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# Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center in Democratic Republic of Congo is Accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries



© Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center

**September 7, 2023 (Phoenix, AZ)** - The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS), the only globally recognized organization providing standards for identifying legitimate animal sanctuaries, has awarded Accredited status to Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center as of September 5, 2023.

Accreditation means that Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center has met GFAS's rigorous and peer-reviewed animal care standards which are confirmed by a site visit, and that it adheres to a demanding set of ethical and operational principles. The Accredited status signifies that Lwiro Primates is a true sanctuary dedicated to the humane, responsible, and respectful care of its animals, and provides a clear and trusted means for the public and donors to recognize it as an exceptional organization.

Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center (LPRC) was founded in 2003 near Kahuzi-Biega National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It serves as a safe haven for orphaned primates (and other wildlife) rescued from the bushmeat and pet trade. LPRC's core functions include rescuing and sheltering these animals, rehabilitating them for potential release into the wild, preserving genetic diversity in endangered species like chimpanzees, and educating and empowering the local community to support conservation efforts. LPRC plays a crucial role in protecting wildlife and promoting sustainable practices in the region.

"We are thrilled to have achieved GFAS accreditation," said Itsaso Vélez del Burgo Guinea, LPRC's Technical Director. "The accreditation process has strengthened us as a team and has helped us identify our weaknesses and improve them. This process encourages us to maintain high standards, ultimately benefiting the animals in our care. During the accreditation process, our team received guidance and recommendations from GFAS experts - special thanks to Jackie. This helped us improve our facilities, protocols, and overall operations based on the latest best practices in animal welfare."

"We are proud to be accredited by GFAS. This accreditation signifies our unwavering commitment to maintaining high standards of animal care and welfare. It reflects the hard work and dedication we have put into ensuring the well-being of the animals under our care. We are honored to be recognized for our efforts and will continue to strive for excellence in animal welfare."

“We are thrilled to announce the Accreditation of Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center,” said Jackie Bennett, GFAS Program Director, Africa and Asia. “It has been a pleasure to work with Itsaso and her team throughout this process. Their commitment to providing the best care possible to chimpanzees and other animals, many of whom are victims of poaching and wildlife trafficking, is beyond doubt. Lwiro Primates is also a demonstrated leader in the sanctuary community, always willing to share their experience and expertise with others.”

### **About Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries**

Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the sole purpose of strengthening and supporting the work of animal sanctuaries, rescues, and rehabilitation centers worldwide. The goal of GFAS in working with and assisting these animal care facilities is to ensure they are supported, honored, recognized, and rewarded for meeting important criteria in providing care to the animals in residence. GFAS was founded in 2007 by animal protection leaders from a number of different organizations in response to virtually unchecked and often hidden exploitation of animals for human entertainment and financial profit. The GFAS Board of Directors guides the organization’s work in a collaborative manner. While the board includes those in top leadership at International Fund for Animal Welfare, World Federation for Animals and American Anti- Vivisection Society, all board members serve as individuals dedicated to animal sanctuaries.

For more information, visit [www.sanctuaryfederation.org](http://www.sanctuaryfederation.org).

### **About Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center**

The Republic Democratic of Congo (DRC) is home to about 90% of the world’s eastern chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*), but since the mid-1990s, these chimpanzees have experienced alarming population declines of up to 40% due to illegal hunting and habitat loss – the impact compounded by years of civil war, insecurity, and humanitarian crises.

Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Center (LPRC) is first and foremost a primate sanctuary focused mainly on chimpanzees and monkeys – however it does also cater to other victims of wildlife crime (currently including parrots and tortoises). It was officially founded in 2003 by two Congolese institutions, the Centre de Recherches en Sciences Naturelles (CRSN) and the Institute Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN), to help alleviate the animal victims of civil war that resulted in both humanitarian and wildlife atrocities; and specifically, to create a permanent solution to the increasing number of orphaned apes confiscated around Kahuzi-Biega National Park (KBNP). Strategically situated only 4 km away from KBNP, defined by the IUCN as the world’s 3rd most important site for the conservation of the Eastern Chimpanzee, makes Lwiro the ideal location for chimpanzee rehabilitation and local conservation education and outreach. LPRC recognizes the importance of engaging with the local community. Conducting education and sensitization programs to raise awareness about the importance of conservation and the need to protect local wildlife. By empowering the community with knowledge and skills, LPRC helps reduce the pressure on wild habitats by promoting sustainable practices and discouraging illegal activities like poaching.

For more information, visit [www.lwioprimates.org](http://www.lwioprimates.org).