

Saving Gorillas with Fuel-Efficient Stoves



Introduction

With only 700 individuals remaining, the critically endangered mountain gorilla is in danger of extinction from habitat destruction caused by trespassing into the Virunga National Park, DR Congo to collect firewood and produce charcoal. The impoverished communities surrounding the park are reliant on these resources, used extensively for cooking and heating, but their use has a negative impact both socially and environmentally. The collection of firewood from the park is incredibly time-consuming and physically exhausting, and children are often involved, which means their education suffers as a result. Burning fuel within the household also damages health due to the large volumes of noxious smoke given off. Furthermore, both firewood collection and illegal charcoal production have a detrimental effect on the environment through habitat destruction.

The fuel-efficient stoves project was launched in partnership with local NGO AIDE-Kivu (*Appui aux Initiatives de Développement et Gestion de l'Environnement au Kivu*) in January 2008, and has since been producing and distributing 'Jiko' stoves, which reduce the consumption of firewood and charcoal by at least 55%. These not only benefit the environment, but also reduce the cost of fuel, as less is required, and produce less smoke than traditional stoves, improving families' health.

Objectives

The overall aim of the project is to reduce reliance on the resources of the Virunga National Park through the production and distribution of fuel-efficient stoves in North Kivu Province, DR Congo. The specific objectives are:

The stoves produced in the centre are sold for \$2 each, as purchasing them confers a sense of ownership and ensures the stoves are used and maintained. The funds generated are then reinvested in the project. The demand for stoves has increased rapidly since the project began, and at the end of 2008 a total of 496 had been produced. Families with Jiko stoves are now saving time and money by using just 1.5 sacks of charcoal per month instead of the four used before they owned a stove, while human pressure on the park has reduced and less fuel is being burnt, therefore contributing to the fight against climate change.

2009 has been designated by the United Nations as 'Year of the Gorilla', with the fuel-efficient stoves project being selected as a 'Year of the Gorilla Conservation Project' on account of its significant role in tackling one of the most immediate threats to the future survival of mountain gorillas. Regular updates from the project are being posted on the Year of the Gorilla blog in conjunction with WildlifeDirect: <http://gorilla.wildlifedirect.org>.

Furthermore, the project also recently beat off almost 1,000 other entries to reach the final stages of World Challenge 2009, a global competition that honours projects showing enterprise and innovation at a grassroots level. Along with 11 other initiatives, the project will be showcased on BBC World News and in BBC Newsweek magazine in late September, and people worldwide will have the chance to vote for their favourite, with the winner receiving \$20,000. For more information go to gorillas.org/worldchallenge09 and www.theworldchallenge.co.uk.

2009 Budget	
Item	Cost (\$)
Human resources (salaries for project manager, labourers and sensitisation officers)	7,640
Office costs (workshop rent, stationery and telecommunications)	1,520
Local travel (vehicle hire)	750
Motorcycle (to facilitate movement between communities for awareness raising)	3,500
Activity costs (tools and equipment for stove production, workshops)	7,848
Total	21,258