

Community Participation in the Nyungwe National Park Management

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Erected into protected forest in 1903, the Nyungwe forest reserve was elevated to national park status in 2005. Up until then it was managed by the American based World Life Conservation Society [WCS]. Challenges- The NNP is under population pressure, a high rate of poverty of surrounding population, a high reliance on natural resources for livelihoods in the communities surrounding the park, forest fires (fires in 1997 consumed 5 to 8 per cent of the park), hunting pressures (particularly for large mammals), artisanal and industrial mining, deforestation for firewood and construction materials. Approximately 1,019 square kilometer, the park in southwest Rwanda Nyungwe Forest with a high-altitude, mountainous sole rainforest forest for Rwanda, and the region along the Albertine Rift is also the center of the major hydrography, sources of the two main African river's basins, Nile and Congo. NNP is the largest mountainous forest remaining in Africa and home to 20 percent of all African primates, including 13 primate species, as well as 280 bird species (including 25 endemic species), 43 species of reptiles, and 85 mammal species

From 2005, the governance system of Rwandan parks adopted a new approach which integrates local communities in conservation and development implemented through integrated conservation and development projects around protected area. The ICDP advocate a full participation of local community in all aspects of conservation and development. Various ICD projects have been implemented including, revenue sharing of income from tourism activities and thus reconcile conservation and development¹. Local communities play a big role in the successful natural resources conservation due to their indigenous knowledge in the area; therefore for the conservation and preservation of the park to be successful and sustainable, the population must be fully involved to participate in each process as well as to benefit from activities and projects undertaken in conservation and development projects.

The research examined how the principles of good Governance are taken into consideration for

¹ Blomley, T. et al., (2010). *Development AND gorillas? Assessing fifteen years of integrated conservation and development in south-western Uganda* Natural Re., London: IIED.

the benefit of the community participation around Nyungwe Protected area and how those principles are implemented in the Nyungwe Park Management. Qualitative data collection was collected among the conservation NGOs, community leaders, associations involved in tourism and conservation activities, government institutions concerned, former ex-miners, former poachers, artisans, beekeepers association involved in conservation around Kitabi zone in Nyamagabe District, Ruheru zone in Nyaruguru District and Rusizi District.