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Ministry of Environment

VOLCANOES COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT - VCRP

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



1 Editor's Note

2 Executive Summary

3 From Warnings to Action: Flood Risk Management

4 Healing Fragile Hillsides, Revitalizing Ecosystems & Supporting Livelihoods

5 Volcano National Park: Conservation and Community Well-Being Advancement

6 Capacity building and knowledge sharing: Strengthening Institutions, Supporting Communities and Improving Accountability

7 Looking Ahead

9 Acknowledgement

10 Partners

Editor's Note

Dear Stakeholders,

It is with great pride that we share the second edition of the Volcanoes Community Resilience Project (VCRP) newsletter, highlighting the progress achieved between June and December 2025. This period represents a major turning point in the project's implementation journey. Many of the systems, approaches, and plans introduced earlier in the year have now translated into concrete, measurable improvements across the Volcanoes Landscape.

Communities that once faced repeated floods, severe soil erosion, and limited livelihood opportunities are beginning to experience a different reality, one marked by safer slopes, restored ecosystems, stronger local institutions, and improved household resilience. The achievements made over these months have not only advanced our technical objectives; they have also strengthened community confidence, renewed hope, and nurtured a shared sense of responsibility among residents living around Volcanoes National Park and the Vunga Corridor.

During a recent field visit, one resident in Musanze expressed this shift clearly:

“For many years, we were the ones waiting for help during disasters. Today, we are learning how to protect ourselves and each other.”

We extend our sincere appreciation to all our partners, government institutions, district authorities, community members, civil society organizations, and development partners, for their continued dedication to this transformative effort. Your collaboration remains central to the progress we celebrate in this edition.

Executive Summary

A Period of Momentum, Delivery, and Community Leadership

Between June and December 2025, the Volcanoes Community Resilience Project (VCRP) entered a period of steady delivery, with visible progress across its four components. Activities that had been in early planning stages at the beginning of the year were fully operational during this period, and many of the intended results began to take shape on the ground. Communities, institutions, and district teams worked together to translate plans into practical improvements that are now gaining recognition across the Volcanoes Landscape.

Flood early-warning systems expanded significantly. Communities gained better access to timely information, and the installation of new hydrological monitoring stations improved the accuracy of flood forecasting. More than 1,800 residents were trained on how to respond to warnings, and outreach in 20 high-risk hotspots reached 1,700 people. These actions are beginning to reduce vulnerability and strengthen household preparedness.



FLOOD EARLY-WARNING AND PREPAREDNESS



- Expanded flood early-warning system
- Improved accuracy of flood forecasting
- Strengthened household preparedness



In Musanze, Nyabihu, Burera, Rubavu, Ngororero, and Rutsiro, communities now see VCRP as theirs, with improved safety, organization, and productivity reflecting growing local ownership.

Landscape restoration progressed, with terraces, trenches, riverbank protection, and tree planting improving soil and water conditions. Seedlings, rainwater harvesting, and village land-use plans strengthened household and community resilience, leading to visibly better soil stability and vegetation cover.

The project made important progress in livelihood support and settlement planning for households affected by the expansion of Volcanoes National Park. Land acquisition for 287 parcels was completed, and designs for climate-resilient model homes were advanced. These steps mark the beginning of a resettlement process that places safety, environmental sustainability, and the dignity of affected households at the centre.



Staff during training on safeguards & community engagement.

Institutional capacity improved through training for over 50 national staff and 35 district officers, while community structures became more active with 243 GRCs and 54 CCCs supporting restoration and problem-solving.



12 Journalists trained to enhance coverage of climate resilience.



30 School environmental clubs formed, engaging youth in restoration and awareness.



41 Sessions engaged women, youth, and persons with disabilities, promoting equity and participation.



From Warnings to Action: Strengthening Community Preparedness

Flooding continues to be one of the most serious challenges for communities living in the Volcanoes region. During the past six months, the project made strong progress in improving early warning systems, expanding community knowledge, and strengthening the readiness of institutions responsible for managing flood risks.

“ These trainings have changed how we think about floods. We now understand what an alert means and the actions we must take. It has given us peace of mind.”

Village Leader, Nyabihu



Key Achievements



15

Installation of hydrological Monitoring Stations

These stations collect real-time information on water levels, flow velocity and discharge in strategic rivers and catchments.

The new flow of data gives Meteo Rwanda, the Rwanda Water Resources Board and District teams a much clearer picture on how and when conditions are changing.



Community Preparedness

More than 1,800 residents took part in training



to understand how to and respond to early warning messages, prepare their homes in advance of heavy rains and support the evacuation of vulnerable people when needed.

FEWS awareness activities reached 1,700 residents across 20 high-risk hotspots. This participation shows a clear demand for practical information that helps households protect themselves.



Residents engage with preparedness messages at inteko meeting.

Preparedness information was widely shared through Umuganda, inteko z'abaturage and other routine community meetings, ensuring that even elderly residents, people with disabilities and households often missed by formal trainings received early warning messages. Together, these efforts have shifted the region from reacting to disasters to preparing for them in advance, strengthening community confidence, improving institutional readiness and creating a more coordinated, effective system for flood preparedness.



Healing Fragile Hillsides, Revitalizing Ecosystems & Supporting Livelihoods

Soil erosion and land degradation have shaped life in the Volcanoes region for many years. Steep terrain, intense rainfall and limited ground cover have made farming difficult and left many households exposed to risk. Between June and December 2025, the project made real progress in reversing this trend. Across several districts, hillsides that were once unstable and unproductive have begun to recover, and communities are seeing improvements in both their land and their livelihoods.

Nyabihu District saw major progress, with 80 hectares of terraces built and another 80 hectares of riverbanks and anti-erosion structures restored, transforming fragile slopes, reducing runoff and improving long-declining farmland.

Mukamira Sector, once one of Nyabihu's most erosion-prone areas, saw dramatic improvements. Terraces were built on 24 hectares and four kilometres of drainage channels were added, reducing soil erosion by about 95 percent and cutting annual soil loss from 25 tonnes to 1 tonne. Potato yields rose from 5–8 tonnes to 25 tonnes per hectare, showing how quickly land can recover with proper management.



Community members constructing terraces to protect hillsides from erosion

Other districts recorded steady gains as well. Musanze completed seven hectares of terraces and planted over 16,000 agroforestry seedlings across 242.5 hectares to improve soil health and moisture retention. Rubavu restored 47 hectares of progressive terraces and provided vulnerable households with 120 rainwater-harvesting tanks and 73 gutters, reducing pressure on catchments and shortening the long distances families previously traveled to collect water.

Soil and water conservation advanced with 20 hectares of radical terraces, 17 hectares of infiltration trenches, and nearly 160,000 seedlings planted. In Mukamira, 21 hectares of fodder increased milk production by 95%, cut fodder costs by 80%, and enabled households to earn around RWF 25,000 per month from sales.

“Working on restoration gave us income and new knowledge. Now, when we look at our hillsides, we see the results of our own hands.”

One woman from Busogo

Landscape & Catchment Restoration

 **128** Community trainers were empowered

 **RWF 857.4 million** injected through wages.

 **120** Rainwater-harvesting tanks delivered

 **16,000** Agroforestry seedlings planted



Conservation and Community Well-Being Advancing Together

The expansion of Volcanoes National Park is a major step for conservation in Rwanda. It is also an important moment for the families who live around the park and whose land falls within the new boundary. Throughout this period, the project focused on making sure these households receive the support they need and that any relocation is handled carefully, respectfully and with a view to long-term stability.

Several livelihood activities moved forward during the reporting period. In Musanze, 80 cattle sheds were constructed to improve livestock management for Girinka beneficiaries. In Rubavu, 40 cows were provided to vulnerable families, giving them access to milk and a reliable source of income. Families were also trained in climate-smart agriculture and household financial management. These trainings are helping people prepare for life in new settlements and improve how they manage their land, livestock and household resources.

A key milestone for this component was the completion of land acquisition for all 287 parcels set aside for the Smart Green Villages. This clears the way for construction to begin in 2025. Earlier design work has already outlined the features of these model settlements, which include fly-ash block construction, solar energy systems, improved ventilation and built-in rainwater harvesting. Communal facilities, such as a 5,000-litre rainwater tank and greywater recycling for small gardens, will help reduce costs for residents and support more sustainable water use

“
What we want is safety and opportunity for our children. These new villages give us confidence that our future will be better than our past.

said a young mother from Jenda during community consultations, reflecting the relief, hope, and anticipation felt across the area.

Prototype houses are expected to be completed in early 2026. These first units will help refine design and construction approaches before full-scale building begins. They also mark the beginning of a new, more resilient settlement model for families living around Volcanoes National Park.

Key Achievements



80 cattle sheds were constructed



40 cows were provided to vulnerable families



Strengthening Institutions, Supporting Communities & Improving Accountability

Most of the work under this component was carried out through the technical assistance provided to the Ministry of Environment by Equilibria Ltd. Between June and December 2025, this support helped strengthen the systems and relationships that make the project function effectively. It also improved the flow of information between national institutions, districts and communities.

To build their confidence further, CCC members took part in study tours in Musanze, Nyabihu and Rubavu. During the visits, they observed VCRP activities on the ground and exchanged experiences with other committees. Many participants reported that seeing how other districts organize their work helped them understand their own responsibilities more clearly.

Capacity building also took place at national level. More than 50 VCRP staff from MoE, REMA, RWB, RDB and Meteo Rwanda attended a training programme that looked back at the progress made so far and identified what needed to be improved. The Project Implementation Manual guided these discussions and helped teams reflect on how to strengthen coordination and day-to-day problem-solving.

At district level, more than 35 officers responsible for agriculture, environment, forestry, gender and social development received training in Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA), Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF).

Communication and public awareness were also strengthened. A group of 12 journalists took part in a three-day training on how to report accurately on climate resilience and VCRP activities. Field visits were an important part of the training, and journalists were able to see restoration works and hear directly from community members.

“
People will now hear not only about challenges, but also about solutions and hope.
”

Clementine, Radio Salus journalist remarked after the visit.



Clémentine tours the horticulture hub as part of the field visit

Youth engagement continued to grow. Thirty school environmental clubs received training through the Building Green Minds module. Teachers and students took part in activities such as clean-up campaigns, restoration work and creative arts related to environmental protection

Community mobilisation also expanded. Full-day training sessions were organised in Nyabigoma and Kaguhu Cells in Kinigi Sector, reaching 200 participants in total, including 120 women, 80 men and 5 persons with disabilities. These sessions covered environmental protection, disaster preparedness and the roles of community structures.

Awareness campaigns across Rubavu, Musanze, Nyabihu, Ngororero and Rutsiro reached more than 10,000 people, including women, youth, older residents and persons with disabilities. These activities helped explain VCRP objectives, highlight rights and responsibilities and encourage community participation. In total, 41 additional awareness sessions were held specifically for women, youth and persons with disabilities. The project also produced podcasts to explain progress and highlight the work of GRCs. Messages on gender-based violence prevention were integrated throughout, with support from the Isange One Stop Centre.



“ **Before these trainings, many women felt left out. Now we are part of the decision-making and the restoration work.**

a woman from Nyabihu explained during one of the sessions.

Through this work, Component 4 strengthened the foundation of VCRP. Institutions are coordinating better, communities are more engaged and oversight structures are functioning more confidently. These improvements will help sustain progress as the project moves into the next phase.



Project participant shares how hillside terracing has improved his livelihood & strengthened community resilience

Looking Ahead

The next six months will be a period of putting the project's plans and designs into action. Work on flood mitigation in both the Karisimbi sub-catchment and the Vunga Corridor will move into tendering and mobilisation. Once contractors are on board, these works will address long-standing risks that have affected communities year after year. The new nowcasting early-warning system will also be activated, giving districts and communities access to more accurate and timely information during heavy rainfall.

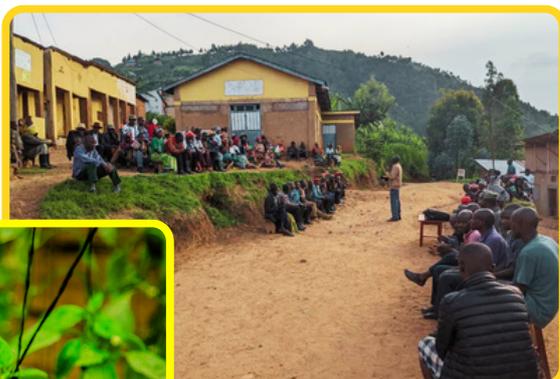
Landscape restoration will continue to expand into new catchments. The LiDAR and multispectral data collected this year will guide these efforts by helping identify the areas that need urgent attention. At the same time, the first prototype houses for the Smart Green Villages will go into construction. These units will help refine the designs and set the standard for the full settlements that will follow. Livelihood pilots, including beekeeping, eco-tourism and other income-generating activities, will also begin taking shape.

Community participation will remain at the centre of implementation. CCCs, GRCs and school environmental clubs will continue supporting monitoring, awareness and community engagement. Training for DIDIMACs, SEDIMACs, and environmental committees will help strengthen local structures and ensure that districts remain fully involved in guiding the work.

The project will also build on recent mobilisation efforts by using platforms such as the Umurenge Kagame Cup events to reach larger groups. These gatherings offer practical opportunities to inform communities, encourage participation and highlight the responsibilities and benefits associated with the project. A deliberate effort will be made to engage women, youth and persons with disabilities, ensuring they have access to information and opportunities within VCRP.

The project will also build on recent mobilisation efforts by using platforms such as the Umurenge Kagame Cup events to reach larger groups. These gatherings offer practical opportunities to inform communities, encourage participation and highlight the responsibilities and benefits associated with the project. A deliberate effort will be made to engage women, youth and persons with disabilities, ensuring they have access to information and opportunities within VCRP.

As the project moves into its next phase, the guiding principle remains the same: keeping people at the centre of the work and ensuring that communities are active partners in building a safer and more resilient Volcanoes region.



APPRECIATION

We express our sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Environment for its leadership and continued commitment in guiding the implementation of the VCRP. We also acknowledge the important technical contributions of REMA, RWB, Meteo Rwanda and RDB, whose expertise has been central to the progress highlighted in this edition. Our appreciation extends to district governments, whose steady partnership and day-to-day involvement have ensured that project activities remain grounded in local priorities and realities.

We are equally grateful to the districts and all local actors who have played a role in this work. Community members, civil-society organisations, youth groups, women’s associations, teachers, journalists and many others have contributed time, knowledge and effort to move the project forward. Their engagement has helped shape solutions that are practical, inclusive and rooted in community ownership.

We also wish to recognise the World Bank for its financial and technical support. This partnership has made it possible to combine strong local engagement with the resources and expertise needed to deliver results at scale.

“The resilience we are building today will protect our children for decades to come. This project is changing the trajectory of our region,”

a district leader remarked, capturing the spirit of the moment.

These words reflect the shared commitment behind VCRP and the confidence that communities are placing in the work ahead.

Partners



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