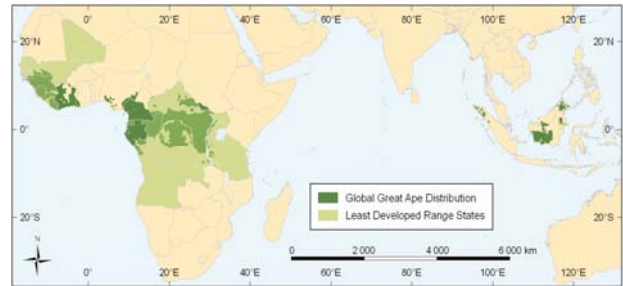


The Great Apes

There are six species of great ape (chimpanzee, bonobo, Western and Eastern gorilla, and Bornean and Sumatran orangutan). They are found across a total of 23 range states, including countries in West, Central and East Africa and on the Southeast Asian islands of Borneo and Sumatra in Indonesia and Malaysia. Every one of the great ape species is at high risk of extinction.



The GRASP Partnership

GRASP was launched in 2001 by the UN Environment Programme to help lift the threat of extinction facing the great apes. The Partnership is a unique mix of UN agencies, governments, civil society and private sector members. An international executive committee guides the work of GRASP and an independent scientific commission provides advice on great ape priorities. The GRASP coordinating team sits at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, with colleagues in Paris.

The Goal

The aim of the GRASP Partnership is to conserve viable populations of great apes and their habitat – forested tropical ecosystems that provide important services to humanity – wherever they exist, through pro-poor conservation and sustainable development strategies.

Significance of the great apes



Great apes share many highly valued qualities with humans. They can reason and communicate emotions, have mastered some forms of language and have their own cultures. They share between 96 and 98 per cent of our genetic inheritance.

As charismatic, flagship species, great apes can help raise awareness and funds for biodiversity in general, and for the forests they inhabit. They are also indicator species for ecosystem integrity, maintaining the health and diversity of tropical forests, by dispersing seeds and creating gaps in the forest canopy which allow seedlings to grow and replenish the ecosystem.

Ape Habitats and poverty

Ape habitats are vital to all species as a source of food, water, medicine and timber and as a regulator of our changing climate. Secure local communities living in harmony with the forests are the best guardians of this precious wildlife heritage. Endangered apes co-exist with millions of poor, rural people in Africa and Asia. Saving apes and reducing human poverty are intertwined.

Threats

- Habitat loss and fragmentation
 - Excessive and illegal logging
 - Expansion of agriculture, especially for biofuel production (e.g palm oil)
 - Mining
 - Illegal burning of forest
- Poaching
 - Hunting for bushmeat
 - Live animal trade
- War and local conflict
- Cross-species transmission of disease
- Climate Change



Some achievements to Date

As of January 2008, GRASP has raised approximately USD 7.1 million for great ape conservation from many donors. However, in order to reach our goals, we need help to raise much, much more. A total of USD 25 million over five years is our short term target.

Broad Achievements include:

- Partnership engagement at the political and field level, resulting in halted encroachment into Africa's oldest national park, the Virunga National Park.
- Supporting community-based projects that protect the forest ecosystem and help people as well as wildlife (e.g. supplying people with essentials such as water, food, medicine, building materials, soil and fuel, providing alternative sources of income).
- Reduced logging, mining, agriculture, infrastructure and other pressures on great ape habitat.



Recent developments:

- Held a Stakeholder forum, which brought together the humanitarian and conservation actors, as well as government, and civil society in eastern DRC to identify issues and find solutions to the current crisis in the Virunga region.
- Secured funding from the Swedish Lottery Foundation for a pilot project on Multiple benefits from reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) in Sumatra and Central Africa. This will form part of a larger REDD programme within UNEP.
- Secured funding from the Spanish Ministry of the Environment for activities in Eastern DRC.
- Completed two field projects: a conservation enterprise and micro-financing programme in DRC implemented by the Bonobo Conservation Initiative, and an ecotourism development project in the Cyamudongo forest, Rwanda, implemented by the Wildlife Conservation Society.



- Held discussions with Liberia and Ivory Coast on a possible long-term transboundary conservation and peace-building initiative, which will take some lessons from the Virunga experience. Consultations with all partners on the ground are already underway.
 - Begun implementation of a project that is assessing High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) to identify areas for palm oil development, conservation and sustainable land use in Borneo and Sumatra.
- Produced a documentary film, jointly with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, on the Petit Loango National Park in Gabon, investigating the impact of a Chinese oil company's exploratory activities within this pristine ecosystem.
 - Took part in joint GRASP/CITES technical missions to South East Asia to investigate the illegal trade in great apes, as part of the implementation of the CITES resolution 13.4.
 - And finally, the 2007 UNEP/GRASP report on oil palm, logging and fires in Indonesia was recently used by the UK parliamentary advisory committee to demonstrate how Europe's new bioenergy policies may increase deforestation and biodiversity loss in the tropics.

Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP)

Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, UNEP, PO Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya, Tel: +254 20 7624163, Fax: +254 20 7624249

www.unep.org/grasp email : grasp@unep.org

