

**Relative contribution of different economic activities to the livelihood of communities adjacent to the protected areas: “A Case Study of Local Communities Adjacent to the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda”**

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**Abstract**

Rwanda's protected areas constitute some of the potential resources which would enhance the livelihoods of the local communities by engaging them in alternative economic activities including farming, non-farming and off-farm activities. This study has been conducted in Burera District in the Northern Province of Rwanda. The main objective of this study was to assess the contribution of different economic activities to the livelihoods of communities living adjacent to Volcanoes National Park. Data was collected through cluster, stratified and simple random sampling methods. Key research instruments included both interview guides and questionnaires. The sample size of 96 households was taken. This sample size was calculated from the 11,096 households in Burera District, using the Alain Bouchard's formula. The criteria for selecting the research areas included proximity to the park (0 - 5) km away from the park, population density, and the type of activities especially in the critical zones. The research findings have confirmed the three hypotheses, namely; communities living adjacent to the VNP depend on different economic activities outside the park; communities around VNP mainly look at the resources from the park as an important alternative source of livelihood and VNP influences economic activities of the adjacent communities. Monthly incomes of the local communities are very low. The researchers therefore recommend that the authorities of the Volcanoes National Park should seek for ways of helping the communities to improve their economic activities especially non-farming and off-farm activities. Rural innovation and creativity should be enhanced and strengthened in both critical and non-critical zones. Basing on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: i) non-farming activities should be encouraged as a major alternative source of livelihood to the local communities; ii) appropriate canalization of water from the Volcanoes National Park to avoid flooding during heavy rains and the associated disasters which often destroy farmers' crops and homes; iii) development of infrastructure including nursery schools, health centres, water supply and electricity to enable the local community access a more decent life; iv) the VNP authorities should seek ways of reducing damages such as crop raiding and also put in place suitable systems to compensate the damages whenever they occur.

**Keywords:** Economic activities; livelihoods; local communities; Volcanoes National Park; Burera district; Rwanda.