

## **Kinigi CBNRM Implementation Strategy Summary of formal group meetings and workshops**

It was initially envisaged when this study was being planned that there shall be a training-information workshop in each of the four districts bordering the PNV. However, it so happened that the study period coincided with the DDP process of MINALOC and MINECOFIN all over the country actually, and hence this could not happen the way it was intended.

Nevertheless, some important group meetings and workshops were either organized or attended for the purposes of this study and yielded good results in terms of information collected.

In Nyabihu district, the consultant (Aphrodise Mboniyintwali) participated in their District Development Planning workshop for two consecutive days and at the second day, made a brief power point presentation related to the integration of environmental issues in their DDP. This was a workshop mainly for district and sector levels officials.

In Musanze District, the consultant also participated in two separate DDP process workshops and participated actively in the discussions by pushing every time the due consideration of environmental issues. Participants to both workshops were members of the district Joint Action Forum (JAF).

As a result of this active participation, the consultant was requested by both districts to be member of the commission that was constituted to review the draft document before they were transmitted to MINALOC & MINECOFIN.

In Burera District, a one-day meeting was organized with local leaders of the sector, cell and Umudugudu levels from the districts of Rugarama and Gahunga. This is a category of local leaders who are in touch with the community issues and concerns on a day to day basis. It is at this occasion that the appreciative inquiry working approach came into play where the consultant mainly listened to what those leaders had to say with regard to park –community relations. So, the meeting used a combination of working methods but mainly group work and presentation in plenary by participants. The meeting provided very insights and perspectives which were useful during the discussion part of the CBNRM Implementation Strategy (summarized below).

CENTRAL AFRICAN REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (CARPE/USAID), VIRUNGA FOCAL AREA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND RWANDA: a WWF led Consortium, including WCS, SNV and AWF, made possible with the generous support of the American People.

## **Discussion**

Rwanda is confronted with major socio-economic development challenges, their underlying causes being essentially high population density and growth rate, high level of illiteracy and subsequent high poverty levels in general. The gravity of these parameters is even more pronounced in the area around Parc National des Volcans (PNV) and the level of the human pressure constitutes a constant threat to the integrity of the park.

In the recent past, there has been, at the national decision making level, increased awareness and recognition of the fact that unless there is significant improvement in the livelihoods of the communities neighboring the park, its long term existence remains threatened. It is in light of this recognition that community conservation approach was introduced and adopted in the current ORTPN five-year strategic plan, an approach also reflected in the PNV five-year management plan (ORTPN, 2004).

The following discussion intends to shade light on how it has still been difficult to move from policy to practice. In other words, the implementation of the existing policies is still problematic in many respects, and there is more which need to be done beyond the political good will if the expected results are to be achieved.

### **i. The decentralization policy**

The decentralization policy which is effective since 2001 was designed as to a tool to foster community development as it allows ownership, empowerment and participation of the local communities in the decision-making processes that shape their livelihoods. In this respect, there are various structures at the district, sector, cell and Umudugudu levels that assume different complementary roles and responsibilities. Among these, the Community Development Committee (CDC) is responsible for the coordination of all the development activities and the involved actors at the aforementioned administrative entities. Recently, the CDC has been seconded to some extent by what has been named the Joint Action Forum (JAF) which is a gathering of all development actors in a given administrative entity.

The study revealed that the current reality on the ground is that most of the decision making power lies in the hands of the District Executive Committee (DEC), the Mayor and his two Vice-Mayors, plus the Executives Secretaries at all administrative entities.

However, the decentralisation remains a real opportunity for local community empowerment and may be its current weaknesses may be attributed to the fact that it is a process that needs time to take roots.

A recent evolution in the decentralisation domain which marks another step in this process is the “Vision 2020 Umurenge” policy which has just been made public by MINALOC (Nyatanyi, C., 2007). Under this policy, there is decentralisation of all the poverty analysis process at the Umudugudu (village) level through the UBUDEHE process while the overseeing of the planning and programs done at the Umurenge (sector) level. The point is that in the new future, these two administrative entities are to become the main focus of development planning and implementation. In this regard, two new structures are to be put in place to take the lead of these processes:

Second, there is an Ubudehe committee at Umudugudu level composed of a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, two advisors and three inspectors. This thinking approach is

already being piloted in the 30 poorest Imirenge (1 sector per district) of the country and if the experience succeeds, there shall be roll-out to the whole country.

## **ii. The Land policy and Environmental Law**

In 2005, a Law determining the use and management of land in Rwanda was made public and this law became the legal tool for the implementation of the “National Land Policy”. This Environmental Law has a major dimension of fostering the rational use and management of natural resources. More importantly, the law entrust the management of these resources to decentralised entities and local communities.

## **iii. The planning mechanisms at local level**

At the decentralised local level, there exist planning frameworks and mechanisms that must be considered during the planning process. These are the following:

- a) *Millennium Development Goals - MDGs*
- b) *Vision 2020*
- c) *Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy - EDPRS*
- d) *Medium Term Expenditure Framework – MTEF*
- e) *Annual plan*
- f) *Performance contract*

The appreciation of this study is that all these frameworks and planning mechanisms end up confusing the users rather than providing guidance. As a consequence, these ones also go for those “shoot and run” type of activities, normally framed in the performance contracts. As a consequence those activities which are of a long term nature such as environment issues and most of the time intangible in terms of results and benefits appear rarely on the priority list of the local planners. They may feature in the documentations but when it comes to budgeting, they are forgotten.

At higher levels of the government, there is an issue of lack of inter-ministerial coordination in the design of sectoral policies and planning. Nyatanyi, C. (2007) in the Vision 2020 Umurenge policy paper remarked that the policy makers, planners and donors have most of the time a thinking oriented to the interests of their own institutions and sectors rather than focussing on the rights & needs of beneficiaries. And she adds that this sectoral thinking does not facilitate the interconnectedness of services delivery at local level. So far, the planning approach is seemingly rather “top down”.

## **iv. The revenue sharing policy**

Revenue sharing policy was developed and is well articulated within the ORTPN Strategic Plan. Its overall goal is to “*ensure sustainable conservation of the National Parks with the participation of the neighbouring communities by contributing to the improvement of their living conditions*”. ORTPN committed to allocate 5 % of its gross tourist revenues to community conservation program to support community livelihoods projects.

So far, the revenue sharing funds given to districts have been allocated to infrastructure development such as construction of primary school class rooms, health centers. While socio-economic needs, important and useful as well for the community, are supposed to be catered for under the government annual budgeting cycles through the responsible line ministries.

A recent analysis done by Sabuhoro in his M.Sc. study revealed the following perceptions of the revenue sharing policy and project results by the local communities (Sabuhoro, E. 2006):

- ✓ The projects do not target the most vulnerable of the community;
- ✓ The projects do not address compensation for damages caused by park animals to local community property, especially crops;
- ✓ There is no transparency in the management of projects;
- ✓ The projects funded are normally easily taken care of by the government annual budget through the responsible line ministries.

The wish of the community is that projects funded under the revenue sharing policy should focus on those that have a direct impact at the household livelihood security. They also feel they should get substitutes products to what they used get from the park.

A certain poacher of the name of SITIMU complained in these words during our meeting *“In those days, I could kill up to 170 buffalos a year but since I have joined this association, I have nothing, no meat in my home and no money to send my children to school, even promises of a grinding mill made to us have not been honoured, I realise that my ex-colleagues who are still poaching are better off than myself”*.

#### **v. Socio-cultural barriers, mindsets and community capacity**

The level of illiteracy (Ubujiji in Kinyarwanda) in the PNV area is among the highest in the country. This has a very negative impact to the lives of the communities in general terms of being aware of what is happening around them in their environment, be it local, national or international. Added to that is the low level of technical capacities in the community. The combination of these two factors has always made it difficult for these communities to seize rightly the opportunities offered by the presence of the park and especially the tourism opportunities. Their competing capacity for jobs offered in hotels and tours agencies is low.

At the same time, they are the ones living near the resource and bear most the conservation burden, so they also have to get their share of benefits. There are two complementary scenarios. The first one is to think of a coherent, appropriate and sustained capacity building program and secondly, to avail to them opportunities that fall within their current technical capacities such as HIMO activities.