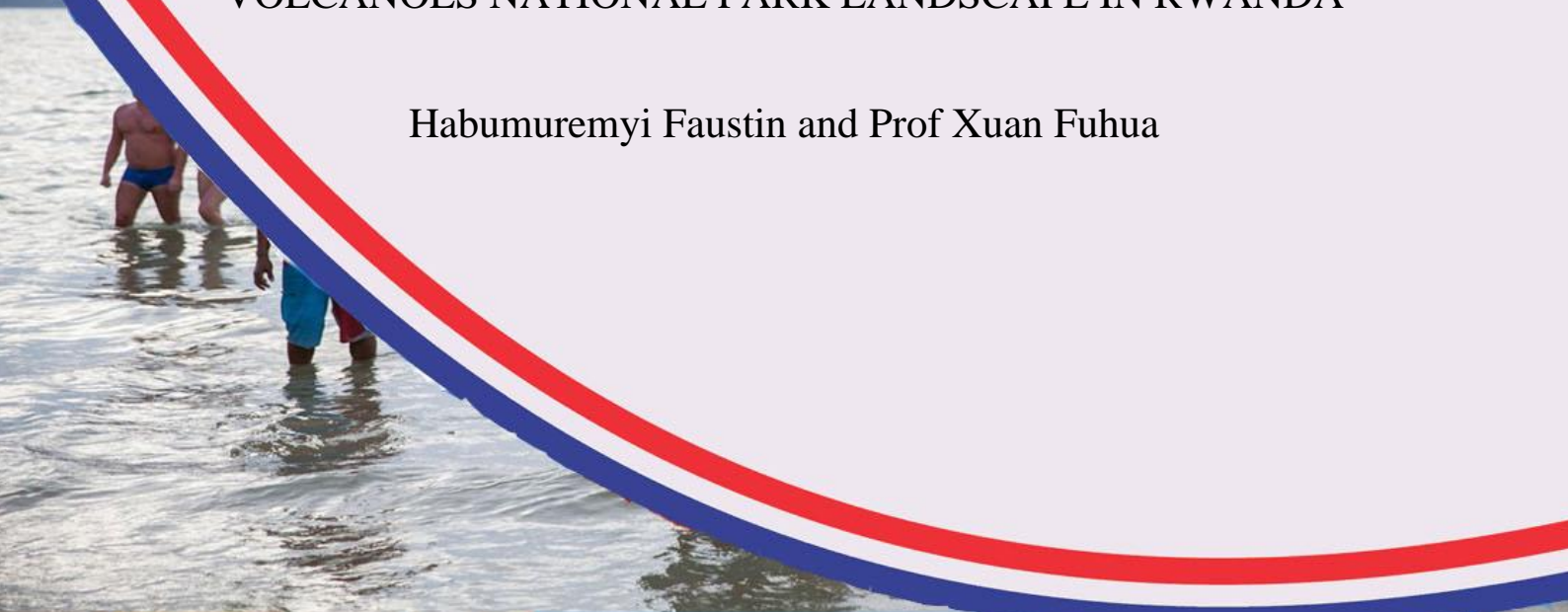


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STUDY ON TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF  
VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK LANDSCAPE IN RWANDA

Habumuremyi Faustin and Prof Xuan Fuhua



**STUDY ON TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF VOLCANOES NATIONAL  
PARK LANDSCAPE IN RWANDA**

<sup>1\*</sup>Habumuremyi Faustin

Post Graduate Student: School of Tourism and Cuisine: Harbin University of Commerce

\*corresponding Author's E-mail: [flecturermusanze@gmail.com](mailto:flecturermusanze@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Prof Xuan Fuhua

Lecturer, School of Tourism and Cuisine: Harbin University of Commerce

**Abstract**

**Purpose:** National Park Landscape management approaches designed at governmental level do not necessarily represent the all-important stakeholder's involvements as consequence sustainable management and protection couldn't be achieved. The purpose the study was to investigate how selected stakeholders describe the current situation about the management and protection of VNPL, how they participate in tourism management and protection of VNPL, what perceived benefits from tourism and what it can be done to improve management and protection of VNPL.

**Methodology:** Quantitative research methods have been used and purposive sampling technique has been applied whereby specific criteria to select respondents from local residents and local authorities in four districts of North-West province of Rwanda were considered.

**Findings:** After analyzing collected data through closed and partial pre-coding questionnaires, the study found that there is lack of knowledge of residents about how they can involve in maintaining the sustainability of VNPL, lack of residents involvement in decision-making, less interaction opportunities between park's stakeholders and interest conflicts over resources between VNP stakeholders.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The study suggests re-designing of VNPL management and protection policies, Increasing Tourism Investment and MSMEs in the region, Linking sustainable tourism and sustainable food systems, improving communication with local community and Adopting evidence-based rural tourism mechanism

**Keywords:** *Volcanoes National Park Landscape (VNPL), Tourism management, Stakeholders.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Management and Protection of landscapes are a complementary element and an essential part of any protected area system. They are particularly appropriate in areas where biodiversity and cultural practices are linked, and where managing practices must accommodate traditional uses, land possession patterns, and the basic to sustain local livelihoods. Protected landscapes can help to the viability of more strictly protected areas by reinforcing connectivity amongst areas and linkages within the broader landscape, especially in situations where conservation objectives are being met over a large area of land (Liu, 2008, AWF, 2012 et al).

Rwanda's policies and programs to boost tourism sector are very emerging, from two decades ago, the government did a lot to rebuild it and make Rwanda the best tourism destination for all the people. Due to the nature of the gorilla tourism of volcanoes national park and given its contribution to national income in the country, the government of Rwanda has come up with policies that can sustain the park as well as benefit local residents economically, socially and environmentally (Adams and Infield, 2003). Regardless the effort, all important stakeholders are not mutually involved especially local people as surveyed residents feel like they are not of the park (Bookbinder et al., 2012). The above policies are good for conservation but they were acknowledged with assorted feelings by the local residents who surround the park and who depend on it (Gray et al., 2009; Munanura et al., 2013).

This study intends to identify the influencing factors of stakeholders' willingness to protect the Rwandan volcanic national park landscape in the process of management and protection, refining the expected interests of all stakeholders, balancing the interests of all parties to achieve multi-party participation in the management and protection of volcanic national park landscape and finally give suggestions. Many researchers including (Liu 2008, AWF, 2012 et al), U.S.A Department of the Interior (2006), World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA 2014), Aichison, J. and Beresford, M. (2003) have proven that sustainable tourism in National Parks is most importantly linked to the proper management and protection of their entire landscapes.

The study assesses the adopted strategies by stakeholders to manage tourism and protect Volcanoes national park's landscape in Rwanda, evaluates the local communities' participation in tourism management and protection of VNPL, assesses their perceived

benefits and determine the problems that are impacting tourism management and protection of VNPL, furthermore, it provides recommendations to be considered by stakeholders all aiming at building sustainable tourism in this beautiful park: “The home of Mountain Gorillas” and keep the park among the best ones in Eastern Africa as well as in the whole African continent.

## **2.0 LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Theoretical framework of the study**

#### **2.1.1 Sustainable Tourism Development**

Generally, development means improvement in a country’s economic and social conditions. On a specific note, it refers to improving management techniques of an area’s natural and human resources in order for wealth creation and to improve peoples’ lives. Development can, however, be considered in terms of human or economic development, and development indicators are ways of measuring this development. Tourism development is, however, defined as a long-term process of preparing for the arrival of tourists. It entails planning, building, and managing attractions, transportation, services, and facilities that serve tourists (Khan, 2005:9). Sustainable tourism development is a model form of economic development that is designed to: improve the quality of life for the host community; provide a great quality of experience for the tourists; and preserve the quality of the environment on which both the host community and the visitor depend. It should adopt a holistic approach by ensuring that park managers consult and work with a range of stakeholders to assess and understand the implications of tourism development and its potential positive and negative impacts (WTO, 1995).

National parks as sensitive environment protected areas are reliant on their natural landscape and ecology as their primary tourism attraction. Their dual remit, to conserve this landscape and provide recreational access are often perceived to be somewhat contradictory due to the negative impacts from visitors or surrounding communities. Such impacts include littering, erosion, pollution, deforestation, poaching for bush-meat, timber harvests, wood harvests for handicrafts, medicinal plants, minerals, fire outbreaks and other many.

Also in most circumstances, tourism and conservation are managed by different organizations and involve a multitude of stakeholders, all with their own goals, priorities and social and economic dependencies (McCool, 2009). This can lead to poor information flow, discrepancies in management strategies and thus, make it difficult to effectively manage tourism impacts (Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

#### **2.1.2 Protected park landscape**

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (European Council, 2000). In this, and in much of the literature, is the idea that landscape arises from the interaction of people with their environment over time (ICOMOS-UK, 2002). Park Landscape is much more than scenery, or even a set of purely physical



attributes: the visual aspect of landscape is only the outward face of complex human/ nature interactions. The protection of park landscape should put people at the heart of the operation and indeed requires them to be there. Landscape occurs everywhere; it takes many forms and thus gives uniqueness to place. It is part of everyone's day to day environment: people both shape and are shaped by the immediate landscape around them. Protected Park's landscape can be considered both as an environmental resource in its own right, and as a framework for assessing and managing the development process of sustainable tourism of the park (Benson and Roe, 2000). It is a particularly good medium through which to plan and manage for sustainability because it reflects economic, social, cultural and ecological forces. Park's Landscape may be inherited from the past, but it should be managed for the future. While park's landscape is always culturally influenced, it is often rich in biodiversity and other natural values. It is very important for nature conservation, with valuable habitats and rare species whose continued existence may depend on proper management of land use. Park's landscape should reflect specific techniques of sustainable land use and embody a particular spiritual relationship to nature so that it can evolve the balance in natural systems, is therefore essential to maintain biological and cultural diversity.

### **2.1.3 Stakeholder's Involvement**

a) Tourism Operators and Park Managers: successful tourism should have professional management. In protected national parks, there are two distinct managerial groups: park managers and private sector tourism operators. These people provide the resource base, the facilities, and the programs that create the opportunity for tourism. They have specific objectives in mind when they do their job. Park managers and tourism operators have different, and often competing, objectives. Park leaders are driven by statutory mandates and their main objective is to safeguard socially-defined values. Private tourism operators are driven by the market and their main goal is to make a profit. These two white-collar groups outlook tourism as a means to: endorse conservation, produce revenue, acquire from others, create employment and income, develop long-term sustainable economic activity, manage resource extraction and foster research.

b) Visitors and Other Users: national Park tourism is ultimately dependent on visitors for its viability. These individuals choose to spend their time and money on places of interest to them. Through their experiences, visitors and other users receive physiological, psychological, social, economic and environmental benefits. These stakeholders view tourism as a means of promoting conservation and preservation ,gaining health benefits, enhancing personal experiences, including cognitive objectives (e.g., study about history), affective conceptions (e.g., increase peace of mind), and psychomotor needs (e.g., get exercise) ,participating in a social experience ,achieving family bonding, spending quality time with friends, providing the opportunity for courtship rituals engaging in a spiritual experience ,meeting people with similar interests ,achieving group team building, achieving time and cost efficiency and feeling personal accomplishment. There are significant users of park properties that are not recreational visitors. These may include local people who have access for religious purposes, resource extraction, or for passage through the protected national park. The interests of these users may conflict with the interests of the recreational users, and these conflicts must be dealt with in the park management plan.

c) Society: people at large have intentions for park tourism. These objectives are often embodied in government policy. This driving force views tourism as a means to: achieve redistribution of income and wealth, gain foreign currency, assist community development, promote the conservation of natural and cultural legacy, sustain and commemorate cultural uniqueness, deliver education opportunities to fellows of society, stimulate health benefits, increase global understanding and awareness. It is essential that all stakeholders work at emerging an understanding of each other's goals, and at building partnerships aimed at reaching those goals. One general goal should be protection of the great quality natural or cultural environment that attracts travellers and improves the quality of life of the local people. A number of tools have been developed to promote society awareness to manage park's landscape, these can include: education and information on why and how to manage resources in certain ways; recognition of responsible stewardship, e.g. through award schemes; celebration of traditional or cultural land use practices supportive of conservation objectives; learning from the knowledge of local peoples in managing resources; formal and informal agreements on specific practices, areas of land or projects; incentives in the form of grants, environmental and social payments, or tax relief; legally binding surrender of rights, such as in conservation easements; and gifting or selling ownership or control of land (Diehl and Barrett, 2013).

d) Government or government agencies: The government is the major stakeholder in the policy making. The role of the government in the tourism sector goes beyond just the policies but it's important for the overall functioning of the tourism sector since it's responsible for the development of infrastructure, provision of security and responsible for the management of most of the tourist attractions. The policy making process is also a political process and sometimes involve lobbying for support from representatives because for it to implemented it must be an approved legislation. It is important to note that the involvement of the government is not only limited to the national level but also at the local level through the local authorities.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

For understanding the current Tourism Management and Protection of Volcanoes National Park Landscape and how it can be improved, the quantitative research methods have been used. Quantitative method as the process of collecting numerical data through standardized techniques, then applying statistical methods to derive insights from it has been chosen because numerical data from different existing and potential stakeholders of the park's landscape were needed. Given that research participants refer to the complete set of individuals (subjects or events) having common characteristics in which the researcher is interested (Fraenkel and Warren, 2017), the study involves potential stakeholders of the park from local residents of four districts (Burera, Musanze, Nyabihu, and Rubavu) in Northern-West part of Rwanda where park is located and local authorities on different levels (sectors, cells and villages) in that region.

When collecting primary data, a questionnaire was chosen as data collection instrument and for secondary data, different materials have been viewed including newspapers, magazines, journals and Websites all having data related to tourism management and protection of park's landscapes. Statistical frequency tables were used to describe the basic features of the data in this study.

## 4.0 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Results and analysis from Local resident's feedbacks

Table 1: Tangible or Intangible benefits for local residents in relation to tourism management or protection of park's landscape

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
<b>Benefits as being park's resident</b>		
a) Food	2	3.5%
b) Firewood	6	10.5%
c) Water	2	3.5%
d) herbs and leaves for medicine	4	7.0%
e) fresh air	4	7.0%
f) money	6	10.5%
g) don't know	6	10.5%
h) others	16	28.1%
i) nothing	11	19.3%
<b>Tourism-related special culture for residents in the region</b>		
a) Traditional dance	26	45.6%
b) Modern dance	6	10.5%
c) Art-crafting	4	7.0%
d) Food related business	14	25.73%
e) Traditional hunting demonstration	1	0.57%
f) Others	6	10.5%
<b>Return from resident special culture by tourists</b>		
a) Money	12	21.1%
b) Happiness	6	10.5%
c) help government to earn money	34	59.6%
d) don't know	4	7.0%

e) others	1	1.8%
<b>Residents advantages from the government as their effort to protect the park</b>		
a) money	3	5.25%
b) schools	4	7%
c) good roads	3	12.25%
d) health centers	5	8.75%
e) water facilities	7	12.25%
f) all as mentioned	2	3.5%
g) none	30	52.5%
h) others	3	1.75%
<b>Resident awards from the government as a result of sustainable land-use</b>		
a) money	7	12.3%
b) cups	2	3.5%
c) agriculture equipment	8	14.0%
d) crop fertilizers	3	5.3%
e) no reward	36	63.2%
f) others	1	1.8%

*Source: Primary data, 2020*

At World Conservation Congress Resolution 1.53, the IUCN recognized that indigenous people have the right “to participate effectively in the management of the protected national parks. Community involvement in tourism can be considered from at least two viewpoints: in the decision-making process and in the benefits of tourism development. However, community participation in volcanoes national park has been recognized by the government of Rwanda only in the sense of helping local people to derive economic benefits via revenue sharing policies.

Since 2005, the Rwandan government has adopted a policy of Tourism Revenue-Sharing (TRS) where through Rwanda Development Board (RDB), 5 % of the park entry fees every year used to fund various community projects where given tourist attractions are found. This rate has been increased to 10% in 2018. Up to 2019, a total of over 5.2 billion Rwandan Francs (about \$5.6 million) in tourism revenue has been used to fund 647 projects such as provide clean drinking water, health centers, classrooms and housing to communities living adjacent to Rwanda National Parks including those of Volcanoes National Park. As several studies have already revealed, without creating opportunities for local people to participate in the decision-making process of tourism management and protection of VNPL plans, it would be difficult for these people [local communities] to obtain adequate benefits from tourism activities.

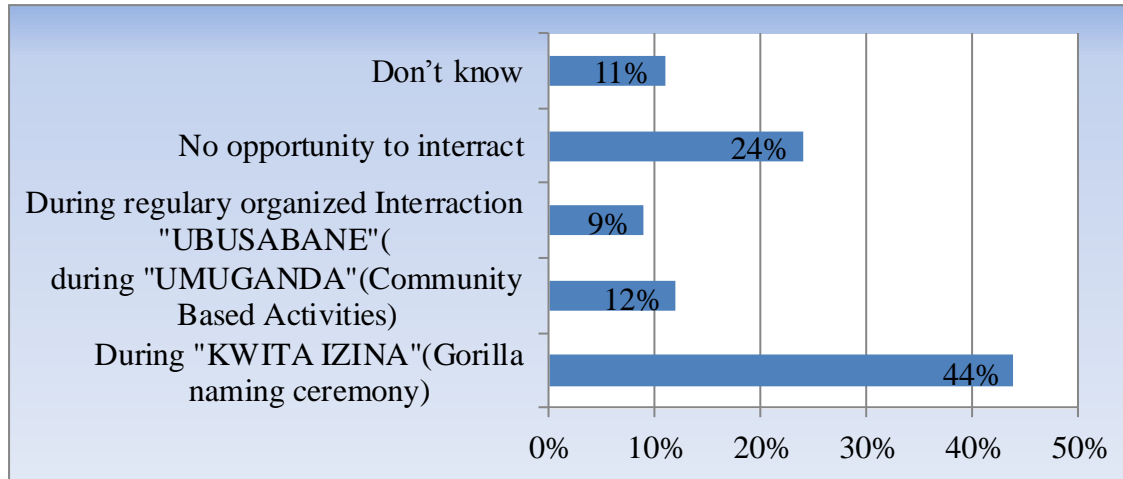
It has been highlighted that a well-motivated local community toward a good tourism management and protection of national park landscape policies should be empowered in four levels: economic, psychological, social-culture and political. The benefits need not always be financial because usually the intangible benefits such as skills development, increased confidence, growing trust, and ownership of the project are greater values to the community.

The initiative made by the Government of TRS is a good step to increase community awareness toward tourism management and protection of VNPL but still there is a lot to do as the above



findings from local residents point out the existing gaps both in tourism management and protection of VNPL.

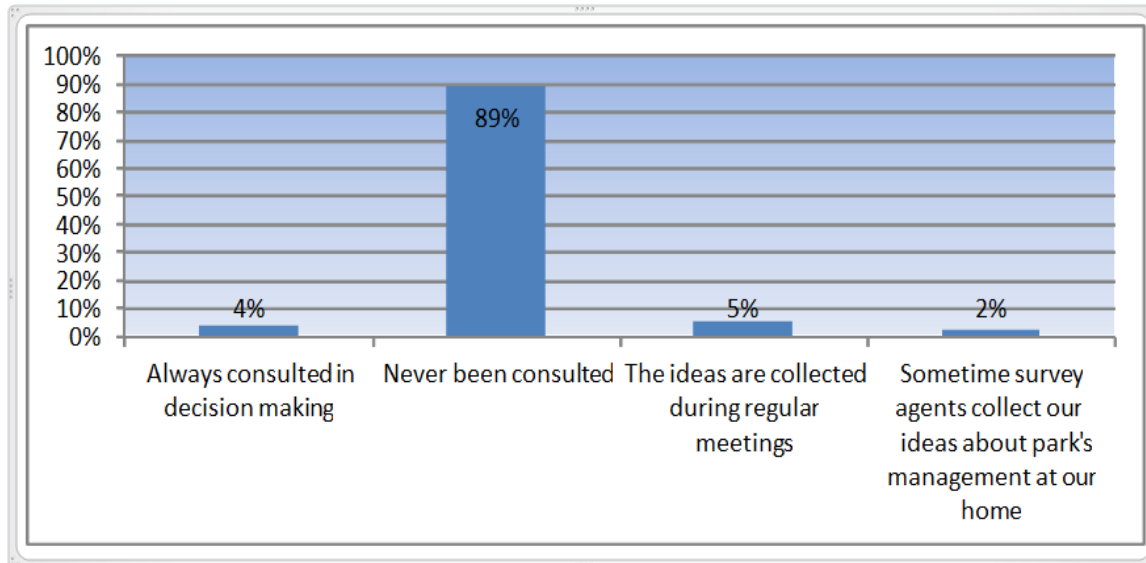
Graphic 1: Residents interaction opportunities with park’s authorities



Source: Primary data, 2020

Interaction between key stakeholders is a cornerstone to establish, implement and maintain developed policies for tourism management and protection of park’s landscape, the graphic 4-8 sought to discover how and when local residents meet with park’s authorities and respondents were given a questionnaire with three possible known interaction channels in the region, 44% conformed that they meet with those authorities in yearly Gorilla Naming Ceremony(KWITA IZINA),12% indicated that they can meet in monthly community work(UMUGANDA),9% said that it can happen during regularly organized meetings while 24% believe that they never got any opportunity to meet with park’s authorities and 11% they don’t know if it happen.

Graphic 2: Residents involvement in decision-making for park management related policies



Source: Primary data, 2020

The graphic 2 illustrates the involvement level in decision-making by local residents in all policies intend to properly manage tourism and park’s landscape, 89% of local residents indicated that they never been consulted for decision-making, 5% marked that their ideas are collected in regular meetings with authorities and 2% said that sometime survey agents collect their ideas about park’s management at their homes.

#### 4.2 Results and analysis from Local authorities’ feedbacks

**Table 2: Awareness of Local authorities to their residents and park’s management**

VALID	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
<b>Incentives from RDB to local citizens as their incredible role in park’s protection</b>		
a) Money	4	9.1%
b) Food	3	6.8%
c) weather clothes	1	2.3%
d) appreciation	5	11.4%
e) don’t know	29	65.9%

f) others	2	4.5%
<b>Training period for local authorities on proper land use and par's protection</b>		
a) one day	8	18.2%
b) 1-5 days	5	11.4%
c) One week	2	4.5%
d) More than one week	1	2.3%
e) Never	20	45.5%
f) don't know	8	18.2%
<b>Local residents park-dependent jobs</b>		
a) park guarding	6	13.6%
b) tour guiding	4	9.1%
c) pottering	6	13.6%
d) not employed	23	52.3%
e) others	5	8.8%
<b>Meeting with residents and parks authorities</b>		
a) once per six months	1	2.3%
b) once per year	1	2.3%
c) once per five years	1	2.3%
d) never happen	7	15.9%
e) don't remember	5	11.4%
f) not applicable	29	65.9%
<b>Park's water management system</b>		
a) canalization	8	18.2%
b) Dams	5	11.4%
c) Self-managed( from park to rivers and lakes)	26	59.1%
d) Don't know	2	4.5%
e) Others	3	6.8%
<b>Compensation to local citizens due to animal invasion to their crops</b>		
a) not applicable	29	65.9%
b) money	7	15.9%
c) no compensation	3	5.3%
d) food	4	9.1%
e) others	1	2.3%
<b>Cooperation between Volcanoes national park authorities and its inhabitants</b>		
a) poor	2	4%
b) moderate	6	3.6%
c) good	24	87%
d) very good	8	3.2%
e) excellent	4	2.1%

Source: primary data, 2020

Local authorities in Rwanda have shown their core role to help in implementing policies related to tourism management and protection of national parks. As their mandate in Rwanda Biodiversity plan of 2016, local authorities supervise several technical and administrative activities which include mobilizing community members to participate in protection of national parks, participating in the consultations leading to the formulation management and protection plans, planning for and integrating conservation activities in the region & Annual performance Contracts known locally as “Imihigo”, mobilizing resources and supporting community

development activities in their region. However, during this study the results present low level of Awareness of Local authorities to their residents toward tourism management and protection of VNPL.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Tourism management and protection of VNPL requires appropriate processes and plans. They are so closely linked that it makes sense to deal with them together. The adoption of management processes that are participatory, beneficial, iterative, adaptive and flexible are required to ensure the sustainability of VNPL. Participatory means that the community in the region should play a central role in management planning and implementation. This study therefore gives the following recommendations to the core stakeholders of VNPL:

### **5.1 Re-designing VNPL management and protection policies**

RDB with stakeholders should re-design Policies and mechanisms which can accommodate local participation in the design, implementation and management of tourism projects and local use of tourism resources. At least, local communities should be empowered to define what forms of tourism facilities they want to see developed in their particular communities, and how tourism costs and benefits should be shared between different stakeholders. In order to achieve these, socio-political changes will require decentralization of tourism authority and decision-making processes from a national level to elected regional and grassroots institutions and organizations such as district councils, administration sectors and local community villages [commonly known in Rwanda as imidugudu].

### **5.2 Increasing Tourism Investment and MSMEs in the region**

RDB with its partners should increase investment in the region as a condition for productivity, employment and tourism developments in the region. Public sector investment is especially important for attracting investments from the private sector, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development partners. Infrastructure, particularly transport and digital infrastructure, is key for the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations. Governments should ensure adequate levels of investment in infrastructure in order to improve the wellbeing of local communities and the visitor experience. This includes roads to improve access and communication, public transport connections and facilities for cycling and walking, reliable electricity, parking spaces, sanitary and educational infrastructure, cultural resources, as well as telephone services, internet/broadband connectivity, water facilities, waste management and recycling, safety and security, banking facilities and health services. It is also important to provide a favorable environment for MSMEs and entrepreneurship by ensuring an adequate regulatory framework. They should also ensure easy and simplified access to financial assistance to empower local communities and enhance the creation of tourism businesses in the region.

### **5.3 Improve communication with local community**

Communication with local community should be improved. Park managers should engage in participatory exercises with the local population – not solely with sector, cell or village leaders, but communicate directly with the population. Meetings would ideally be designed to include farmers in the region, where options about most effective mitigation options are discussed

### **5.4 Link sustainable tourism and sustainable food systems**

The promotion of policies and initiatives that advance the close relationship between sustainable food systems and tourism can be a pathway for the conservation and use of biodiversity, agro biodiversity, cultural heritage, local gastronomy, beverages, health and wellness in region, promoting local economies while preserving identities. Initiatives to make tourists more aware of their carbon footprint when travelling to rural areas and on their impact on the local food systems should be developed to encourage behaviors that help generate positive impacts for communities and ecosystems.

### **5.5 Adopt evidence-based rural tourism mechanism**

RDB and park management should adopt evidence-based tourism development through integrated trustworthy data and monitoring tools that measure the economic, social, cultural and environmental impact of tourism in the region track and optimize resources. Statistical information and data collection, processing and evaluation by the national authorities should be made more efficient, preferably based on a higher level of digitalization in rural areas so as to enable a better ability to establish, plan, evaluate and manage development programs.

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