

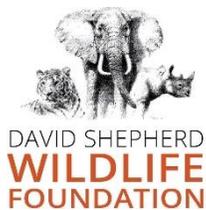
International Elephant Foundation

Update Report: Joint Operations Centre



Murchison Falls National Park

June 2019



By July 2019, the joint operations command centre construction project has reached the roofing level.

The contract for the construction of the joint operations command centre was won by Mutoni Construction Ltd. Construction started in March, 2019.

After discussing designs for the JOC with operators from the Northern Rangeland Trust, Sabi Sands and Sengita, the following design was agreed upon with UWA:



The construction project required 20,000 bricks. Thanks to Mutoni Construction we were able to purchase these bricks from Pacer Community College, where 40 youth from poaching communities' north of Murchison Falls were trained and engaged to make Hydrafoam bricks.

The youth were then brought into the construction project as apprentices providing paid, first-hand teaching and mentorship for three months. Once the construction project had enough bricks the youth teams were engaged on renovating two old ranger buildings and restoring the dispensary and nurse's accommodation.



June 2019 – the Joint Operations Command Centre construction, next to the armory.



10,000 snares were removed from the armory and buried in the foundation of the JOC. The snares were placed by youth from poaching communities to demonstrate the vast numbers of snares deployed and the large number of animals that would have been killed or maimed if they had remained in place as set by poachers.



10,000 snares buried in the foundations of the joint operations command centre – never to be used again.



20,000 bricks made by the community youth group. All youths had three months of apprenticeships – breaking the poaching cycle between generations. Having made the bricks nearby the site, the bricks needed to be delivered to the construction site.



Roofing has now started. A design change was made in early July, to increase air outlets and insulate the building between the metal sheeting and main building. This is to lower the internal temperature by about 5 to 15°C, which in turn will help reduce the need for fans and air conditioning. The operations and intelligence rooms cannot have windows for security reasons.



One of two ranger buildings renovated by the youth from the poaching groups; renovated and given a new lease of life for at least ten more years. Each building being renovated cost \$4000, rather than being bulldozed. There are twenty more buildings like this that could be renovated providing continuous employment for the community youths for multiple years.



Another youth team was trained at Pacer Community College by Plascon Paints. They painted the two renovated ranger buildings, the Paraa dispensary and the nurses accommodations. They were mentored by Mutoni Construction foremen and were paid a daily wage. They will be used to paint the JOC.



While painting the buildings helped, they still need building repairs and reroofing.

Whilst the JOC infrastructure is being established, so too is the technology and skills needed to be ready for operations.

- UCF / UWA have now signed a contract with Vulcan / Wildlife Protection Solutions Ltd to install EarthRanger (formally known as DAS) and Semantica in the JOC.
- The Ministry of Lands and UWA have established a working partnership to access government mapping files for the JOC.
- Detailed aerial survey was carried out in June 2019, partially funded by the International Elephant Foundation to provide the Recovery of Murchison Fall program an impact baseline from this point going forward. This survey included areas north of Murchison Falls to support landscape planning across the conservancy region.
- Michael Keigwin with UWA and Kevin Vallack from UNODC, have written UWA's National and Regional Law Enforcement Strategy supporting the framework for training and investment required.
- The Recovery of Murchison Falls programme has now run its tenth Junior Leadership / NCO course. This provides the training foundation beyond the basic training that UWA provides all rangers.
- In June 2019, 4 Rifles Regiment from the British Military provided training courses in JOC management and communications to analysts, senior wardens and leadership, as well as the basics of communications, reporting and briefing for all staff. In addition, twenty rangers started training to become the quick reaction force. All rangers benefited from first aid and a medical management course as well.



4 Rifles Regiment (x 39) training 100 rangers in a variety of operational critical skills.



Quick Reaction Force – professional and safe operations: ‘stop and search’ techniques.



Extracting injured people whilst still under threat – one of a few means, the fireman's lift.

Digital Radios and Solar Network.

Thanks to the Forgotten Parks Foundation (Kevin Marriot), UCF has procured the initial kit necessary to establish the backbone of a digital system across Murchison Falls.

Whilst the whole park is limited by the lack of power, solar power has been installed at the sector command stations including Kololo (where there is a tower), Punu Rii and Got Labwor. Additional solar power is needed.



The solar panels have been protected with wire fencing installed by another youth group from Pacer Community College.

Two repeaters, 30 radios and four car radios have now arrived in Uganda and are with UWA ready for installation in the next month. Installation will be carried out by the Forgotten Parks Foundation with UWA's own technology staff present to benefit from learning opportunities.

In Q3 2019 Murchison Falls will have an operational JOC and the ability to communicate to its operational command centres for the first time.

Challenges:

1. Completing the budgets for the construction projects took longer than wanted causing the programme to need to work in the wet season. Construction came to standstill as the wet season made areas impassable. Once the wet season subsided we were able to access Rabongo and Got Labwor.
2. Solar power is required in nearly all ranger posts – but it is expensive. We have concentrated on command centres at first to ensure each region can be communication with another.
3. Training removes frontline rangers from operations. UCF has been careful to train UWA during the wet season, when poaching is at its lowest.

Conclusion.

The Recovery of Murchison Falls programme is completing deliverables quickly. Last month Rabongo and Waiga Ranger Posts were completed, and solar power was installed in Got Labwor, Kololo and Punu Rii Ranger Posts, all Sector Command Centres. Digital radio towers were installed at Kololo and Rabongo. In addition, five ranger posts that struggled with water, now have guttering and water tanks installed removing an operational cost to UWA of \$3000 per month due to not having to drive an old water lorry to all posts once a week. A further 150 rangers have completed the Junior Leadership NCO course, 20 completed the quick reaction force training, 170 completed the medical training, 12 wardens and rangers carried out a JOC operations and communications course. Twenty rangers completed marine ranger operations courses. All were delivered by the British Military.

In the next three months Vulcan and WPS will have prepared all mapping files for EarthRanger, and the construction of the JOC will have finished.

At the request of the Chief Warden the facility is also having a law enforcement detention unit put in, in which there will be a room for a police officer on site. This will ensure the safe and legal processing of those arrested.

As we write, a further British Military team from the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment is travelling to Murchison Falls to continue Junior Leadership training for NCOs. The course will take two weeks.

The change UWA is about to go through with the development of the JOC is the largest operational change they will have ever gone through. Being responsive to real time management issues requires a completely different culture and series of skill sets. UWA is excited and very much looking forwards to stepping up.

The British Army has described the ranger teams as some of the most dedicated and impressive teams they have trained. They have maximized every opportunity to learn.

We all thank IEF, Global Conservation, Tusk Trust and the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation for your incredible support. We hope you agree that we are making solid inroads into the Recovery of Murchison Falls.

We look forwards to your visit and review of progress in October.