



## **Project Proposal: The Mist-Belt Restoration – A Youth-Led Reforestation and Gorilla Conservation Initiative**

### **1. Executive Summary**

"The Mist-Belt Restoration" is a comprehensive initiative aimed at combating environmental degradation, enhancing biodiversity, and fostering community well-being through strategic reforestation and youth-led conservation efforts.

Initiated by the **Bwindi Mist Wardens**—the specialized environmental action arm of the thriving **Allied Youth Academy**—this project focuses on planting indigenous native trees in the buffer zones surrounding the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. By pairing environmental stewardship with youth sports (specifically football) to drive recruitment and engagement, we believe this initiative will not only improve local ecosystems but also create a lasting legacy of conservation to protect our mountains, mist, and gorillas.

### **2. Problem Statement**

The buffer communities surrounding the Bwindi Impenetrable ecosystem face significant environmental and socio-economic challenges, including severe deforestation, soil erosion on steep mountain slopes, and increasing human-wildlife conflict. As agricultural demands push closer to the park boundaries, habitat loss directly threatens the endangered Mountain Gorilla. Furthermore, local youth face high unemployment, increasing the risk of illegal activities like snaring and forest encroachment. Current efforts often fail to deeply engage the younger generation, necessitating a concerted, community-driven approach that speaks their language and channels their energy into environmental restoration.

### **3. Project Goals**

- **Restore Ecosystems:** Plant 10,000 indigenous tree saplings across degraded buffer zones and community boundaries over a 12-month period to restore the critical "mist-belt."
- **Enhance Biodiversity:** Expand safe natural habitats to support local flora and fauna, specifically reducing human-gorilla conflict by creating natural boundary deterrents (e.g., planting unpalatable buffer crops/trees).
- **Improve Environmental Health:** Contribute to vital soil stabilization on the Bwindi mountain slopes, improving local water catchment and carbon sequestration.
- **Community Engagement & Education:** Utilize community football tournaments ("Goals for Gorillas") to recruit 150+ Allied Youth Academy members as volunteer Mist Wardens, educating them on the importance of conservation.

- **Long-term Sustainability:** Establish a community-led maintenance plan where local football squads act as "Tree Guardians" to ensure the survival and growth of planted trees.

#### **4. Activities & Methodology**

Our project will unfold in distinct, manageable phases:

- **Phase 1: Planning & Site Preparation**
  - Detailed site assessments and soil analysis in partnership with local authorities.
  - Selection of appropriate native tree species beneficial to the ecosystem but distinct from gorilla-attracting crops.
  - Community outreach and volunteer recruitment via the Allied Youth Academy and kickoff "Conservation Cup" football matches.
  - Preparation of planting sites (clearing, digging, mulching).
- **Phase 2: Tree Planting & Reforestation**
  - Organized community planting events, utilizing youth teams to cover large mountainous terrains.
  - Implementation of best practices for tree planting to ensure high survival rates.
  - Installation of protective measures (e.g., organic fencing, eco-friendly tree guards).
- **Phase 3: Conservation & Maintenance**
  - Regular watering, weeding, and mulching schedules carried out by the Bwindi Mist Wardens.
  - Monitoring of tree health and growth.
  - Establishment of the "Tree Guardian" program where local youth football teams adopt, care for, and compete over the health of specific reforestation plots.
  - Educational workshops on sustainable land management, anti-poaching awareness, and eco-tourism.
- **Phase 4: Monitoring & Evaluation**
  - Periodic assessment of ecological impact (survival rate of saplings, soil erosion reduction).
  - Tracking of community participation, youth retention, and educational outcomes.
  - Reporting on project progress and achievements to stakeholders and donors.

## 5. Budget (Estimated 12-Month Pilot)

- Tree Saplings & Seeds (10,000 native indigenous trees): **\$3,500**
- Tools & Equipment (shovels, gloves, watering cans, wheelbarrows, boots): **\$1,800**
- Soil Amendments & Mulch: **\$800**
- Youth Engagement (Football gear, balls, "Goals for Gorillas" tournament logistics): **\$1,200**
- Educational Materials & Workshops: **\$1,000**
- Project Coordinator (Part-time Stipend for 12 months): **\$2,400**
- Volunteer Support (Refreshments, Branded T-shirts/Jerseys, Transport): **\$2,500**
- Monitoring & Evaluation Costs: **\$900**
- Contingency (10%): **\$1,410**
- Total Estimated Budget: **\$15,510**

## 6. Expected Outcomes & Impact

- **Environmental:** Reduced soil erosion on steep gradients, improved water retention for local communities, increased carbon sequestration, and a strengthened buffer zone protecting the Mountain Gorillas.
- **Social:** Stronger community bonds built through sports, increased environmental awareness, and a generation of Allied Youth Academy members transformed into active, empowered environmental stewards.
- **Economic:** Reduction in crop-raiding (saving local farmers money), potential for integration into community eco-tourism models, and foundational training that can lead to "green jobs" (e.g., UWA rangers, tour guides).

## 7. Team & Partnerships

This project will be led by the **Bwindi Mist Wardens**, operating under the established infrastructure of the **Allied Youth Academy**. We will actively seek strategic partnerships with the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) for technical guidance, local district councils for land-use permissions, and potential corporate or NGO sponsors aligned with youth and wildlife conservation. Our team brings deep local trust, expertise in community organizing, and a proven track record of youth mobilization.

## 8. Conclusion

The "Mist-Belt Restoration" initiative offers a tangible, youth-driven, and sustainable solution to critical environmental challenges in the Bwindi Impenetrable ecosystem. By investing in the Bwindi Mist Wardens, you are not just planting trees; you are cultivating a generation of protectors. Together, we can create a healthier, more resilient environment, ensuring that the magic of the *Mountains, Mist, and Gorillas* thrives for future generations.