

## New funding to train 1,890 entrepreneurs, reduce extreme poverty, and protect endangered chimpanzees in Uganda

**SAN CARLOS, Calif., April 22, 2024** — On Earth Day, Village Enterprise announces a \$450,000 grant from the Arcus Foundation to fund the expansion of the PARKS project into more communities around Kibale National Park to reduce extreme poverty and safeguard the endangered chimpanzee population.

This funding will help to protect the chimpanzee population in Kibale National Park in Uganda by supporting 1,890 local community members, who might otherwise have depended on illegal poaching and lumbering to provide for their families, to start small enterprises. It will also fund anti-poaching patrols and the removal of snares.

The project has already trained 3,823 entrepreneurs with skills on how to start microenterprises, develop savings habits, and on the value of conservation. The training has resulted in the creation of 1,077 conservation-friendly microenterprises by local entrepreneurs, including retail and grocery shops, agribusinesses, animal husbandry, and even beekeeping.

As a consequence of these microenterprises, 20,180 individuals have been supported onto a sustainable pathway out of extreme poverty, as well as reduced hunting and habitat destruction in Kibale National Park. It also resulted in 824 snares being removed from the park.

### Supporting households to generate sustainable incomes

The new grant will enable Village Enterprise to train a further 1,890 entrepreneurs living in extreme poverty through a one-year program which will provide them with the seed capital, mentoring, and business and financial literacy training they need to establish microenterprises that are conservation-friendly.

As part of the program, Village Enterprise has already helped establish 109 savings groups, which are small communities of fellow entrepreneurs who help encourage each other to put away savings on a weekly basis. The new funding will allow for 42 new business savings groups to be created. These savings groups also allow entrepreneurs to have access to greater capital through loans that they can use to expand their enterprises or in case of emergency.

The program empowers the new entrepreneurs to generate an increased and more consistent income for their households, establish a sustainable pathway out of extreme poverty, and become less - and eventually no-longer - reliant on the need for income generated via illegal hunting or lumbering inside of Kibale National Park.

### Snare removal and anti-poaching patrols

The grant will also enable the Ngogo Chimpanzee Project to operate eight two-person anti-poaching patrol teams in the Kibale National Park area. These patrols will remove snares, deterring individuals from hunting and destroying habitat by illegal logging activities. In addition, the grant will provide the margins of the park with two patrol teams which will reduce crop raiding and improve community relations with the park.

To strengthen the climate and conservation pillar of the project, one member from each business savings group is selected as a conservation champion. These champions are then trained on conservation practices and create tailored plans for their communities that support the protection of wildlife and ecosystems.



**Dianne Calvi, CEO and President of Village Enterprise, commented:**

“Thanks to the Arcus Foundation, Village Enterprise will be able to transform the lives of even more people living in extreme poverty near Kibale National Park, while also protecting the park’s vital ecosystems and one of the largest remaining populations of East African chimpanzees.

In order for conservation efforts to truly succeed, we can’t take away an individual’s ability to earn an income, especially when they are living in extreme poverty. We need more projects like PARKS that foster both conservation and the entrepreneurial spirit. By providing individuals with the training to become entrepreneurs, we are offering them a sustainable alternative to generate income, increase their savings, and eliminate their reliance on illegal hunting or deforestation. Ultimately, this is how we can safeguard nature, protect endangered species, and end extreme poverty.”

**-ENDS-**

**Media enquiries:**

Village Enterprise - [villageenterprise@wearesevenhills.com](mailto:villageenterprise@wearesevenhills.com)

**Notes to editors:**

Find out more about Village Enterprise’s work [here](#).

**About Village Enterprise**

Village Enterprise's mission is to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through entrepreneurship, innovation, and collective action. We work with vulnerable women, refugees, and youth who are most impacted by climate change, conflict, and displacement, and equip them with skills and resources to launch climate-smart businesses, build savings, and put themselves and their families onto a sustainable path out of extreme poverty. Village Enterprise has started over 80,000 businesses, trained over 274,000 first-time entrepreneurs, and positively transformed the lives of over 1,656,000 people in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

