

CHAPTER 10

Community Conservation and the Use of Incentive Measures: A Case Study of the Care/“Development through Conservation” Project in Communities around Bwindi National Park³

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INTRODUCTION

Biological diversity, upon which human survival hinges, today faces an ever-increasing threat of total destruction due to several factors including: population pressure, over-exploitation and unsustainable consumption patterns. It is against this background that the world community negotiated and adopted the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to promote the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources. While past conservation efforts have focused primarily on establishing protected areas and enacting legislation, these efforts alone have had limited success in addressing the complexities of biodiversity conservation. It is in view of this limitation that the CBD, in Article 11, urges each Contracting Party to “... *as far as possible and as appropriate, adopt economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity*”, as an essential part of designing effective biodiversity conservation strategies.

This paper describes incentive measures which are being implemented in communities around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) in South Western Uganda, particularly the Development Through Conservation (DTC) Project, but also with some reference to the Revenue Sharing Program (RSP) and the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust (MBIFCT).

Following the designation of Bwindi forest reserve as a National Park in August of 1991, resource users who had earlier been legally allowed to harvest small amounts of both wood and non-wood products from the forest for subsistence, lost access into the forest. Consequently, community hostility towards the Forest Reserve (now Park) reached its peak, adding to the earlier animosity which had developed

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particularly between 1986–1987 when the surrounding communities got more upset about the increasing loss of access to the Reserve and the possibility of total exclusion. To compensate the local resource-users for this loss of access rights and to motivate them to enhance biodiversity conservation, the above incentive measures were initiated. These measures were aimed at sensitising the local communities around the park to and making them appreciate the economic benefits of biodiversity conservation through sharing with them benefits from the park, thereby relieving pressure, due to illegal and unsustainable resource use, from the park.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AREA

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park (BIFNP) is situated in South-Western Uganda just South of the Equator (0°53' to 1°8'S). It stretches into three districts of Kabale, Kisoro and Rukungiri and lies on the edge of the Western Rift Valley along the Zaire border. It covers an area of 330.8km², approximately 5.43 per cent of Uganda's total gazetted natural forest estate. The climate in the forest is characterised by heavy mists and relatively low temperature ranges (7°C to 20°C).

BINP is surrounded by a high human population density ranging from 151 to 301 persons per sq. km. The majority of the population is poor and experiences serious land shortage characterised by land fragmentation and absence of fallow periods.

The park comprises a continuous forest cover lying over rugged topography between an altitudinal range of 1160m – 2607m, representing a continuum of lowland to montane forest communities. The park, therefore, has a great diversity of plant and animal species with a number of regional endemics. It supports at least 120 species of mammal, making it one of the forests in Africa with the highest mammalian species richness, including the only few remaining species of Mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla berengei*) in the whole world. It also supports at least 346 bird species, several of which are regional endemic species, including seven which are listed in the Red Data Book of the International Council for Bird Preservation. It is also estimated that there are at least 14 snake species, 27 species of frogs and 20 species of other reptiles. Although botanical surveys are still incomplete, over 200 species of trees have been identified, ten of which occur nowhere else in Uganda and sixteen of which show a very limited distribution elsewhere.

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park (BIFNP) was originally a gazetted forest reserve, managed by the Uganda Forest Department in the Ministry of Natural Resources. However, due to its importance as a biodiversity-rich area and being home to the rare Mountain Gorillas, it was decided to designate it as a national park in 1992 under Uganda National Parks (UNP) and now Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities. The other major

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actors in and around BIFNP include: district administration; local councils; parish park management committees (PMACs); and NGOs such as CARE International, World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and African Wildlife Foundation (AWF).

THE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CONSERVATION (DTC) PROJECT

Conservation efforts in Bwindi Forest have historically faced a variety of obstacles largely deriving from conflicts of land-use interests whereby local communities have wished to continue utilising the natural resources as they have done traditionally over many years. Between 1986 and 1987, that is prior to becoming a National Park, community hostility towards the Forest Reserve increased when local people got upset about the increasing loss of access to the reserve and the possibility of total exclusion. In 1988, WWF-US supported the Impenetrable Forest Conservation Project (IFCP) with the primary aim to halt encroachment into the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest so as to conserve the habitat of the Mountain Gorilla. WWF-US sub-contracted CARE/Uganda to assist with carrying out “out-of-forest” extension services and, through the DTC project, to win community support as a complement to the forest conservation efforts.

From 1991 onwards, CARE/Uganda in Phase II of the project introduced the integrated conservation-development approach to facilitate the conservation of the forest park as well as meeting the development needs of the local communities. This phase is aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture, soil conservation, and watershed management in the areas around BIFNP with the view to increase farmers’ cash incomes, provide alternative occupations and replace products and services lost as a result of the creation of the national park. The project was implemented under the following components:

- a. *Community Conservation Component* consisting of the following sub-components:
 - (i) Multiple Use Approach – allowing limited access by communities to harvest selected resources in BINP;
 - (ii) Vermin Control – to counter conflicts with neighbouring communities by supporting UNP erect a boundary wall;
 - (iii) Community Conservation Awareness devoted to changing people’s attitudes and knowledge about forest conservation and sustainable agriculture;

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- (iv) Community Project Support – to develop community capacity to manage projects;
- (v) Institutional Development – facilitating the organisation of Forest Societies and Park Parish Committees to be organised and supporting the Park Management Advisory Committees; and
- (iv) Catchment Approach – a watershed conservation/management intervention still in its pilot stage.

b. *Park management* – involving institutional capacity building; re-organisation of law enforcement and preparation of park management plans.

c. *Development* – including establishment of development and conservation committees; on-farm planting of forest species; establishment of tree nurseries; establishment of woodlots; establishment of exotic trees on farm; establishment of vegetable nurseries; improved soil conservation; improved banana management; improved bean varieties; improved potato varieties; improved cooking stoves; development of village-level community action plans.

The DTC project was established after fairly good consultations with the different actors including; Government Departments (the Department of Environment, Forest Department, Uganda National Parks, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MFEP), Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries-MAAIF), District Authorities, Local Councils, and NGOs/donors including; WWF, CARE and USAID. The local people were involved in the project formulation and have continued to participate in the implementation of the project, mainly through four local institutions namely: the Park Parish Committees (PPCs); Park Management Advisory Committees (PMACs) comprising the chairpersons of the PPCs; the Forest Societies; and the Beekeepers' Association. CARE, is providing technical assistance to the PPCs in the preparation of village-level development action plans. Those activities falling within the mandate of the DTC project are supported, while the remainder are referred to other support agencies/organisations in the project area.

The rights and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and collaborators are defined, at the national level, by the Project Coordinating Committee (PCC) comprising UNP, CARE, USAID, GMU, MFEP, MAAIF and MGCD and at the district level by the Project Technical Committee (PTC) comprising the Chief Administrative Officer; District Agricultural Officer; District Forest Officer; District Environment Officer; and the Chairman, Local Council V. At the community level, it is the Park Parish Committees; Park Management Advisory Committees; the Forest Societies; and the Beekeepers' Association.

Objectives and Effectiveness of the DTC project as an Incentive Measure

The ultimate long-term goal of the DTC Project is to promote the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components in and around BINP in perpetuity for the health, welfare, enjoyment and inspiration of present and future generations. The intermediate objectives are to provide development/livelihood alternatives to the local communities so as to compensate for the benefits forgone by losing access to the park and by doing so to reduce the hostility towards the park and instead create better understanding of the benefits of biodiversity conservation.

The effectiveness of the DTC Project, in general, was assessed during an end-of-term evaluation which was carried out in January, 1996 and presented in the Evaluation Report (Metcalf, 1996). Generally, it could be said that the project, as a non-monetary incentive measure for promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the areas around BIFNP, has, to a large extent, been effective. It has succeeded in making people around the park more aware of the need to conserve both the forests and the farmlands and has contributed to changing their attitude towards conservation. Secondly, the development component of the project has enabled farmers to increase the sustainable production and use of goods and services from the park and the farmland, thereby compensating for overall community hostility due to the gazetting of the forests into national parks and their subsequent loss of access to the forest resources. Finally, the project has helped to harmonise the relationship between UNP and the local people. UNP is now seen as a real partner to the local communities. From a hostile beginning a few years back, UNP now has a forum within which to meet and discuss with local communities.

IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED

- Before advising on an incentive measure for biodiversity conservation it is essential that a prior, detailed study is undertaken to identify the underlying conservation problems. Where it is felt that direct monetary benefits (e.g. through endowment funds or resource-revenue sharing) is the ideal incentive measure, the size of such funds should be sufficient so as not to undermine the credibility of the incentive measure.
- Depending on scale, successful incentive measures may require a concerted effort by several partners: the local community, government donor agencies and non-governmental organisations.
- Compensation is an expensive form of incentive measures and it may not be a sustainable measure in a number. A combination of modest direct

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monetary benefits with an integrated conservation and development project is a more effective incentive measure for reducing human pressures on protected areas.

- For local communities to be equal partners in the implementation of positive incentive measures, considerable time has to be devoted to the development of community institutional structures.
- It is important to ensure that the definition of beneficiary communities or customers is all inclusive and equitable.
- The existing national sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and legislation need to be reviewed to assess their adequacy or appropriateness before introducing new incentive measures for biodiversity conservation. As indicated in this case study, for example, some of Uganda's current policies and legislation have some useful indirect incentive measures explicitly or implicitly aimed at biodiversity conservation. What may be required for purposes of Article 11, is to amend or improve upon them.
- NGOs are in a more strategic position than government to implement incentive measures aimed at the conservation of biodiversity because of their mode of operation, the trust often placed in them by the grassroots people, and their close proximity to rural communities. They can play a big role in building the capacities of local institutions in order to enable them to negotiate better the terms and conditions with government.

CONCLUSION

Until recently, the concept of using incentive measures to promote conservation and sustainable use of biological resources has not been widely pursued in Uganda. A few initiatives, however, have been introduced, for example, in the communities surrounding BIFNP including the DTC project, the UNP Revenue-Sharing Programme and the Mgahinga Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust (MBIFCT). This paper has described the DTC project, with some reference to the RSP and MBIFCT, indicating the various indirect non-monetary incentives that have been introduced to encourage and motivate the local communities to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. This has been done through providing development/livelihood alternatives to the local communities as a way of compensating them for the benefits they forewent by losing access to the park and, by doing so, reducing the hostility towards the park and instead creating better understanding of the economic benefits of biodiversity conservation. The DTC project is a unique and

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innovative indirect incentive measure in the sense that, while ultimately aiming to achieve effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, it has, at the same time, sought to meet the immediate development needs of the local communities.

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