



## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT ON CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center (GRACE) has been committed to education and community engagement since its inception. Founders of GRACE recognized that it takes the support and assistance of the Congolese people to successfully conserve Grauer's gorillas and their habitat.

**GRACE's vision** "...a healthy, stable population of wild Grauer's gorillas in DRC that is no longer threatened and is a source of pride for the Congolese people" can only be fulfilled by engaging local communities. This is accomplished through its conservation education programs and working with local communities to identify and implement sustainable alternatives to forest intrusion.

### GRACE'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2017-2020

**Strategic Priority #3** focuses on Education & Community Engagement: Promote understanding and appreciation of gorillas through education programs and assist Congolese communities with finding sustainable solutions for co-existing with wildlife.

### CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An important part of GRACE's mission is to lead conservation education and community engagement activities in the Tayna region. GRACE has a four-part education program:

- (1) *Local visitor program* – Most people living near Tayna have never seen a gorilla and know little about them; thus, learning about and observing gorillas at GRACE has the potential to be a powerful educational experience that creates pro-conservation attitudes and fosters conservation action.
- (2) *In-classroom program* – Our educators visit primary schools to deliver a more in-depth curriculum than the visitor program that is then followed by a visit to GRACE to see the gorillas.
- (3) *Youth conservation clubs* – In order to nurture the enthusiasm for conservation in local youth, we organized conservation clubs in 2017. The program's goal is to create a mechanism outside of school where kids can learn and make a difference for conservation. We also want these clubs to help kids develop important life skills like leadership and teamwork.
- (4) *Community action* – Our fourth education program is to work with local communities on various conservation activities, ranging from raising awareness about wildlife laws and good hygiene practices to getting people involved in local conservation actions.

Our education and engagement programs use conservation messaging around a behavioral change model. All programs identify a behavior we want to change (a detriment to the forest or wildlife) and an alternative behavior we want to promote. Our programs then work with the community members to facilitate their ability to engage in the alternate behavior.

## IN 2020, GRACE EDUCATORS ACCOMPLISHED THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) Continued raising guinea pigs as a protein source.
- 2) Conducted a forest use study where GRACE educators surveyed people entering and leaving the forest to assess how they were using items from the forest, including bushmeat and firewood.
- 3) Celebrated International Women's Day with a small, more localized celebration focused on tree planting and digging dustbins.
- 4) Created a gorilla ethogram to accompany a web activity in partnership with Explore.org
- 5) Created a cell-phone recycling brochure/toolkit for US-based audiences
- 6) GRACE Educators designed a Pride Wall to celebrate World Gorilla Day
- 7) Practicing good hygiene keeps people and gorillas safe.
  - a. GRACE greeting/Handwashing song
  - b. Constructing tip-taps
  - c. Radio information about hygiene
- 8) Publication in American Journal of Primatology
- 9) Planning for Radio Campaign and Radio Evaluation Training to occur in 2021
  - a. Creation of programming (content and schedule)
  - b. Identified brazes and got community buy-in
  - c. Trained surveyors and delivered radios
  - d. Conducted pre-assessment



This year, the COVID-19 pandemic required us to take a creative approach to conservation education. In early March, GRACE Educators focused on teaching local audiences about the importance of handwashing. They even provided directions and began constructing “tip-tap” handwashing stations as examples for the community.

By the end of March 2020, all in-person education programming with schools and community groups ceased. Since GRACE education staff utilized the radio in previous years to reach audiences affected by the Ebola outbreak, we decided to take this same approach in 2020 to safely continue our education and outreach through December.

Focus also shifted to engaging US-based audiences through a cell-phone recycling toolkit and a gorilla ethogram activity in partnership with Explore.org.

In September 2020, the DRC-based GRACE Educators hosted a small-scale, physically distanced celebration of World Gorilla Day. In addition, GRACE Educators spent time training our survey teams this year. This included training for the field teams on proper hygiene practices when surveying the forest and training the evaluation team to complete pre-assessments for the radio program.



**Above:** Sims Guy, GRACE Educator, demonstrates a “tip-tap” handwashing station

## THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

Between January and December 2020, GRACE educators engaged with 2,333 community members, 1,929 of which occurred between January-March 2020. These interactions included P6 classroom visits, conservation clubs, and a celebration of International Women's Day in March 2020. In September 2020, Educators and GRACE staff safely celebrated World Gorilla Day. As in previous years, there were no community visits to GRACE due to strict health protocol.

### Summary of In-Person Programs Conducted in 2020:

Program	Number of Contacts	Audience	Comments
Primary 6 School Program	149	Pupils	
Conservation Clubs	40	Youth	
Women's Group Meetings	400	Adult Females	
Guinea Pig Monitoring	116	Adult Females	13 meetings but same 9 women
Hygiene Lessons for Field Team	69	Adult Males	
Radio Surveyor Training	3	Adult Males	
Interviews for Radio Campaign	6	Adults	
Special Events	1550	Community Members	International Women's Day and World Gorilla Day

In addition to these in-person engagements, educators conducted on-air programs totaling over 88 hours in 2020 (up from 25 hours in 2019). In 2019, the local radio station had an estimated audience of 60,000 that includes  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Lubero territory,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Beni territory and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Bafwasende territory. If we estimate that 25% of the population may listen to the radio, we can potentially reach 15,000 people with each broadcast.

### Summary of Radio Programs Conducted in 2020:

Radio Program	Time on Air per episode	Total Hours	Topics
Echoes of GRACE	30 minutes	46	Hygiene, bushmeat, Congolese wildlife laws, etc.
Radio Drama	??	400	Bushfires, protecting the forest, etc.
Brief Message	2 minutes	22	Short public service announcement/conservation message or action
Radio (Other)	??	14	Interviews with members of the conservation clubs

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### 2020 RADIO CAMPAIGN: IMPROVED COMMUNITY ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON REDUCING DISEASE TRANSMISSION AND ITS IMPACT ON PEOPLE AND GORILLAS

Feedback received during the Ebola crisis in 2019 showed that our radio programs helped local communities better understand how Ebola is spread and encouraged compliance with best practices for prevention. Based on this feedback, we sought to measure the impact of delivering education programs via radio. Therefore, we secured a Disney Conservation Fund Grant to better understand the radio audience and measure our ability to influence behaviors that impact conservation.

In 2020, we created a robust radio campaign connecting the importance of handwashing and hygiene to human and gorilla health. Team members from the US and DRC hired and trained three local people to conduct a pre-assessment with 21 barazas (community compounds) living within 15 kilometers of the Tayna Nature Reserve. The goals of the pre-assessment were to:

1. Determine actual and potential listeners of the Tayna radio station to help estimate the geographic reach of radio broadcast.
2. Establish baseline information on people's:
  - Knowledge of local wildlife, threats to wildlife and forest habitat, wildlife protection laws, and the role of hygiene in protecting gorillas;
  - Attitudes toward the reserve and protecting the forest and wildlife; and
  - Current practices that impact the forest and/or wildlife, such hygiene practices, hunting and forest resource use.

Along with conducting the post-assessment, the survey team ensured all communities had access to a radio by giving out one solar-powered radio to each of the 21 Barazas (extended family groups).



*Above: GRACE Educators outside Radio Tayna*



*Above: GRACE Educators train Survey Team*

After the survey team was trained, GRACE Educators worked with Education Advisors to create four weeks of content, including dramas, informational sessions, and interviews with leaders and influencers, as well as a special song written by GRACE Educator Sims Guy. Our efforts focused on behaviors related to hand-washing, wearing face coverings, and building “tip taps” or hand-washing stations. Content was created in a mixture of Kiswahili and Kinande languages to adapt to the widest audience possible.

Planning for the radio program, and collecting and discerning pre-assessment data, took most of 2020. Content delivery began in early 2021 with plans to collect post-assessment data shortly after two-rounds of program completion. The goals of this project are: 1) to verify that community members can indeed tune in to our programs from their villages, and 2) assess the potential of radio communication to change attitudes and behaviors.

In 2021, we will conduct a post-assessment and ask questions to assess whether the radio campaign was able to improve knowledge and attitudes and teach conservation-friendly behaviors to listeners. We will also ask if people listened to the radio programs and, if so, whether they prefer one type of programming over the others (drama, interviews, others). Data from this project will inform our future radio programming plans and other conservation education efforts. Our hope is that GRACE can continue to use radio as a tool in scaling up our already successful community conservation projects that have been piloted with the three villages closest to GRACE.



**Top:** GRACE Educators Gracienne, Honoré and Sims broadcast at Radio Tayna  
**Bottom:** Gracienne, GRACE Educator, interviews a member of the Tayna community

### **CELEBRATING LOCAL PRIDE IN GORILLAS ON WORLD GORILLA DAY**

GRACE celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> annual World Gorilla Day on September 24. This global event aims to honor gorillas and also spark conservation action. Our goal this year was to celebrate local pride in Grauer’s gorillas, but to keep GRACE staff and the community safe, we redesigned our celebration. GRACE Educators prepared a special radio broadcast about gorillas in honor of the day. They also created a “pride” or “feedback” wall for community members to share their thoughts and feelings about gorillas. Large posters with three writing prompts: “Why are gorillas special?”, “Why are gorillas important?”, and “I like gorillas because they are...” were hung in the community. Community members wrote their answers and attached them to the corresponding posters. This created a collaborative space for the community to share their thoughts on protecting gorillas. In total, 209 people safely celebrated World Gorilla Day in 2020!

**Top:** A community member shares her thoughts on why gorillas are special  
**Bottom:** A completed “Feedback Wall” displayed in the community in celebration of World Gorilla Day

