

IMPACT REPORT

Save the Aquatic Giants Project

Conservation of Hippos and Support for the Livelihoods of Indigenous and Local Communities in the Ruzizi Plain, Democratic Republic of the Congo



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Executive Summary

In the Ruzizi Plain, in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, hippos hold both ecological and symbolic significance. These “aquatic giants” are not only impressive mammals; they play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem balance by regulating soil fertility and supporting wetland dynamics. They are also deeply embedded in the cultural imagination of local communities, who have long regarded them as living witnesses to the history of the Ruzizi River. Yet, their survival is seriously threatened by multiple pressures, including agricultural expansion, deforestation, poaching, recurring human-wildlife conflicts, and, more recently, the visible impacts of climate change.

To reverse this worrying trend, MKAAJI MPYA asbl, with financial support from the **Global Diversity Foundation** through the **GEN Seed Project Funding**, launched the **Saving the Aquatic Giants: Hippo Conservation and Support for the Livelihoods of Indigenous and Local Communities** project. This initiative uniquely combines hippo conservation with support for the livelihoods of local and indigenous communities, aiming not only to ensure the species’ survival but also to improve the well-being of the communities that share the same territory.

The approach places indigenous peoples and local communities at its center. By strengthening and expanding the **Rural Conservation Clubs (RCCs)**, the project has transformed local residents into key actors in protecting their environment. For example, in Katogota, a new club of 40 members was established, trained, and equipped to monitor conservation sites, conduct patrols, and raise awareness among community members. Simultaneously, awareness campaigns conducted in several riverside villages reached more than 350 people directly. These activities have helped to challenge negative perceptions: *hippos, once seen as destructive enemies of crops, are gradually being recognized as a shared natural resource to preserve.*

In addition to GDF’s support, a major milestone was achieved through participatory mapping conducted with technical and financial support from the **African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)**, under the **Charles R. Wall Conservation Leadership and Management Fellowship (CLMF)** program, through which we supported a fellow. Seven key hippo conservation sites were identified, three of which—Katogota, Luvungi, and Kamanyola—are currently covered by our activities and have been selected as pilot hubs. Aware that conservation cannot succeed without strong economic and social dimensions, the project has placed particular emphasis on women’s empowerment.

Organized into **Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA)** within the RCCs, women have benefited from practical training and start-up funding to develop alternative and income-generating activities.

These initiatives range from small-scale trade to sustainable agriculture and aquaculture. More than 30 women have already benefited, strengthening their economic and social roles within households and the community. This diversification of income sources reduces dependence on farmland located within conservation areas and directly contributes to lowering human-wildlife tensions. The results achieved within one year are significant. Thirty-eight local stakeholders - including traditional chiefs, administrative authorities, and Batwa indigenous leaders, have actively engaged in conservation initiatives. Riverbank restoration days along the Ruzizi River have been launched, contributing to ecosystem regeneration, biodiversity enhancement, and climate resilience. Beyond the numbers, the most remarkable impact is perhaps the shift in mindset observed in the villages: conservation is no longer seen as an externally imposed constraint, but as a collective opportunity for development, dignity, and local pride.

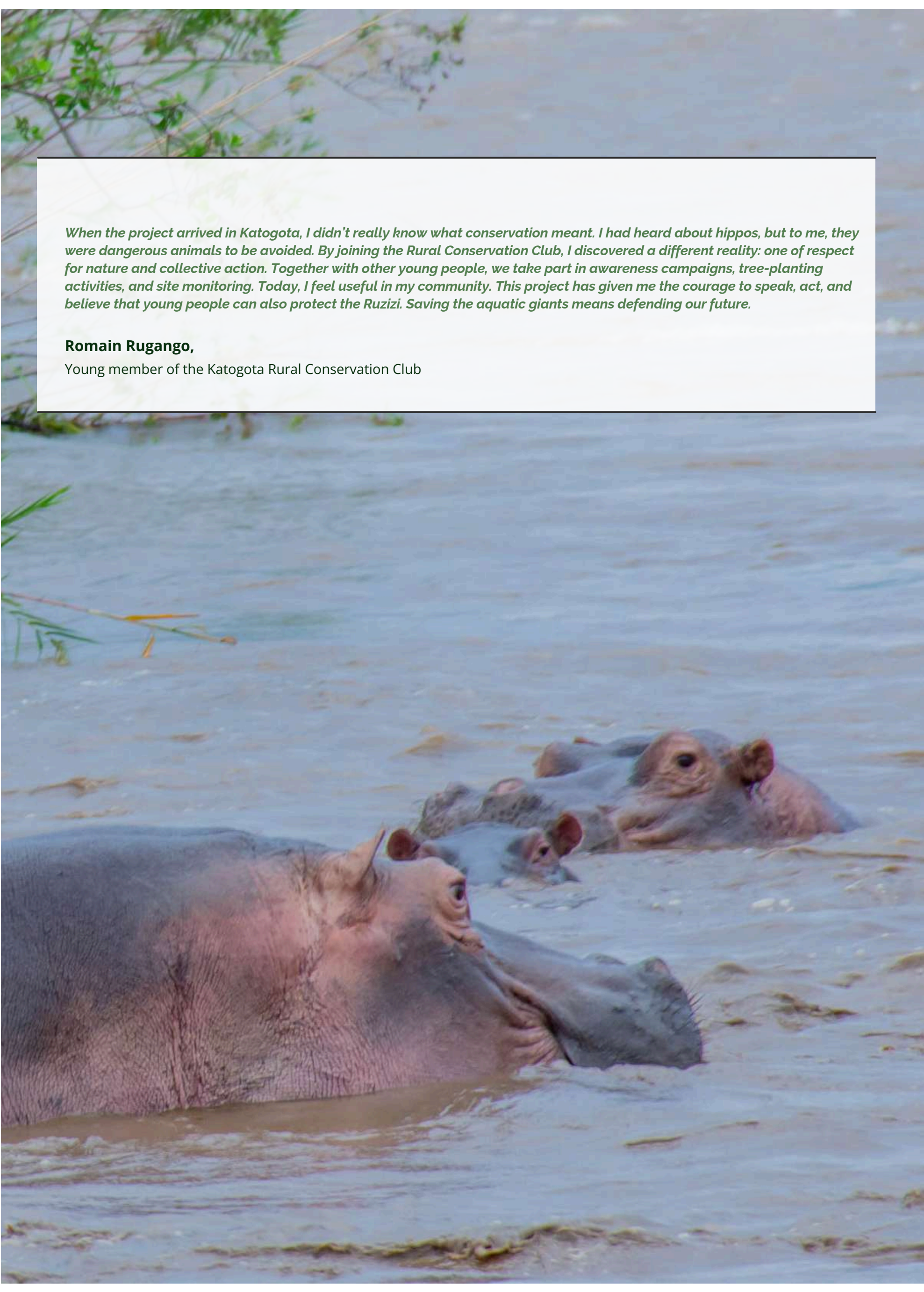
The financial support of the Global Diversity Foundation (GDF), combined with the technical and financial expertise of the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and the active mobilization of communities, has demonstrated that an integrated approach can both protect a threatened species and improve local living conditions. The project **“Saving the Aquatic Giants: Hippo Conservation and Support for the Livelihoods of Indigenous and Local Communities”** therefore goes beyond saving hippos: it paves the way for a model of ecological and social sustainability, where nature and people advance together toward a more balanced and resilient future in the Ruzizi Plain.

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I didn't understand why so much was being said about hippos. Now I know that they are part of what sustains our plain. Thanks to the project, I have learned to love and protect nature, because it protects us too.

M. David Bahati

Young member of the Kamanyola Rural Conservation Club

A photograph of several hippos in a river. In the foreground, a hippo is partially submerged, with its head and ears visible. Behind it, another hippo is also in the water. The water is a murky brown color, and there are some green plants visible in the background.

When the project arrived in Katogota, I didn't really know what conservation meant. I had heard about hippos, but to me, they were dangerous animals to be avoided. By joining the Rural Conservation Club, I discovered a different reality: one of respect for nature and collective action. Together with other young people, we take part in awareness campaigns, tree-planting activities, and site monitoring. Today, I feel useful in my community. This project has given me the courage to speak, act, and believe that young people can also protect the Ruzizi. Saving the aquatic giants means defending our future.

Romain Rugango,

Young member of the Katogota Rural Conservation Club

Context and Justification

Stretching between Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika, the Ruzizi Plain is a fragile ecosystem where protecting hippos also means safeguarding the food, water, and livelihoods of local communities.

The Ruzizi Plain, located in the South Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, represents an exceptional and strategic ecosystem. Serving as a true ecological corridor, it connects Lake Kivu in the north to Lake Tanganyika in the south, following the course of the Ruzizi River. This vast plain is considered a critical habitat for several iconic and threatened species, including the common hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*).

Nicknamed the “Giants of the Ruzizi” by our Rural Conservation Clubs (RCCs), these aquatic mammals play an essential role in maintaining the ecological balance of the region. Through their presence and movements, they contribute to the fertilization of agricultural soils, the regulation of water flow, and the regeneration of aquatic ecosystems. In this way, they act as natural regulators, positively influencing biodiversity and the life cycles of wetland areas. A healthy population of hippos is therefore a key indicator of the environmental health of the Ruzizi Plain landscape.

However, despite this recognized ecological importance, the hippos of the Ruzizi Plain currently face multiple threats. Poaching represents one of the most alarming pressures. Driven by the demand for meat and ivory from their teeth, it has significantly reduced local populations. This threat is compounded by limited monitoring and the persistence of illegal hunting and wildlife trade activities. Habitat degradation also increases the species’ vulnerability. Agricultural expansion, which is necessary for meeting a

growing demand for food, encroaches increasingly each year on wetlands and riverbanks. Overgrazing by domestic livestock and rapid urbanization further contribute to the fragmentation and degradation of ecosystems. Added to this is the pressure of climate change, which manifests in reduced river flow during the dry season, the progressive drying of certain wetlands, and increased riverbank erosion. These changes reduce available habitat and directly threaten the survival of hippos. Recurring land conflicts in the region constitute another major threat. In a context where land is scarce and valuable, competition for its use is intense. The absence of effective integrated natural resource management mechanisms exacerbates this pressure, fueling tensions among riparian communities, local authorities, and conservation initiatives.

In addition to these ecological challenges, critical socio-economic issues persist.

The Ruzizi Plain is experiencing rapid population growth, and structural poverty remains widespread. Local communities depend directly on the land, the Ruzizi River basin, and natural resources for their livelihoods. This dependence increases competition for space and intensifies conflicts. Human-wildlife conflicts are a clear manifestation of these pressures. In search of food, hippos often leave the waterways to invade cultivated fields, sometimes destroying entire plots of cassava, maize, or rice in a single night. For many families already facing food insecurity, these agricultural losses represent a severe shock

insurmountable and foster strong resentment toward these animals. These tensions have shaped a negative perception of hippos within local communities.

Rather than being seen as an ecological asset, they are often regarded as competitors or direct threats to daily survival. This situation exacerbates the fragility of human-wildlife relations and complicates conservation initiatives. The vulnerability of local communities is further heightened for certain specific groups, notably rural women and the indigenous Batwa people. Historically marginalized and often deprived of equitable access to resources, they bear the full brunt of combined ecological degradation and socio-economic marginalization. Women, in particular, carry a significant share of the family survival burden and are especially exposed to the consequences of agricultural losses and resource scarcity.

Thus, the conservation of hippos in the Ruzizi Plain goes far beyond the mere protection of a threatened species. It fits into a broader framework of ecological sustainability, social justice, and community cohesion. Protecting hippos also means preserving wetlands, safeguarding biodiversity, and ensuring the fertility of agricultural lands that feed families.

It is also a matter of social justice and human dignity. By directly involving communities in resource management and providing economic alternatives, conservation becomes an opportunity for shared development.

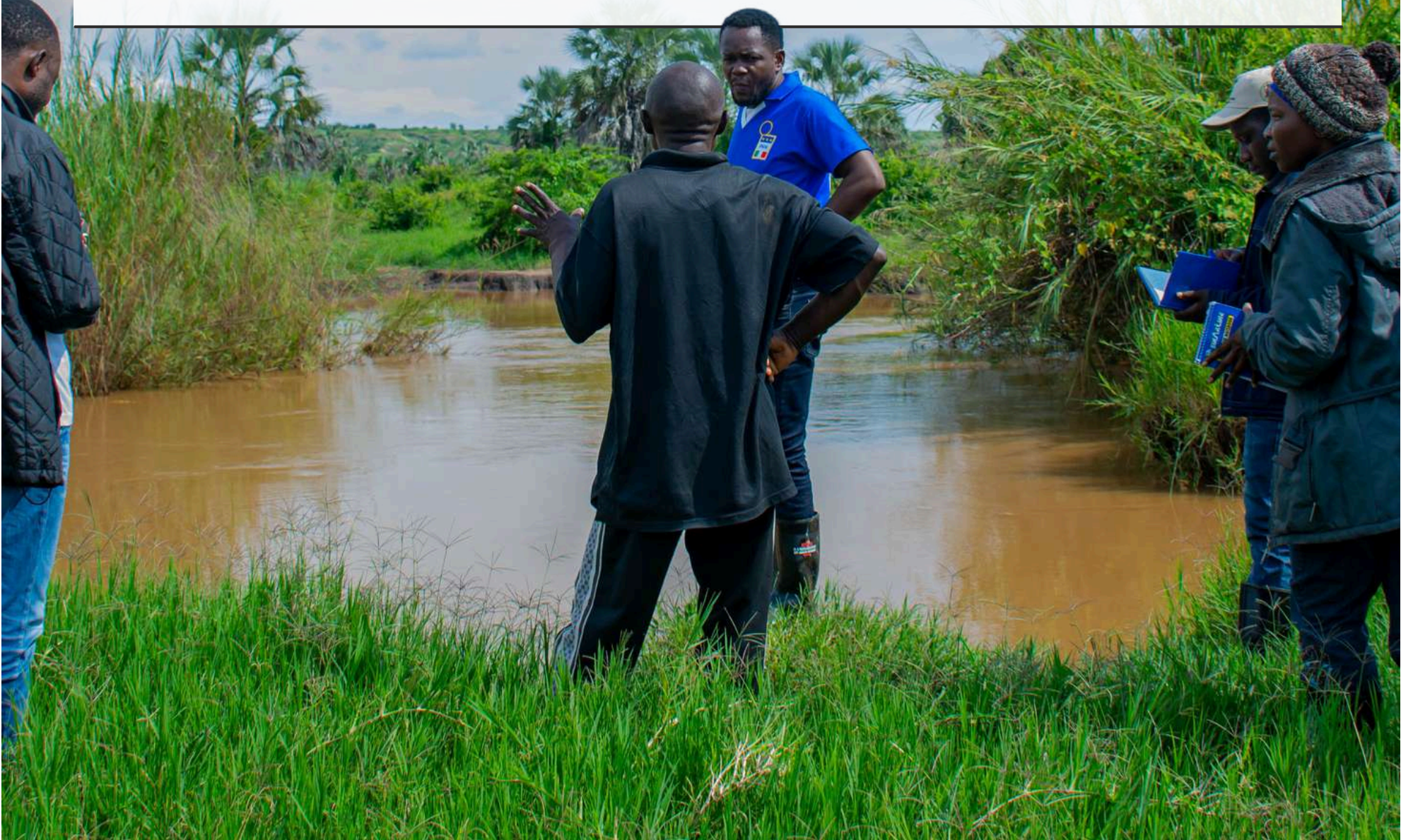
It helps reduce inequalities, place women and marginalized groups at the center, and build solutions tailored to the local context. Thus, restoring the fragile balance between humans and nature is not just about saving hippos: it also means protecting the fields that feed families, providing stable income for households, and strengthening cohesion among communities. In the Ruzizi Plain, inclusive conservation is not an option—it is a promise of a sustainable future, where biodiversity and human populations grow and thrive together.

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Before the project, I thought conservation was only for educated people or those working in offices. We, the women of the villages, were never consulted. But with MKAAJI MPYA and the “Saving the Aquatic Giants” project, everything changed. Thanks to our savings and credit association, I was able to start a small business and help my children go to school. We were also trained on nature protection and the role of hippos in maintaining the river’s balance. Today, I know that when we plant trees or protect riverbanks, we are benefiting both nature and our families. I am proud to say that the women of Luvungi now participate in conservation, and that our voices matter.

Chantal Byamungu,

Member of a Savings and Credit Association and participant in the “Saving the Aquatic Giants” project, Luvungi



Project Objectives



The Saving the Aquatic Giants project was designed as an innovative and integrated response to the threats facing the biodiversity of the Ruzizi Plain and the livelihoods of riparian communities. Its objectives are structured around five main, complementary, and interdependent axes.

1. HIPPOPOTAMUS CONSERVATION

At the heart of the project is the commitment to protect hippopotamus populations, an iconic and threatened species of the Ruzizi Plain. This involves combating poaching, implementing participatory ecological monitoring, and raising community awareness to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and transform local perceptions of these mammals.

2. RESTORATION OF NATURAL HABITATS

The survival of hippos is closely linked to the quality of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems - their habitat. The project therefore aimed to restore degraded habitats along the Ruzizi River, notably through riverbank reforestation, wetland regeneration, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices that reduce pressure on this ecosystem.

3. IMPROVING THE LIVELIHOODS OF INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Recognizing that conservation cannot succeed without viable economic alternatives, the project supports the most vulnerable households—particularly women and the indigenous Batwa people—through income-generating activities. The focus is on economic diversification, the establishment and support of Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCAs), and the development of ecotourism-related opportunities. These initiatives help reduce direct dependence on natural resources and increase the resilience of communities to environmental and socio-economic shocks.

4. STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE THROUGH RURAL CONSERVATION CLUBS (RCCS)

The Rural Conservation Clubs (RCCs), led by communities with the support of the Environment, Conservation, and Climate Change Department of MKAAJI MPYA asbl, form the institutional backbone of the project. These local structures are trained, equipped, and supported to become genuine actors in environmental governance. They monitor conservation sites, conduct awareness campaigns, facilitate mediation in human-wildlife conflicts, and represent the communities' voice in local natural resource management bodies.

5. PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH (HERA)

The project adopts the Household Ecosystem Restoration Approach (HERA), which places each household at the heart of ecosystem conservation and restoration.

Practically, this approach empowers households to protect and restore their immediate environment through actions such as reforestation, agroforestry, sustainable land management, and the reduction of pressures on sensitive areas. HERA thus links the survival of hippos and aquatic ecosystems to the daily needs of local families, ensuring food security, alternative income, and ecological resilience. Overall, these objectives reflect the project's vision: to make hippo conservation a driver of social justice, ecological restoration, and collective prosperity in the Ruzizi Plain.

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Before, hippos often destroyed our rice fields here in Kamanyola. Many of us thought they were just a problem. Since the arrival of the “Saving the Aquatic Giants” project, things have changed. With the Rural Conservation Club, we have learned how to better protect our fields without harming the animals and how to monitor the areas where they live. The project has also helped us understand why these giants are important for the river and our lands. Today, there is more dialogue between farmers, traditional leaders, and club members. Personally, I feel more confident and proud to contribute to the protection of our plain. Saving the hippos also means preserving the rice we grow and the peace in our community.

Jean-Bosco Cirimwami,

Rice farmer and member of the Kamanyola
Rural Conservation Club



Description of Activities Carried Out

During the implementation period, the Saving the Aquatic Giants project carried out a range of strategic and complementary actions, combining ecological conservation, community participation, and economic empowerment.

Establishment and Operation of Conservation Sites

Through a participatory approach, 7 key hippopotamus conservation sites were identified in the Ruzizi Plain. Among these, three sites—Katogota, Kamanyola, and Luvungi—received direct support from the project. In each of these sites, Rural Conservation Clubs were established or strengthened to ensure monitoring, awareness-raising, and the implementation of local protection initiatives. These areas are gradually being recognized as community ecotourism hubs, thus serving a dual purpose of conservation and development.

Ecological Restoration Activities

Restoring degraded habitats was a priority. Riverbank reforestation campaigns along the Ruzizi River were carried out with the active participation of local communities. Community nurseries were established to produce seedlings for reforestation and agroforestry. These initiatives not only promote ecosystem regeneration but also help reduce erosion and enhance the ecological resilience of the plain.

Community Awareness and Training

To sustainably embed conservation in local mindsets, several environmental education activities were organized. Four major awareness campaigns reached over 350 people, including women, youth, and community leaders. Additionally, training workshops helped strengthen the capacities of the Rural Conservation Clubs in areas such as human-wildlife conflict management, local governance, habitat conservation, and the development of income-generating activities.

Support for Rural Women

Recognizing their central role in the local economy, the project paid special attention to women. Through the establishment and support of Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCAs), over 40 women were assisted in starting alternative economic activities, including small businesses, agriculture, and fish farming. This support helped reduce dependence on land within conservation areas and strengthened the economic resilience of households.

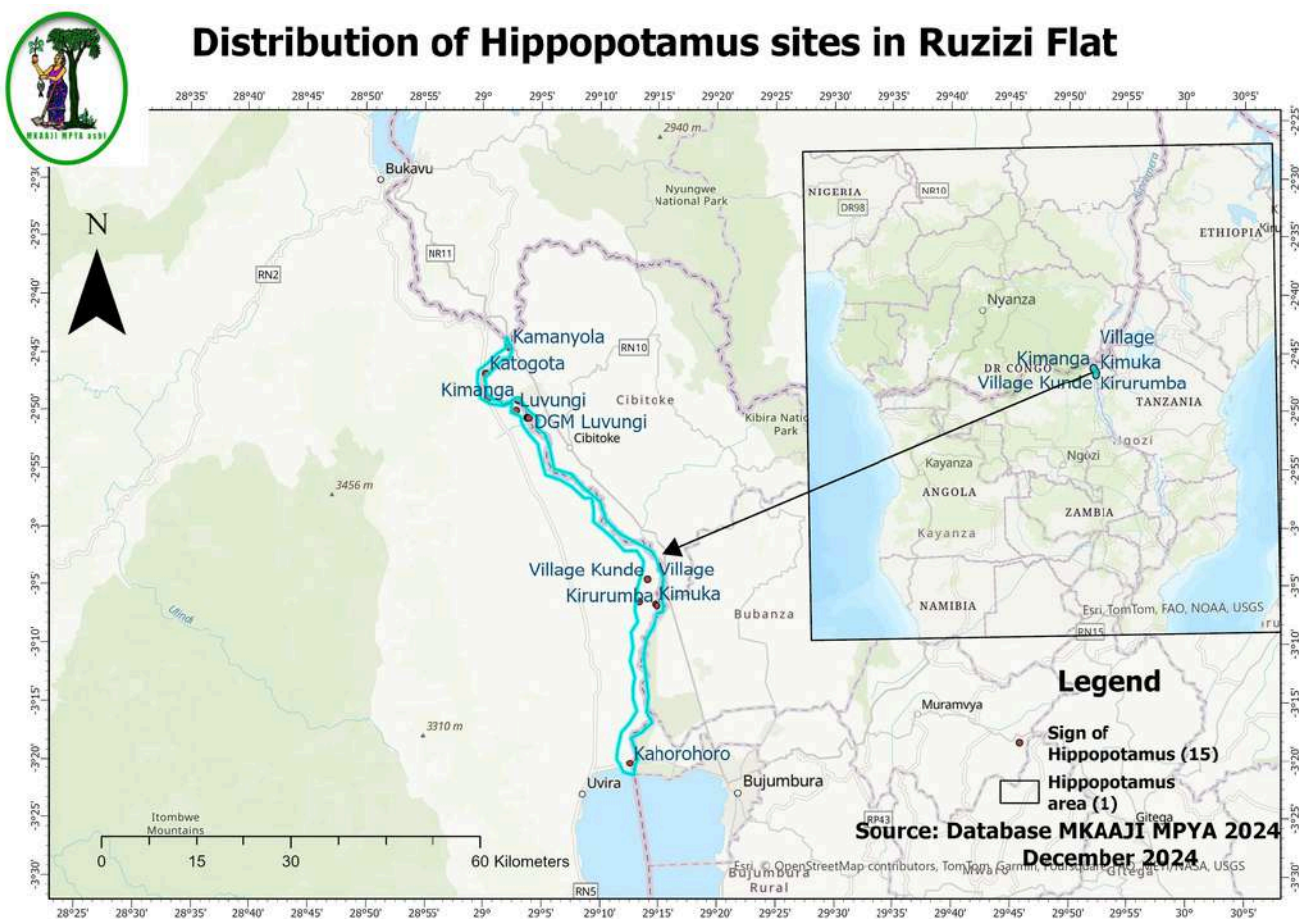
Mapping and Planning with an African Wildlife Foundation Intern

In collaboration with the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and with the support of an intern fellow, participatory mapping was carried out to identify priority conservation sites and plan field activities. This mapping produced a practical management tool, aligning community perspectives with scientific and strategic data.

Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships

The success of these actions relies on close collaboration with partners. AWF provided valuable technical and financial support, particularly for capacity building and planning. The Global Diversity Foundation, through funding from the GEN Seed Project, provided essential financial support for the implementation of these activities. Together, these partnerships gave the project a local, scientific, and international dimension, while strengthening the legitimacy of the initiatives with authorities and communities.

The actions carried out demonstrate that hippo conservation can serve as a driver of social cohesion and sustainable development, provided that communities become its primary actors and beneficiaries.



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Before, I saw hippos as a threat to my field. Today, I know they are part of our wealth. Thanks to the project, my perspective has changed: I feel useful, respected, and proud to protect what sustains our plain.

Mme Marie Mugoli

Farmer and member of the Katogota Rural Conservation Club

Since the arrival of the “Saving the Aquatic Giants” project, we have witnessed a real change in how our communities perceive nature. Previously, there was much distrust and conflict around hippos. Today, thanks to awareness-raising and the work of the Rural Conservation Clubs, people understand that these animals are part of our collective wealth. As a local authority, I am proud to see our youth, women, and village leaders working together to protect the Ruzizi. This project has restored dialogue, responsibility, and, above all, hope.

Chef Kasereka Bisimwa,
Traditional Leader of Luvungi



Results and Impacts

Saving hippos also means saving the future of communities: when nature regains its balance, men and women regain dignity and hope.

The actions carried out under the “Saving the Aquatic Giants” project have yielded tangible results, both ecologically and socio-economically, while also strengthening local capacities. These impacts can be measured across several key dimensions.

Improvement of Hippopotamus Conservation and Their Habitat

The establishment of three active conservation sites (Katogota, Kamanyola, Luvungi) and the mapping of four others has strengthened the protection of hippos in the Ruzizi Plain. Monitoring activities, combined with awareness campaigns, have contributed to better habitat security and a collective understanding of the need to preserve these species. Ecological restoration initiatives, including riverbank reforestation and the establishment of nurseries, have also promoted the gradual return of vegetation that protects the wetlands.

Reduction of Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Once seen as field predators, hippos are beginning to be viewed differently thanks to joint awareness-raising efforts and the development of alternative economic activities. Households involved in village savings and credit associations,

as well as income-generating activities, have found new sources of livelihood that reduce their dependence on conservation areas. This shift in perspective has eased tensions and promoted more peaceful coexistence between communities and hippos.

Strengthening Local Capacities through Rural Conservation Clubs

The Rural Conservation Clubs have become genuine hubs of environmental governance. With 40 trained members in Katogota and local actors engaged in other villages, these clubs mediate conflicts, monitor conservation sites, and promote a culture of conservation within communities. Their active involvement strengthens the sustainability and local ownership of the project.

Increased Ecosystem Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation

Restoration activities, including tree planting and riverbank regeneration, directly contribute to climate change adaptation by reducing erosion, improving water retention, and protecting aquatic habitats. Over time, these measures enhance the ecological resilience of the Ruzizi Plain, a vital asset in the context of increasing climate variability.

Economic Empowerment of Women and Local Communities

The active involvement of women is one of the project’s most notable successes. Over 30 women joined VSCAs and started small local businesses, including sustainable agriculture with support from the Organization’s Mobile Agronomists (AMM), small trade, and fish farming. These initiatives, described as “green jobs,” not only improve their incomes but also foster autonomy and female leadership. They demonstrate that conservation and development can complement each other effectively.

Impact of the African Wildlife Foundation Fellow’s Internship

The African Wildlife Foundation fellow played a key role in the project. Their involvement helped strengthen participatory mapping of the sites, improve community awareness, and provide targeted support to women engaged in alternative economic activities. Their presence also bridged technical expertise and community engagement, ensuring better planning and more rigorous monitoring of results. The project has demonstrated that it is possible to combine hippo protection, ecosystem restoration, and the improvement of local livelihoods. The results achieved provide a solid foundation for the sustainability of an inclusive and integrated conservation model in the Ruzizi Plain.

“*Saving the aquatic giants means protecting life in all its forms: the species, the ecosystems, and the communities that depend on them, to build a more just and sustainable future.*”

Gervais Muderhwa

Director of the Environment, Conservation, and Climate Change Department, MKAJJI MPYA asbl



Case Studies / Testimonials

One of the most striking aspects of the project is the gradual transformation of perceptions and practices within local communities. Testimonials collected from the pilot villages provide concrete examples of the project's impact on the daily lives of beneficiaries and on the relationship between humans and nature.

Testimonial from a Community Leader in Katogota

We are very pleased with this kind of initiative. MKAAJI MPYA is turning us into "Wakaaji Wapya" (new cultivators), seeking new solutions to the problems in our communities. Hippos existed in the Ruzizi River before us, and they must continue to be there after us. Restoring greenery by planting trees along the river is a major contribution to the development plan of our community. We are fully committed to the success of this initiative.

This is therefore a clear translation of the change in perception: from being seen as enemies, hippos are now regarded as a valuable asset to protect, integrated into the vision of local development.

Experience of Zawadi, member of the Katogota Rural Conservation Club

Before, we only saw hippos as dangerous animals. Today, I am a member of the Rural Conservation Club and I speak to others about how they can contribute to the development of our village. Thanks to the project, I joined a savings group with other women and started a small cassava processing business. This has changed both my perspective and my income.

Mrs. Zawadi's experience illustrates both the direct economic impact of the project and the rise of women's leadership in local conservation initiatives.

Concrete Impact in the Village of Luvungi

In Luvungi, the project's support focused on developing a key conservation site identified by the communities. At the same time, several women were organized into savings and credit associations, enabling them to start economic activities. These alternatives have helped reduce agricultural pressure in sensitive areas while fostering greater acceptance of conservation.

Itara and Kamanyola: Emerging Community Dynamics

In the villages of Itara-Luvungi and Kamanyola, the project brought together local authorities, the indigenous Batwa people, and riparian communities around a common cause: the survival of hippos and the enhancement of the Ruzizi River. Community dialogues have opened new prospects for shared governance and peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife.



Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned

Implementing a conservation project in the Ruzizi Plain has not been without challenges. While the results are encouraging, they are also the product of patient work in the face of real obstacles.

Ongoing Threats

Poaching remains a concern. Despite awareness-raising efforts, some still see hippos as a source of meat or ivory. Land conflicts are also very present: the pressure to cultivate riverbanks is high, which degrades habitats and fuels tensions. Added to this are pollution, waste, intensive agriculture and slash-and-burn practices, and pesticide use, all of which undermine water quality, the health of the ecosystem, and the survival of species.

Building Trust

At the beginning, many families saw hippos as enemies: these animals could destroy entire fields in a single night. For already vulnerable households, it was difficult to see any “benefit” in their presence. Some were initially distrustful, fearing further loss of land. The indigenous Batwa people, long marginalized, also sometimes felt excluded from these dynamics. This highlighted the need to go further in inclusion and active listening.

Game-Changing Solutions

In the face of these challenges, the team did not seek to impose solutions but engaged in dialogue. Regular community meetings created spaces for discussion and helped build trust. Introducing economic alternatives, such as savings groups and small income-generating activities, changed perceptions of hippos: their presence is now associated with new opportunities, such as tourism and ecosystem restoration. The participatory mapping conducted with the support of the African Wildlife Foundation also gave residents an active role in decision-making, strengthening their sense of ownership.

Key Lessons Learned

Three key lessons emerge from this experience:

- Conservation can only succeed if local communities feel ownership of the project and derive tangible benefits from it.
- Providing viable economic alternatives is essential to reduce pressure on natural resources.
- Hippos, long perceived as “enemies,” can become ambassadors of development when communities link them to ecotourism, education, or ecosystem restoration.

These lessons remind us that conservation is not only about ecosystems but also about social justice, dialogue, and shared hope.





Perspectives and Recommendations

At the end of this first phase of the ***“Saving the Aquatic Giants: Hippo Conservation and Support for the Livelihoods of Indigenous and Local Communities”*** project, MKAAJI MPYA asbl is pleased with the progress achieved, both ecologically, economically, and socially. Together with our partners and riparian communities, we have demonstrated that it is possible to reconcile the protection of hippos and their habitats with the improvement of local livelihoods.

The results achieved, from the establishment of conservation sites to the creation of alternative economic activities for women, as well as awareness-raising and ecosystem restoration, highlight the relevance of our approach. The participatory method, based on the Household Ecosystem Restoration Approach (HERA), has proven to be an effective lever for strengthening ecosystem resilience while fostering sustainable community ownership.

However, we are aware that significant challenges remain: persistent poaching, land pressures, structural poverty, and the growing impacts of climate change. These threats require strengthened collective action and a long-term vision.

That is why MKAAJI MPYA asbl reaffirms its commitment to continue and expand this project. Our ambition is clear: to extend conservation actions to the seven identified sites, consolidate the Rural Conservation Clubs as local environmental governance structures, and strengthen sustainable economic alternatives for the most vulnerable households while restoring this landscape. We know that this vision can only be realized through strong partnerships. We sincerely thank the Global Diversity Foundation and the African Wildlife Foundation for their financial and technical support, as well as all local authorities, community leaders, women, and youth who have mobilized alongside us.

Together, we have laid the foundations for an inclusive and integrated conservation model. We firmly believe that protecting hippos also means safeguarding the future of the entire Ruzizi Plain, for current and future generations.

This impact report was prepared by MKAAJI MPYA asbl as part of the “Saving the Aquatic Giants: Hippo Conservation in the Ruzizi Plain” project, implemented with financial support from the Global Diversity Foundation (GDF) through the GEN Seed Project Funding, and also with the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) under the Charles R. Wall Conservation Leadership and Management Fellowship (CLMF) program.

It presents the main achievements, results, and lessons learned from activities carried out on the ground in Katogota, Kamanyola, and Luvungi, in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This document aims to highlight the ecological and socio-economic impacts of the project, the active participation of local communities, and the prospects for sustaining integrated conservation efforts in the Ruzizi Plain.

Acknowledgment

The preparation of this project was made possible thanks to the technical and financial support of the **Global Diversity Foundation (GDF)** and the **African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)** through the Charles R. Wall Conservation Leadership and Management Fellowship (CLMF).

We express our deep gratitude to our institutional partners, local and traditional authorities, as well as all the riparian communities of Katogota, Kamanyola, and Luvungi, for their ongoing commitment, trust, and collaboration in the implementation of the project. Our thanks also go to the AWF fellow, whose involvement strengthened participatory planning, the mapping of key sites, and support for women within the Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCAs).

Finally, we commend the engagement of the members of the Rural Conservation Clubs (RCCs), community leaders, youth, and rural women, who are true agents of change in the Ruzizi Plain.

MKAAJI MPYA NGO reaffirms its commitment to continue, together with all its partners, building an inclusive and sustainable conservation model where the protection of nature goes hand in hand with the well-being of human communities.



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