

Conservationist advises on chimps

By Betty Amamukirori

The relationship between chimpanzees and humans can be better. For instance, farmers can plant high-value crops, which cannot be destroyed by the primates such that farmers' incomes are not undermined.

This was part of the advice which Dr Jane Goodall, a renowned conservationist, gave to Ugandans so that they can reduce economic losses and enhance the protection of chimpanzees and their habitats.

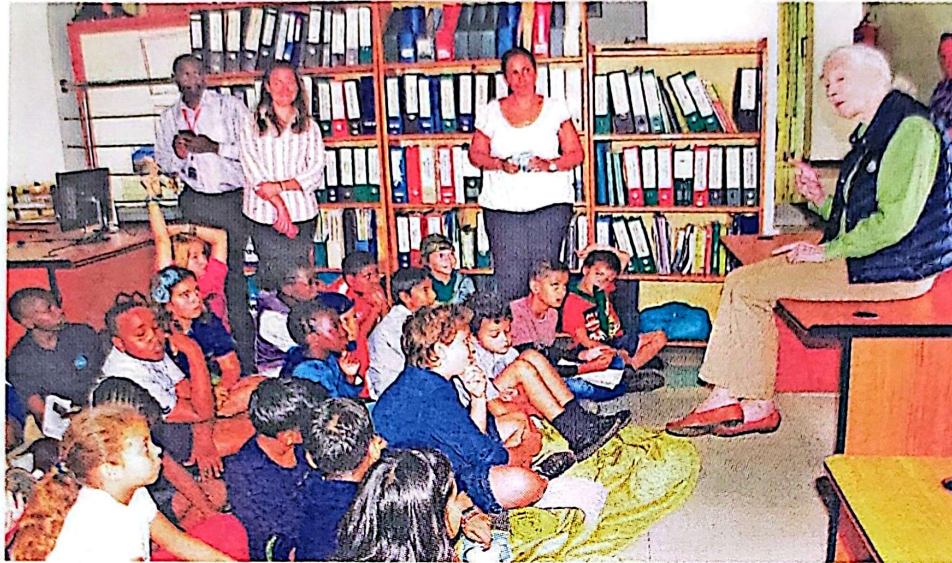
"Plant crops that chimpanzees do not eat. These will act as buffers and stop chimpanzees from attacking humans and humans hurting them," she said.

The crops include chilly, sunflower and vanilla. Goodall made the remarks at the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) in Lubowa, Wakiso district, yesterday, during a press conference.

Her remarks come a few days after a group of chimpanzees kidnapped a five-month-old baby in Kyamajaka village, Muhororo town council in Kagadi district.

Dr Peter Apell, the JGI country director, said they are discouraging communities, especially in the Albertine region, from planting crops such as mangoes, sugarcane and maize on the edges of the forests because chimpanzees eat them.

He said so far they have introduced the chimpanzee-repellant crops in Hoima and Masindi districts and farmers are getting high returns from them since the market is readily available.



Jane Goodall talking to pupils about chimpanzees during the press conference at the Jane Goodall Institute in Lubowa, Wakiso yesterday. Photo by Mary Kansiime

He said they are targeting Kasongire parish in Budongo sub-county, Buliisa district. He also noted that this has reduced the hostility between humans and the primates in the western region.

Goodall, who also met a group of pupils from 10 international schools, said in order to stop the human-chimpanzee conflict, Ugandans need to stop destroying forests, which are the natural habitats of the animals.

"We are up against mining, illegal logging, destroying forests and dams. We need to understand that our future

is doomed if we continue destroying the environment. Our children will not have much," she said.

Apell said the solution for the human-chimpanzee conflict is ending deforestation.

"The only long-lasting solution is for Ugandans to care for our forests. The primary reason the conflict is there is that we are cutting forests. We are losing trees and chimpanzees and other wildlife animals have nowhere to go," Apell said.

The primatologist, who is also a United Nations goodwill ambassador,

will be in Uganda for five days and will attend the celebration to mark the 20th anniversary of Ngamba Island chimpanzee sanctuary and the 27th anniversary of JGI.

The 84-year-old is known for her research at Tanzania's Gombe Stream National Park, which brought chimpanzees onto the world map.

Goodall is also the founder of the JGI whose major focus is on the conservation of the endangered primates and, the Roots and Shoots, a non-profit organisation, which educates the youth about environment

Dr Peter Apell, the Jane Goodall Institute country director, said they are piloting a project that will address the effects of human-chimp conflict by compensating destroyed property and treating people hurt by the animals.

He said they were working with the communities to empower people with livelihood options through supporting people in enterprises that can increase their incomes and enable them save in a resilience fund, which can be drawn later for compensation.

"We have created a quasi insurance mechanism managed by the communities to provide the compensation. We empower the communities with livelihood options; support them in enterprises that provide increased income to the households and a proportion is saved on resilience fund to compensate for losses from human-wildlife conflict," he said.

He said Kinyara Sugarcane factory has opened up a health facility and bought an ambulance to treat and rescue anybody injured by chimps.

COMPENSATION

and how they can protect it.

She noted that when she first came in 1987, she met an infant orphan chimpanzee caged at Entebbe Zoo, with minimal care and attention paid to it.

"They had no enrichment, nobody understood them. Fortunately, I found a young woman who volunteered to look after them.

We gradually raised money to build them a better place and moved the chimps to Ngamba Island," she said. Currently, there are 49 chimps on the island.