The challenge of gorilla poaching

Gorilla poaching is one of the greatest threats that local wild gorillas face in the Mintom Communal Forest. Gorillas are classified under category A in the Cameroon Forestry and Wildlife Regulations. Poaching would result in a fine if the poachers are found to be guilty. Despite this local people poach bushmeat, including gorillas, because of a lack of cheap protein options to buy. The meat supplements their diet and helps to feed their families.

As part of this application, Steering Committee lead Charlie Ndongo held a call with Greg Bakunzi of Red Rocks Initiative, Volcanoes National Park, in Rwanda. Greg advised us to find investment to pay local poachers to act as Guardians of the forest and the gorillas. He also recommended that school fees for poachers' children be paid for in order to spread the message amongst the local community that keeping gorillas alive was supporting entire families and benefitting the community more widely. This was highly effective in Volcanoes National Park region in the early days of conservation management. Many of these Guardians have gone on to be wildlife guides, and it is hoped that something similar could happen in Mintom Communal Forest.

There are currently no funds available for such an initiative but it is an aspiration of the Steering Committee in future.