

# **Terms of Reference: Review and assessment of the current state of coordination and collaboration with UWA’s partners operating in the GVL landscape specifically QENP and Virunga National Park (VNP) in the DRC.**

## **Background**

Often referred to as the “pearl of Africa”, Uganda contains globally important biodiversity that sustains key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, water, and energy, providing direct and indirect employment for the country’s population of 45,905,417 (45.9 million people)<sup>1</sup>. Uganda’s biodiversity, however, faces enormous threats from wildlife crimes such as illegal wildlife trafficking (IWT) and poaching due to the country’s porous borders, weak law enforcement, corruption, low capacity of wildlife authorities, and persistent insecurity in neighboring countries such as South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Over the past several years, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has collaborated with the Government of Uganda—particularly the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), the agency responsible for managing the country’s national parks, wildlife reserves, and wildlife—in combatting wildlife crime (CWC). WCS continues to build on this long-term partnership with UWA to strengthen the agency’s ability to combat wildlife trafficking, including poaching at both the park level—focusing on the Queen Elizabeth Protected Area (QEPA).

WCS has proposed a new game-changing collaborative management partnership (CMP) with UWA in QEPA for Ishasha sector. The proposed new site engagement focuses initially on securing Ishasha as the most viable source site of lions for the wider QEPA and transboundary area but will have longer-term wide-reaching positive impacts on QEPA’s species and ecosystems.

WCS and UWA have co-designed a co-management approach for Ishasha that will innovate governance and management, enhance flexibility and adaptability, strengthen partnerships and collaboration, invest in long-term capacity and unlock additional financing opportunities. The proposed CMP will implement comprehensive species recovery, habitat management, community engagement and tourism enhancement initiatives that will restore the park’s ecological integrity and help transform relationships between local communities and the park.

The CMP will be for a duration of twenty years, split into five-year strategic periods. The goal of the CMP is: ‘To protect Ishasha’s globally important ecosystems and iconic tree-climbing lions through collaborative and innovative conservation efforts in partnership with local stakeholders’.

Under the CMP, Strategic Objective three will focus on enhancement of wildlife protection and Law Enforcement (LE) in Ishasha sector, QEPA. A LE robust strategy development will be informed by reliable data. It will be managed adaptively based on a continuous flow of information between rangers and management. The law enforcement strategy will be grounded in a strong understanding of the situation in the field, such as poaching hotspots, seasonality and timing of illegal activities,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/National-Population-and-Housing-Census-2024-Final-Report-Volume-1-Main.pdf>

and key park access points. UWA rangers have an intimate understanding of these factors, and this will be utilized to inform strategy development in the first six months of the CMP. WCS will provide support to UWA in the implementation and monitoring of the strategy. Specifically, data collection will be improved: on-the-ground information used for LE strategy and adaptation begins with UWA's eyes and ears: rangers in the field. They collect crucial information about the location, timing, nature, and intensity of illegal activities; confiscations of contraband; arrests or other human contacts; key species sightings; and duration and coverage of patrols. Under the CMP we would implement a program of long-term, hands-on training to build rangers' skills in data collection and to expose them to the kind of reports and analyses to which their data contributes. Greater understanding of how their day-to-day activities can lead to more effective patrol planning and improved protection of the park will motivate rangers to better use SMART which will, in turn, provide better data on which to base the LE strategy. This training will be park-wide across QEPA, not restricted to Ishasha. Additionally, law enforcement monitoring data guides patrols will be guided by law enforcement monitoring data and strategies developed. WCS will support UWA to deploy targeted patrols in Ishasha. These will include overnight patrols, de-snaring missions, intelligence-led operations, transboundary engagement with Virunga Foundation rangers, and other-directed initiatives. Patrols will focus on deterring crimes and intercepting individuals before crimes have taken place, to minimize the harm to wildlife and habitats.

The aim of this consultancy is to support antipoaching interventions in QEPA and counter wildlife trafficking efforts in Uganda and across the region through a review and assessment of current coordination and collaboration with UWA's partners operating in the GVL landscape specifically QENP and Virunga National Park (VNP) in the DRC.

### **Scope of Work**

WCS is seeking a consultant to:

Deliver a comprehensive review and assessment of UWA's partnerships in the GVL and provide recommendations to enhance coordination and collaboration in support of Uganda's efforts to strengthen cross-border cooperation and effectively respond to instances of poaching and wildlife trafficking in Uganda. The scope of work will cover:

- The current wildlife crime/trafficking situation in Virunga National Park and QEPA-Virunga NP conservation Transfrontier including impacts on the Ishasha sector, QEPA.
- Current coordination and collaboration within the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) Regional Technical Committees (RTC) with an emphasis on the RTC – Law Enforcement.
- Coordination and collaboration between UWA and its Vetted Unit (Focused Conservation) and L'Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) at QEPA level including additional emphasis on the Ishasha sector, QEPA.

Deliverables will be in the form of:

- Two (2) reports:

- 1) An inception report detailing the methodology, data assessment and workplan (including in-field visit schedule) for the consultancy.
  - 2) A final report detailing the results of the review and assessment with recommendations to enhance Uganda's efforts to strengthen cross-border cooperation and effectively respond to instances of poaching and wildlife trafficking in Uganda.
- A presentation (virtual) of findings to UWA and WCS staff.

### **Meetings**

- Planning meeting with WCS project lead following execution of contract.
- Scoping meeting(s) with WCS project lead to inform Inception Report
- Meeting/interviews in Uganda with relevant stakeholders.
- Presentation of draft final report to WCS project lead at milestone submission.
- Presentation of final report to WCS and UWA

### **Requirements**

- Experience working on wildlife crime problems in Uganda and demonstrated knowledge and understanding of poaching and snaring in Queen Elizabeth National Park.
- Strong project management skills, including the ability to develop and execute strategic plans.
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills to effectively collaborate with diverse field programs, stakeholders, and internal teams.
- Excellent English language verbal and written communication skills.
- Ability to travel to Uganda and Queen Elizabeth National Park and conduct interviews with relevant stakeholders.

### **Application procedure**

1. Submission of the technical proposal and budget for conducting this service not exceeding seven pages, including references.
2. Submission of the current CV of the applicant with at least two referees.
3. Submit the application documents to **wcsuganda@wcs.org** and copy to **snampindo@wcs.org**
4. WCS will not cover application costs
5. Deadline for submission of application is **April 14, 2026**.