

Gorilla Conservation and Tourism as a Poverty Reduction and Resilience Strategy: Implications for Community and Livelihood Development in Southwestern Uganda



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Introduction

Poor rural households in Africa rely disproportionately on local environmental resources for their livelihoods and well-being

A livelihood that guarantees access and entitlement to a range of reliable economic resources, assets and opportunities is essential to achieving human wellbeing (Chambers, 1997).



Conceptualising Conservation, Livelihood Diversification and Economic Sustainability

The integration of livelihood diversification into environmental conservation programs has been considered as an effective strategy in achieving household food security, opportunities for investment, development of local business and economic stability and overall national development (Kulindwa et al. 2006) .



Primary Environmental Care Approach

This is a people-centred approach and argues that human activity is not necessarily or inherently detrimental to nature and if humans are given the opportunity, people will often manage their environment sustainably because it is in their best interest (UNRISD, 1994).



Salafsky (2000) refers to this approach as economic substitution:

- livelihood and conservation are indirectly linked
- this approach enables local people to continue to meet their livelihood needs while protecting their environment



Tourism as an essential component of the national development strategy in Uganda

Legal and policy frameworks that support tourism as an essential component of the national development strategy have been developed in Uganda. They include:

- The 2003 National Tourism Policy that guides the development of tourism in the country
- The 2010-2015 National Development Plan (NDP)
- The Vision 2040



All these policy frameworks highlight tourism as a strong component of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

- The NDP acknowledges the development of community based tourism enterprises as a major strategy for tourism to benefit local communities living close to national parks (Government of Uganda, 2010).
- The Vision 2040 emphasizes investment in infrastructure, human resource development, tourism research and promoting domestic tourism (Government of Uganda, 2013).



Conservation Tourism, Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction

Whilst conservation tourism is a fast growing industry in Uganda, its contribution to livelihoods and poverty reduction, particularly in communities adjacent to protected areas is perceived to be insignificant.



Goal

Against this background, this paper examines the contribution of the tourism sector to reducing poverty in southwestern Uganda.



Objectives of the Paper

The paper ascertains the extent to which gorilla tourism sustainably drives local community development and rural livelihood improvement in the communities closest to:

- Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (Bwindi hereafter) and
- Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (Mgahinga hereafter) in southwestern Uganda.



Market Based Policies Approach

The introduction on of market-based policies with the intention of creating incentives for positive or neutral behaviours for the environment is argued could create disincentives for environmentally destructive behaviour (UNRISD, 1994).



Post Structural Adjustment Programme in Africa

**Economic Liberalisation
and Conservation**

Introduction of neo-liberal policies

Privatisation and divestiture of state control

Development of Tourism Sector through public/private partnerships

Revenue Sharing Programs

Livelihood diversification & Economic Development

**Impact:
Provide new safety nets and
improved wellbeing**



The goal of this approach is:

- balance the trade-offs between human activities and
- achieve maximum economic efficiency
- thereby ensure sustainable development.



Study Area in Uganda

Consisting of Kisoro, Kabale and Kanungu districts, the southwestern region borders the Republic of Rwanda and the DRC.

Poverty in the region extremely high

Evictions of indigenous Batwas for conservation left 82% landless

Foreign tourist pay US \$600 to visit

High incidence of crop raiding by wildlife in Bwindi and Mgahinga



Methodology and Fieldwork Strategy

We employed focus group meetings and interviews with community leaders, household members and NGOs staff who work on Pro-poor tourism initiatives in Kisoro district to obtain their perspectives of the impact of the Tourism Revenue Sharing (TRS) program and household wellbeing.

Study Areas and Counties:

Mgahinga Gorilla National Park: Nyarusiza and Muramba sub-counties

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park: Nyabwishenya, Nyundo and Kirundo sub-counties



Key Findings of the Study



Current Impact of the Revenue Sharing Program

UWA remits 20% of the Park Entrance fees to Bwindi and Mgahinga communities

**Communities around Bwindi 2013 received
661 million shillings (US \$261,780)**

**Communities around Mgahinga received
137 million shillings (US \$53,725)**

23 projects around Bwindi and
Mgahinga

18 of these projects were implemented in
2006 costing around US \$71,500

Revenue Sharing

Support local schools, upgrade
health centers, and rehabilitation
of local roads and bridges

Not much has been achieved regarding
the income generating activities
initiatives side of the Strategy

*No Comprehensive Program for Livelihoods Development and
Employment Generation Activities(2018-??)*



Some observed Challenges Associated with Livelihoods Development Dimension

❑ Extensive bureaucracy associate with Credit Application

A community leader explained by saying that: “for example, all projects seeking to access the funds must be located in villages or local administrative parishes adjacent to the protected area, have been reviewed and approved by the sub-county CPI and endorsed by the district CPI and council, and be beneficial to a community as opposed to an individual”.



Challenges with Application Processes

The participants of our focus group meetings explained:

“whilst these policies may be useful, the additional conditions such as forming community associations, opening bank accounts etc. are not as easy to meet as they may seem on paper because it requires a great deal of coordination”.

According to participants of our focus group meeting, *“the rigorous application system has deterred many community members from applying for the funds since very few people can sufficiently meet the funding requirements as set by Uganda Wildlife Authority”.*



The Size of the Funds Shared

A local community leader who also lives in a community adjacent the gorilla parks, lamented that:

“there have been several complaints on the fact that the size of the fund is just too small to make any significant impact on the lives of the local people and their households”.

- \$42 (7% of \$600) is designated at Park Entrance Fees
- Counties receive only 7% park entrance fee of \$600 per guest
- 20% of \$42 = \$8.40



Example of Revenues Shared

National park		Years and amount in UGX shillings		
		2005	2007	2009
Bwindi	Total	3,349,712,128	5,121,800,940	7,297,180,333
	Shared	149,491,900	107,713,006	100,004,000
Murchison Falls	Total	1,357,168,768	1,447,768,743	2,031,828,839
	Shared	189,400,531	454,155,365	150,000,000
Queen Elizabeth	Total	1,04,093,653	1,554,425,517	1,809,687,869
	Shared	177,757,600	153,850,000	200,000,000

Source: UWA Accounts Department, 2010, as cited in Ahebwa et al., (2012)



The Gorilla Levy Fund and its Application

- The Gorilla Levy Fund adds 2% from each gorilla permit issue to the entrance fees, thus making a total of 22%.
- *According to a female resident: the 2% deduction from the gorilla permit fee of US \$600 per person is still a small amount given the state of poverty in this area,*



Tourism Revenue Sharing as a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) System

An important consideration that could be undertaken by UWA is modifying the TRS program into a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) system

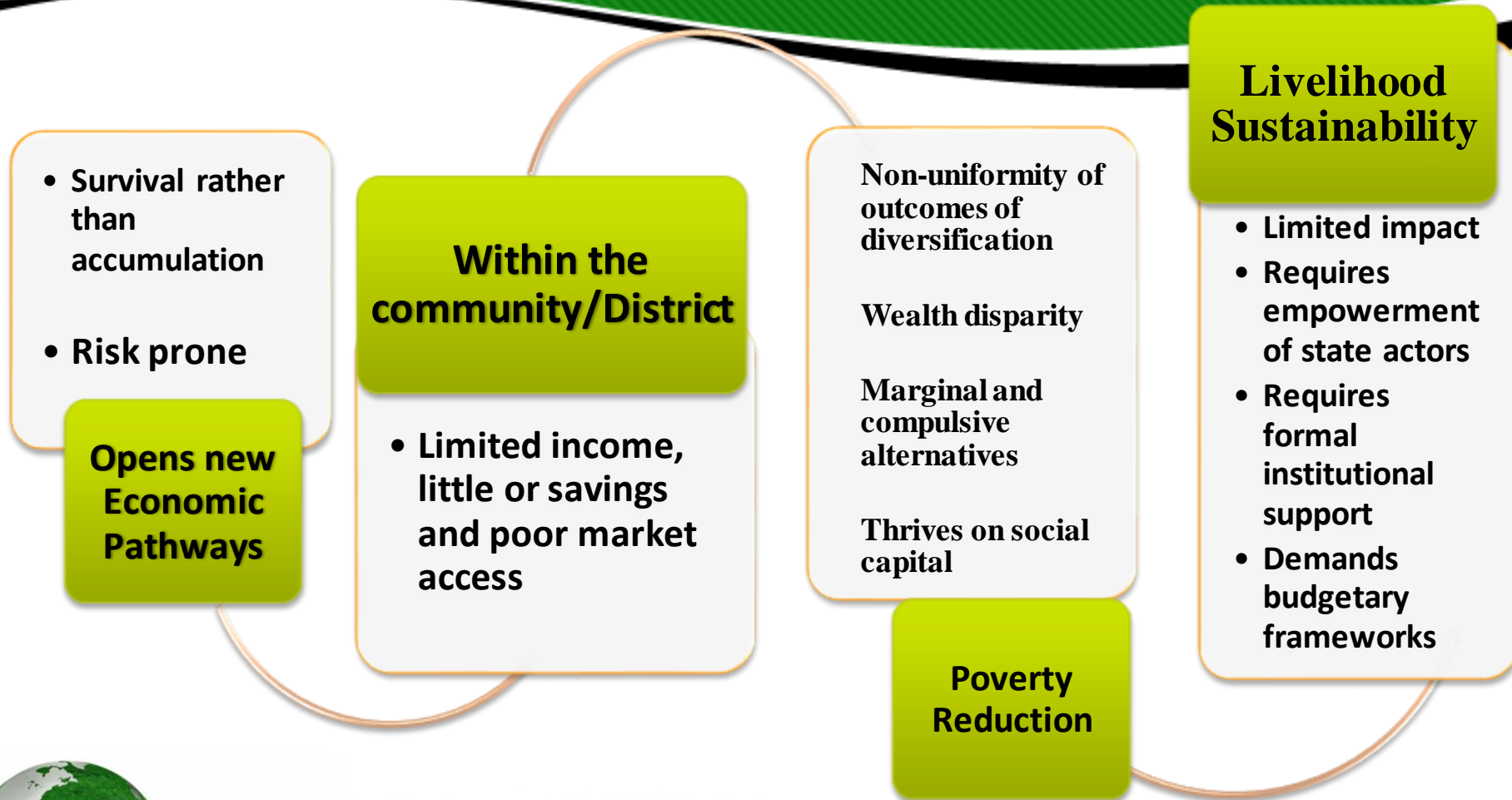


Policy Strategies

Approaches for improvement of pro-poor tourism development in Southeastern Uganda

1. Inclusive tourism development
2. Investment in Community Based Tourism Enterprise Initiatives
3. Infrastructure Improvement





Conclusion

- **Better sharing mechanisms that supports community development**
- **Strategies to that would lead to rise in household income through better livelihood diversification**
- **Programs that would encourage increase in household savings**

