works in MLW and Bili Uele where they are involved in improving the effectiveness of protected area management partnering with local wild life authority, the ICCN that is supported technically as well as financial.





The support includes setting up management units, surveillances, performance business plans, ensuring the use of new technologies, managing community conservation strategy among others.

Akpona underlines the change AWF has brought to this remote area and to its poverty stricken populations supporting the bordering communities in the development of agriculture through initiative like distribution of improved seeds, good agricultural practices and other income generating activities.

One of the major project undertaken by AWF was to ensure accessibility of the MLW landscape to the Capital Kinshasa by establishing Congo shipping project. The 500-ton green ship found no reliable transportation for the residents in the landscape but now they are able to transport their harvests and the ship brings back manufactured prod-

*"We are not there to oblige communities to do what we preach, but the benefits have forced those who first thought were there to take away their forests but seeing the benefits from communities who worked with AWF later requested our intervention,"*

ucts from the capital.

The shipping project has provided a reliable way for the residents on its 11 port stop-over on the Congo River and ensures Maringa-Lopori-Wamba stay connected to the rest of the world while increasing production and access to the markets.

The Africa Wildlife Foundation realized another important component in the landscape which is gender balance. This required empowering women achieved through partnering with RFDR (Reseau des Femmes oeuvrant pour le Developpement Rural) to raise production, do literacy classes and develop alternative income generating activities for women and make sure women are also part of decision making processes.

"The landscape is very remote with no TV, no telephone and people don't know about laws," says Akpona emphasizing a need to educate and sensitize the local populations about conservation and other sustainable developments.

Among other local NGO's AWF has partnered with is a group of lawyers enforcing laws including environmental laws and which shares information in the right way for instance sensitizing the locals not to sale bush meat in local markets. And this is tackled through developing some livestock initiatives for the communities.

*"The landscape is very remote with no TV, no telephone and people don't know about laws,"*



## Working with communities

AWF has been able to work with communities in this part of the Congo for over 10 years, an achievement that has been based on four elements that include; trust, transparency, pre-consent of community and putting into consideration the cultural values of the area.

This approach has ensured sustainable conservation which started with educating the local communities why it was important to conserve and what are their options.

"We are not there to oblige communities to do what we preach, but the benefits have forced those who first thought were there to take away their forests but seeing the benefits from communities who worked with AWF later requested our intervention," says the Akpona.

He emphasizes that, "We convince them (communities) to do conserve for themselves." The approach ensures sustainability even when the project comes to an end, the good work continues since the people know the advantages of doing it.

The work in MLW has produced success stories for the residents who now boost income generating projects which promotes conservation and the most important element was the changing of perceptions on the importance of landscape and the possibility to value resources.

AWF has developed participative land-use plans and engaged residents in the active management of the forests in which they live, all while delivering livelihood improvements. This way it caters for conservation of ecosystems in the Congo Basin.

Such work ensures that vulnerable and endangered wild animals and the habitat is secure which in turn would be catastrophic as scientists warn that if they are not protected some species will be wiped out completely by 2050.

# At the heart of peace building in Rwanda



UMUHUZA Members and staff

Eleven years ago, Umuhuza, a non-government organization was founded in Rwanda with a rationale of building a society in which communities live in harmony, mutual respect and dignity.

"We seek to nurture a culture of peace through education, specifically centering parent's involvement in the promotion and improvement of child education in a bid to foster peaceful and law abiding citizens," says Mathilde Kayitesi, the Executive Secretary of Umuhuza.

In our mission we undertake to promote a culture of peace through adherence to conflict management and resolution principals and respect for human rights, she adds.

For purposes of recognition, Umuhuza entails to be service and training center in peace management of conflicts, family literacy, listening and advisory partners for victims of violence and an outlet for dialogue within communities.

With our promoted values of mutual

respect, honesty and integrity, justice, solidarity, and commitment, we strive to reach our objectives which involve instilling a culture of peace and conflict management in the community, promote mutual respect, justice, social and economic equity, revive Rwanda's positive traditional values of culture regarding conflict management and strengthening social cohesion by promoting education and the culture of open dialogue within different communities.



Parents were empowered to support their children in early learning.



Community volunteers were empowered to support children' in Reading activities

Umuhuza works in four district of the country including Ngororero, Gasabo, Burera, and Gicumbi. The organization intends to expand to 26 districts across the country in a program called 'Murekedusome'[School -Community Partnership for Education ]- promoting a reading culture.

#### **UMUHUAZ PROGRAMS**

The organization started in Ngororero District of the Eastern Province as an area where the first attempts of carrying out genocide begun.

"We chose to start our campaign in Ngororero District because we really wanted to get first-hand information about what really transpired among Rwandans to have such hate that led them to the genocide," says Didacienne Mukabaheshimana the President and Legal Representative of Umuhuza.

Umuhuza has developed a five year strategic plan with four focus areas as peace education, family literacy, community economic empowerment and organizational development.

1. The peace education program has a strategic objective to enhance Peace and community healing process through sustainable conflict prevention, mediation and reconciliation mechanisms among the families and communities.
2. Family literacy is intended to increase availability, accessibility and utilization of family literacy & Early Childhood Development Services (ECD) targeting the preschool children & parents in our target communities.
3. While community economic empowerment strategies to improve and diversify the incomes of target communities and households.
4. Finally, organizational development holds the strategic objective of improving the Organizational, Institutional & Technical capacities in order to make Umuhuza a viable and accountable Organization.

Through peace education, Umuhuza has undertaken to support and strengthen the capabilities of Abunzi-Mediators, by developing training manuals for them and offering them trainings. Umuhuza partners with initiatives of change when creating peace programs to organize and facilitate the circle of peace.

"Our peaceful management programs, we aim at pre-empting violence and despair by addressing root causes of conflict," Mukabaheshimana, the President Umuhuza says. "Our intention is to use the circle of peace as a tool for wound healing as well as conflict prevention."

On the onset in Ngororero, operations commenced with early child development intended to build a more peaceful and safer community. "Our ECD program is mainly focused on educating parents on nurturing children to become peaceful members of the community; children that cannot be manipulated," underlines the Executive Secretary. She adds that through regular parent meetings, home visits, and literacy classes, parents are taught to recognize that they can build strong, healthy and vibrant families.

Today, over 3270 families have been reached through the 'Child I Care' program which encourages families to identify the importance of nurturing



UMUHUAZU ROUND TABLE DISPLAY AT LITERACY WEEK

relationships between children and their caregivers.

Eugene Ndagiijimana, the Program Manager of Umuhuza highlights on the First steps [INTERA ZA MBERE] as a project building off the experience of 'First Read and Child I Care.' The first steps programme is a community based targeting children with 0-6 years and their parents. It is focused on determining the most feasible and cost-effective approach to delivering parenting education, suitable for national expansion in the Rwandan context that is effective in achieving improvements in parenting practices, child development indicators, and emergent literacy promotion in the home.

The program manager underlines that, they develop programs based on umuhuza vision and linked to Global and the country's strategic plan under CHILD PROTECTION of protecting children from violence specifically protection of children from Physical and Humiliating Punishment (PHP) in the families

and community at large.

The organisation developed child protection program to re enforce its Non-violence education and early childhood development program which highlights the family's great need to care for their children's social and emotional development. Umuhuza implements this program by raising awareness on positive discipline in every day parenting within community, Skills development [by providing information and support that help community learn how to interact and discipline their children without violence] and partnership with all stakeholders to full prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings to inform the order on positive discipline.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS

Through its programs, Umuhuza has had Mediators (Abunzi) trained in peaceful conflict management. In Kigali City 30 associations members were trained, in Ngororero 38 mediators (Abunzi) and 46 APAX

associations and 36 Abunzi in Kayonza.

Umuhuza has mobilized people in its areas of operation and currently boosts 600 community volunteers that support the organization in implementing its different programs. They work with parents and mostly around 336 youth in Urugerero [Youth completed secondary school, who are doing one year national services] who are very energetic in supporting programs in their communities were empowered and engaged in community activities.

- Manual has been created, translated and promoted in three secondary schools.
- Ongoing activities of counselling to violence' victims
- Dialogues have been organized on the role of the youth in the culture of peace, 3270 parents of infants from 0 to 6 years old of Ngororero district



Children are supported to accessing books in community at village level



Parents are trained and encouraged to produce reading and learning materials using local available materials to support their children practice reading at home.

- have been trained in early learning techniques.
- Behaviour changes in terms of relationships within community and within family. 10 cooperatives run by graduates of Umuhuza early childhood development program
- Family outreach Practitioners Trained in Family Literacy 15.SOS Village, 20.Ngororero

- district, 35.SEVOTA
- Umuhuza's development is enhanced by Training its members in leadership, mediation, counselling and in family literacy.
- Under the children protection program, 30 community facilitators were trained to help the community in Burera district learn how to interact and discipline their children without violence.

# TESTIMONY

## “Volunteering changed my life” – Dukunde

“I want to become a writer,” the enthusiastic Dukunde Ange Maurice says with a big smile.

Dukunde Ange Maurice, 23, is from the village of Karambo in Ruvune Sector, Gicumbi District. He developed interest in writing children’s stories in his high school vacation after he helped develop children stories with a local NGO while volunteering.

Umuhuza, a local non-governmental organisation working with community include Youth from national services (Urugerero), empowered Dukunde and engaged him among others in family literacy to support community both parents and children in literacy promotion.

Dukunde with eleven other youth in his sector, who were part of this program doing their national services, joined Umuhuza and volunteered for three months. After they complete national service, he decided to keep volunteering in Umuhuza family literacy program because of his interest in teaching and developing children stories which he still supporting children in reading clubs in his village.

Now Dukunde has just finished his first year at the University of Rwanda, he says whenever he goes back to his village there are children waiting his support and sometimes their parents come along.

Sparked by his interest to create children stories, Dukunde has been selected to a group of writers by Save the Children, an international child organisation where he has already submitted three child stories that are pending to be published.

“There is no going back, this feels like the big dream I have been waiting,” underlines Dukunde. Volunteering with Umuhuza has changed the way he looks at things and developed him, he says.

Dukunde notes that Umuhuza has given him a lot of knowledge which has opened his eyes. The organisation provides his community with reading and learning materials but even when they don’t Dukunde innovatively works out with whatever material he can find like banana leaves or cassava flour to teach demonstrate and teach his learners including children and their parents.



# Mahatima Gandhi University Rwanda launches new ICT text books, learning modules

Mahatma Gandhi University Rwanda (MGUR) on first December launched its new volumes of academic textbooks and self-learning modules on ICT integrating today's rapidly advancing technologies at Kigali Convention Center.

The MGUR Chancellor and Founder, Dr. Rajan Chopra said "in view of His Excellency, President Paul Kagame's government efforts in achieving Vision 2020, we are taking bold steps to invest on improving our academic materials to provide the skills that are core in achieving the goal of transforming the nation's agriculture-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. We are going to stride further by issuing not only quality textbooks but as well as laptops to students that will help them improve their ICT skills."

MGUR Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Vince Sinining added "MGUR is working towards becoming the Center of Excellence in Online and Distance Learning, providing working people access to higher education, anytime, anywhere. We are also working on providing in-service training tour lecturers and tutors to improve 'teaching and learning' using online resources, as well as hands-on training."

The Guest of Honor at the ceremony, Dr. Papias Musafiri Malimba, the Minister of Education attributed the event as, "an important occasion



students the necessary skills to be competitive."



that the Ministry of Education supports as the government places ICT at the forefront of the country's efforts towards achieving Vision 2020. Like Mahatma Gandhi University Rwanda, we are confident that Higher Education Institutions in Rwanda will continue to play their significant roles in utilizing ICT in today's advancing technologies and provide our

After the book launch, special scholarships were awarded to two upcoming stars in Rwanda — Yvan Buravan and Andy Bumuntu, who will be studying Mass Communication with specialization in audio-video production related to their career in the performing arts.

Two students were also awarded laptops during the book launch — Karemara David and Byukusenge Muriel.

Dr. Chopra gave special achievement awards to individuals in the field of education, public service, banking, media, TV, and performing art. A special award was accorded to Jules Sentore for promoting Rwanda's arts and culture through music.



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# Achieving Universal Health Coverage in Africa



By Matshidiso Moeti

Three years ago, a young boy in rural Guinea fell victim to the Ebola virus. An epidemic soon took hold of West Africa. By the time it was contained, it had killed more than 11,000 people and devastated the economies of the three hardest-hit countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. And it provided a sobering lesson about the need for countries to build resilient health systems capable of responding swiftly and effectively to emergencies.

But strong health-care systems are critical not only in times of crisis. They are also needed to provide children with life-saving immunizations; to provide women with reproductive care, including contraception; and to provide all people with preventive services and treatments to address the growing burden of non-communicable diseases.

When people are healthy, everyone benefits. More kids attend school, and more adults are able to work, buy food, and pay school fees, providing invaluable economic contributions to their families, communities, and countries. Health crises are less likely to take hold; if they do, the existence of an effective health system with sustained links to local communities facilitates a more effective response.

The case for providing universal health care (UHC) is indisputable. Yet an estimated 400 million people around the world still lack access to basic health services, and out-of-pocket health costs

drive 150 million people into poverty every year.

Fortunately, the global community has begun to coalesce around the idea that all people, regardless of where they live or how much money they have, should be able to access the health services they need, without risk of financial hardship. Operating under the belief that health is a fundamental human right, governments must provide quality care at prices all citizens can afford.

Implementing UHC is not easy, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where resources – both human and financial – are limited. But it is not impossible; indeed, we already know what works. If we are to ensure health and well-being for all, at every stage of life – Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals – then we cannot shy away from the challenge.

A vital first step is to stop focusing only on treating specific illnesses, and instead to adopt a more holistic approach to maintaining the health of individuals and communities. We must also make health care less cumbersome, by ensuring that health services are integrated, with patients able to receive all needed services with as few visits to clinics as possible. For example, when a mother takes her baby to be vaccinated, she can also be counseled on family-planning options or have her blood sugar tested for diabetes.

To this end, building strong primary health-care systems is vitally import-



ant, particularly in Africa. Primary health-care providers are, in many ways, a health system's "first responders," helping to identify threats, whether to individuals or, in the case of disease outbreaks, to entire communities. They ensure access to basic preventive and therapeutic health services – such as vaccines, maternal and child health care, and treatment for chronic diseases – and can refer patients to specialists to manage more complicated health issues. They also provide essential health-promotion information that can help people detect, manage, and avoid illness.

Countries across Africa are already taking steps to advance UHC. For example, Ghana has instituted a National Health Insurance Scheme that covers treatment for most diseases, as well as a system that trains nurses to provide door-to-door primary-care services for hard-to-reach populations. And in Ethiopia, a cadre of 38,000 health-extension work-

ers helps to ensure that essential health services reach people wherever they are. Such programs prove that UHC is achievable in Africa.

Yet much more work needs to be done to ensure that all people in all countries across Africa – and, indeed, across the developing world – have access to the health care they need. With health leaders from across Africa currently gathered in Windhoek, Namibia, to discuss precisely these topics, now is an ideal moment to commit to carrying out that work.

Indeed, the Windhoek meeting – which coincides with the third UHC Day on 12 December – offers an unprecedented opportunity for countries to define the critical measures needed, and make concrete commitments to strengthen integrated, people-centered services rooted in primary health care. We need to focus on training health workers ef-

fectively, improving access to medicines, and establishing innovative mechanisms for health financing at the individual and household levels.

The cost of weak health systems – both to human lives and to the economy – is steep. The Ebola outbreak – which economists estimate cost three times more to bring under control than it would have cost to build functioning health-care systems in the first place – made that starkly clear. But so do the lives lost every day to preventable and treatable diseases.

Achieving UHC is not just a moral imperative; it's also an economic one. The time has come to fulfill it.

**Matshidiso Moeti is Regional Director for Africa at the World Health Organization.**

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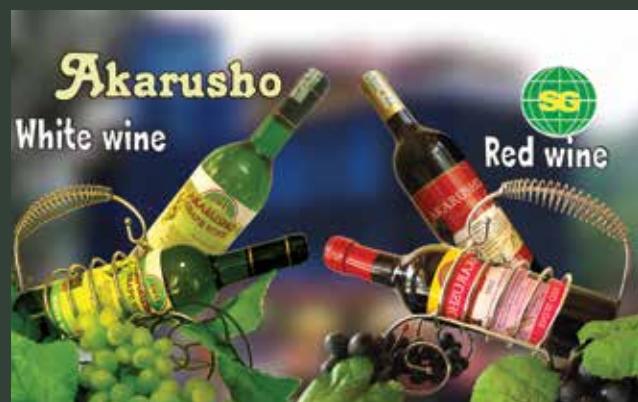
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# Harmonizing development and conservation



**By Elias Ntungwe Ngalame**

It is time to face the fact that the Congo Basin forests will increasingly be threatened as development needs of member countries surges if urgent measures are not put in place to harmonise development challenges and conservation, experts have warned.

The Congo Basin forest which holds more than 25 billion tons of carbon and thousands of animal and plant species is today impacted directly and indirectly by industrialisation, with palm oil plantations taking the lead.

“We need to step out of the conservation box and work with the different stakeholders to balance environmental needs with socioeconomic requirements,” notes Jef Dupain, Regional Director, Central and Western Africa at the African Wildlife Foundation.

In November, speaking at a panel discussion on industrial agriculture and Apes Conservation at the Congo Basin Forest Partnership conference held in Kigali, experts agreed there was a need to guide development actions and encour-

age best practices for sustainable resource conservation.

“The expansion of industrial palm oil plantations into the habitat of endangered animal species like apes in the Congo Basin forest area has become evident,” said Bas Verhage of WWF citing the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The discussions were held against the backdrop of the publication of the second volume of the book “State of the Apes: Industrial Agriculture and Ape Conservation,” by Arcus Foundation.

The book accordingly examines the interface between ape conservation and industrial agriculture in the Congo Basin and West Africa and notes that Ape habitats like that of other species in sub-Saharan Africa are seriously threatened. It more specifically explores the drivers behind the agricultural expansion and addresses ways to minimize and mitigate its impact on biodiversity.

In Cameroon for example, the Dja forest reserve in the South of the country is seriously under threats

from an expanding rubber plantation just like the Ebo forest in the Littoral region is facing challenges from growing palms plantation.

The case of some 142,000-hectare Ebo forest that sits less than 150 kilometers from the capital of Cameroon, Yaounde and even closer to Douala, both cities with populations of over 2 million, is seriously under threat. Like Korup National Park and the Dja Reserve, Ebo is also home to a wide variety of wildlife, including the rare Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee and the drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*), a highly endangered baboon-like monkey that, until the 1980s, scientists had written off as extinct.

The conservation actors at the conference called for an integrated cross-sector approach to national management that factor in development and conservation needs through building bridges and linkages between protected areas, spaces designed for production, infrastructure and mining activity.

“There is an urgent need to work towards reconciling the conservation and development visions so as to optimise land use. The concept of protecting of Congo Basin should also include opportunities for development and job creation. Conservation and development are closely linked rather than conflicting concepts. Thus conservation projects should be tailored and harnessed to provide solutions to development and employment challenges,” Andreas Athanas, AWF Program Design Director said in an interview.



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**JEF DUPAIN, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, CENTRAL AND WESTERN AFRICA AT THE AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION.**

Experts agree transparency must be the watchword in the conservation and forest management industry in coming years to bolster and foster trust among stakeholders.

“There is a need to build a permanent platform for inclusive dialogue between the States, the private sector and other actors to create an enabling environment and ensure transparency,” Athanas said.

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# Driverless cars



Driverless cars are ushering in a new wave of mobility and innovation. It is not only leading motor manufacturers who are integrating smart and sensor-based technologies into cars, but Google, Uber and Tesla are also pioneering full automation capabilities. Driverless cars are going to be more than a disruptive innovation; they are also likely to be socially and culturally transformative.

Alphabet, Google's parent company announced this December that its self-driving car technology was ready for commercialization.

Since 2009, Alphabet's self-driving cars have logged 2.3 million driverless miles on test drives in the USA. The company said it completed the world's first fully driverless ride on public roads last year in Texas, with a blind passenger in a car without a steering wheel or pedals.

While Tesla Motors has a semi-autonomous feature called Autopilot that can take over for the driver for long stretches, and it is preparing for its newest cars to go fully autonomous as early as next year. Tesla also announced its intention to start a



ride-hailing service once its driverless car technology is ready.

The ride-hailing service Uber is already testing self-driving cars to pick up customers in Pittsburgh with a person on standby in the driver's seat. Lately, its driverless cars have been spotted on the streets of San Francisco.

Other companies are also eyeing this market developing autonomous car technology, in the near future we may start to see our roads filled with driverless cars.





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