

A man in a white polo shirt is building a brick wall. He is holding a brick in his hands, and the wall is made of red bricks with grey mortar. The background is a clear blue sky with some trees visible on the right side.

BUILDING VETERINARY CAPABILITY TO RESPOND TO ELEPHANTS IN CRISIS
IN MURCHISON FALLS CONSERVATION AREA

Interim Report to the International Elephant Foundation – May 2016

INTRODUCTION



In 2011 MFCAs were a park in crisis. Once home to more mega-herbivore per km² than anywhere else in Africa, poaching was soaring and UWA did not have the capacity to regain control.

UWA contacted Michael Keigwin for help and a strategy was developed to recover the park and protect their elephants with the help of UCF.

Having identified the threats throughout the elephant range and UCF / UWA set about aligning UWA's capability to counter the threat. At first this included:

- Realigning the Ranger distribution and infrastructure to sustain the conservation and preservation of elephants and their habitats for the long term;
- Establishing a Marine Ranger Unit to stop poachers deploying snares, traps and poaching teams along the River Nile in Western MFCAs;
- Developing veterinary capability to improve emergency response and long term protection of elephants in MFCAs;
- Supporting Ranger patrols; and
- Rolling out the WILD LEO project across MFCAs, supporting intelligence led patrols and prosecution success.



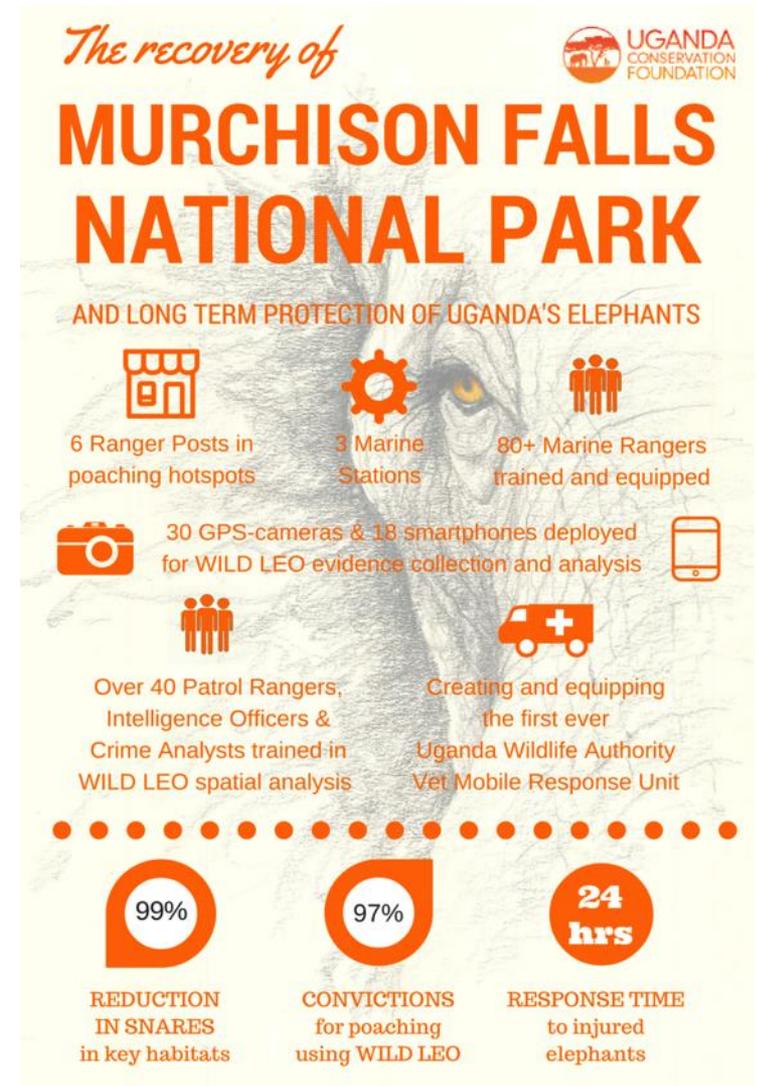
Elephants injured by snares, MFCAs 2011-12

ACHIEVEMENTS



Since the project started, UCF has:

- Constructed six ranger posts, including two with Mobile Unit accommodation, and are currently building two posts. UWA have also built two;
- Created the Marine Ranger Unit supporting anti-poaching, safety and rescue services for communities and tourism, fisheries dept support, including:
 - Building three marine ranger stations (MRS), each providing a long term presence in key elephant habitats, a forth MRS is about to be built;
 - Donating three patrol boats, five engines and equipment; and
 - Training over 80 Marine Rangers to Internationally accredited standards.
- Cleared the majority of poaching from core elephant habitats, which has so far been well sustained. Elephant mortality has decreased;
- Established the Vet Response Unit, resulting in the rescue of dozens of elephants from snares, traps and gun shot wounds, none of which would have otherwise survived; and
- Greatly limited illegal activity pressuring activity into smaller areas where targeted operations and future long term capability will counter the threat.





Elephant populations are on the increase, with reports that the Uganda national herd now exceeds 5,000 (UWA, 2015)

PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES



Goal:

To establish a long term Vet Response Units capability in Murchison Falls Conservation Area.

Objective:

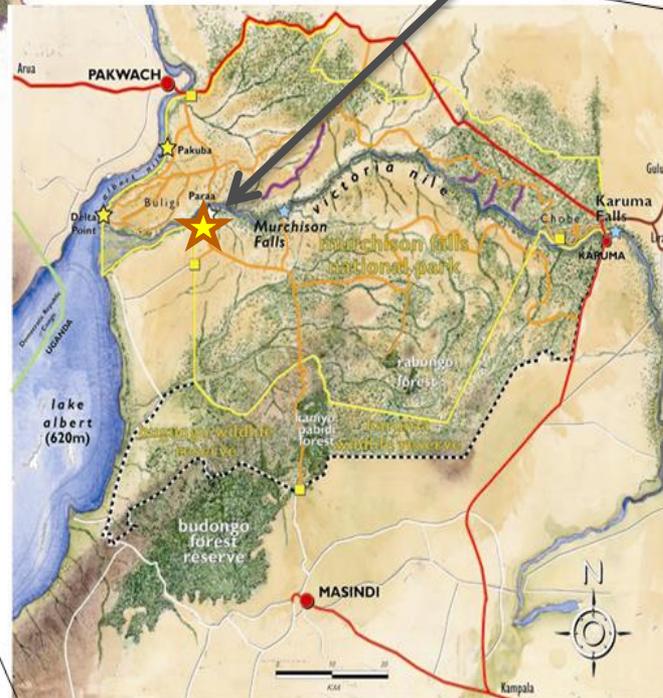
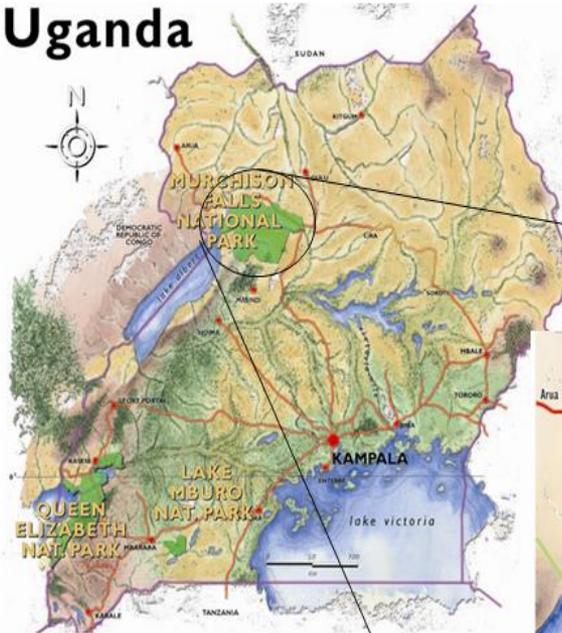
1. Refurbish and convert a disused building in Murchison Falls into a Veterinary facility
2. Ensure the Vet Response Unit has the capability to respond to incidents
3. Establish partnerships and opportunities to grow the capacity of the field teams



LOCATION



Uganda



**UCF/UWA VET &
ANALYTICS LAB,
MUBAKO**

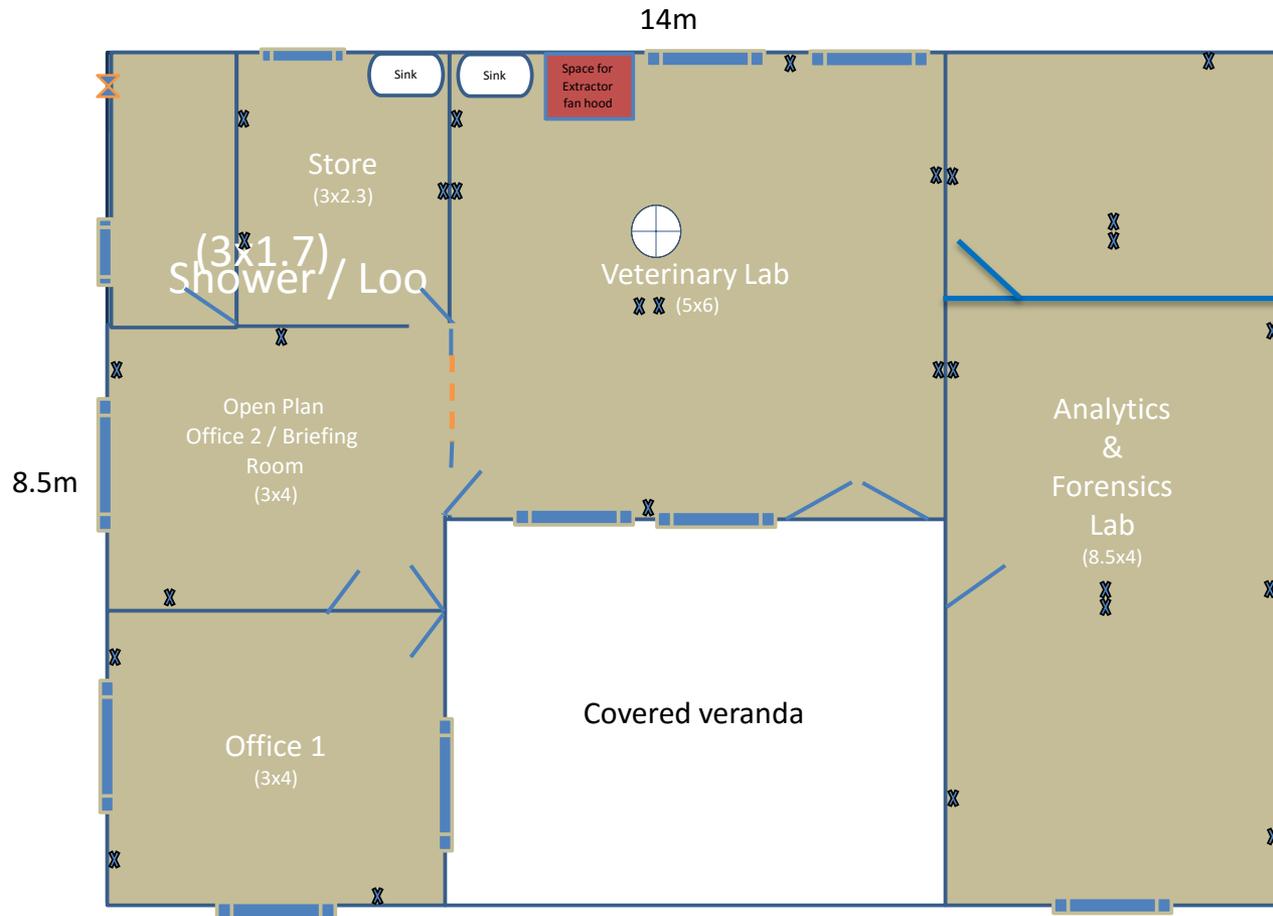
GPS Coordinates:
2.259088, 31.538599

METHODOLOGY



- The original plan was to refurbish a disused building at Paraa, on the northern bank of the Victoria Nile.
- However, as fundraising for the project progressed, the scope of work changed. UWA decided they would prefer the Veterinary Lab to be within their Head Quarters in Mubaku, which is on the south bank and also where most of the UWA Vet team reside. UCF agreed with the logic and set about changing the scope to be a 'new build'.
- The plan provided opportunity to integrate an Analytics Lab into the building, supporting the development of another UWA capability, whilst allowing UWA to improve the security of intelligence and law enforcement planning and analytics. This element was supported by the British High Commission in Uganda.
- The brick built structure includes a Veterinary Lab, a store room for drugs, samples and equipment, a shower and lavatory, an office for the Warden in Charge of Veterinary Services, Research and Monitoring, and meeting room / library, an analytics lab and a computer room.

DRAFT FLOORPLAN*



*Layout of rooms has been changed during the build

OBJECTIVE 1: PROGRESS REPORT



- After the final location of the lab was agreed, a scope of works was issued to three contractors in Jan 2016, with two bids received.
- When judged against the criteria of value for money, Bundu Thermal Services (BTS) quoted more than half the rate from the other contractor, Terrain Services (\$45,341 vs \$103,073 respectively). BTS have a proven record on previous UCF projects, with a good working relationship with UWA.
- BTS were awarded the contract and work began in early February 2016.
- A site visit by UCF on 9th May 2016 confirmed the construction phase is nearing completion, with all ceilings and plastering complete, the roof finished and electrical wiring underway. Once wiring has been completed, all that remains is to finalize plumbing, and tile and paint the internal and external walls.
- A solar fridge has been identified and is on order. Remaining work will involve contracting the fitted workbenches and other furnishings required.

OBJECTIVE 1: PROGRESS REPORT



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OBJECTIVE 2: PROGRESS REPORT



- The completion of the Vet & Analytics Lab will transform UWA capabilities to respond to incidents in MFCAs and the wider environs of Western and Northern Uganda
- The MFCAs Vet Respond Unit already has already significantly improved field response capacity with the donation from UCF of the following items of equipment:
 - Vet Dart Gun including spare darts, drop out & training darts, needles, syringes, gun case etc
 - 2 types of centrifuges
 - Field Microscope and Field pulse oximeter
 - 40x 45mg CO₂ canisters
 - FiV/FeLeuk & Microbacterial Test Kits – specifically for lions
 - Veterinary kit bag
 - Reference books on field anaesthesia
 - Medications including Ivermectin, long-acting antibiotics, injectable Vitamin-E, anti-inflammatory agents etc
 - Exam supplies including syringes, needles, gloves, facemasks, sample containers, blood collection tubes etc



OBJECTIVE 2: PROGRESS REPORT



- Supported by the UCF UWA Vet Mobile Response Vehicle and on occasion, up to six further UCF vehicles as logistical support/scouts, this equipment has enabled the MFCFA Veterinary team to operate efficiently on a variety of field operations including:
 - Emergency interventions to treat snare injuries on elephants and other endangered species in MFCFA
 - Treatment trials on the rash exhibited by approx. one third of the rare Rothschild's Giraffe in MFCFA
 - Problem animal control around the boundaries of MFCFA, helping to mitigate human elephant conflict
 - Emergency intervention and scoping of lion health in Kidepo Valley National Park
 - Translocation of Rothschild's Giraffe to Lake Mburo National Park and southern MFCFA



OBJECTIVE 3: PROGRESS REPORT



- In 2015, UCF supported two joint veterinary intervention projects bringing together UWA Vet Unit with international vets:
 - Treatment trials on the Rothschild's Giraffe with Dr Pete Black and Rob Yordi of Busch Gardens. Links have also been created with Tufts University and the Smithsonian Institute.
 - Emergency intervention and health-checks as part of scoping project for monitoring lions in southern MFCAs and Kidepo Valley Conservation Area, with Dr Pete Black and Rob Yordi from the Seaworld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund.
- Meetings and field visits have also been conducted with Dr Thomas Graham of Vets Without Borders (a Fulbright Scholar) based in Uganda, various other specialists, resulting in initial conversations by Dr Thomas Graham and UCF with the US Embassy (and partners / parts thereof, i.e. CDC) and Uganda's Virus Research Institute about the possibility of future collaboration to tackle common problems at the intersection of wildlife, public health and agriculture, i.e.:
 - Rabies outbreak in northwestern Uganda
 - 50% incidence of TB in certain communities

OBJECTIVE 3: PROGRESS REPORT



- Once completed, UCF aims to utilise the new Vet & Analytics Lab to leverage greater coordination between wildlife veterinary management and public health, with a focus on:
 - Collating and synthesizing existing research on zoonotic diseases
 - Conducting a gap analysis and identifying research needs for areas not yet covered
 - Hosting international vet symposiums incorporating individual experts and agencies working in this arena
 - Developing practical interventions to help mitigate risk of disease outbreak, promote best practice livestock and public health
 - Share new techniques and best practice from existing trials, such as the use of salt lick to vaccinate wildlife against rabies in the USA

CONTACTS



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