# THE ROLE OF ECOTOURISM IN THE RECOSTRUCTION OF POST-WAR RWANDA.

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## DECLARATION

I declare that "The Role of Ecotourism in the Reconstruction of Post-war Rwanda" is my own work, that all other sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference and that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.



Patrick Manzi Mbayiha November 2004

Signature.....

Supervisor: Dr Thembela Kepe

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Félicien Mbayiha and Bellancila Mukamusoni, without your special love and support, I never would have become who I am today. More than anyone else, I dedicate this thesis to you.

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## ABSTRACT

## THE ROLE OF ECOTOURISM IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF POST-WAR RWANDA.

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The study examines the role of ecotourism in the reconstruction of post-war Rwanda. This is in the context of widespread poverty throughout Rwanda, and the government's efforts to improve the population's welfare, following years of civil war. . The study is based on secondary data review, including government's policies on poverty alleviation, literature on the role of ecotourism in development and a case study of a national park where ecotourism is seen as bringing in much needed revenue. The study concludes that ecotourism in Rwanda has potential to contribute to economic growth, and this is in part due to the country's unique flora and fauna. However, the study also points out that several challenges to this potential remain. These include the country's still shaky security and the widespread poverty itself.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Poverty and historically ethnic-related conflicts have proven to be the major challenges facing the Rwandan people today (Austin, 2000). Poverty, which is Rwanda's current primary problem, is made worse by long-term conflicts between the two ethnic groups, the dominant Hutu and the minority Tutsi. These conflicts resulted in a much publicised civil war in 1994, where over 500 000 people were massacred by fellow neighbours (Kumar et al 1996). For several years after the massacre, Rwanda suffered tremendous shock in terms of political stability and disruption of livelihoods. People who live in the countryside were hardest hit by the conflict, leading many of them to abandon their fields and homes. This, therefore, added to an already grave livelihood situation.



Over 90% of the population lives in poverty and mainly depends on subsistence agriculture as a main source of livelihood. According to the reports, of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper-PRSP (2002) and World Bank (1998), poverty in Rwanda is widespread, multifaceted, and the country is rated among the poorest in the world. Poverty is prevalent both in rural and urban areas of Rwanda. In rural areas, where the majority of the population lives, people have little or no access to proper sanitation, shelter, electricity, safe water; there is large-scale environmental degradation (USAID, 2002). The per capita income in Rwanda is among the lowest of the least- developed countries, and is estimated to be at $ 237 (PRSP, 2002). Poverty proportion of households below the poverty line rose from 53% to 70% between 1993 and 1997 and the latest estimate is 65% as a result of

foreign aid and anti-poverty strategies (PRSP, 2002). Ten years after the genocide, Rwanda has embarked on a reconstruction programme that aims to heal the civil war wounds, through peace-building initiatives, while at the same time attempting to speed up poverty alleviation programmes.

The current government of Unity has tried to address the above problems since the beginning of the post-war period, so as to lead to the economic, political and social development of the Rwandan people (World Bank, 2002). Among the various strategies, that the government has embarked on to alleviate poverty, are agriculturally led-industrialisation, reconciliation programs between the two ethnic groups, uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the people, encouraging domestic and foreign investment, decentralisation, and development of the tourism sector (Newbury & Newbury, 1995). The provision of security countrywide, civil service reform, and suitable training and incentives for ministry staff are seen as another way of ensuring that the people's social welfare is adequately protected.



Due to the rich diversity of the country in terms of national parks, forests, rivers waterfalls, and other environmental resources, ecotourism has been identified as one of the major potential sources of revenue if properly managed (Katarebe, 2002). However, as it is the case in many other countries where tourism has gained such importance, there are challenges that need to be met if tourism is going to contribute to poverty alleviation. The negative impact of human beings on natural resources and the displacement of people to make way for conservation areas that are crucial to ecotourism are among these challenges. Therefore, the

major focus of this research is to explore the potential of and challenges that ecotourism faces in its role of contributing to the reconstruction of post-war Rwanda.

## 1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this research is to explore opportunities presented and challenges faced by ecotourism in its role of contributing to the reconstruction of post-war Rwanda. In order to accomplish the main aim, the study has the following specific objectives:

- To present a review of the extent of poverty and government strategies for poverty alleviation in Rwanda,
- To explore opportunities presented by and challenges of ecotourism in African poor countries, whose socio-economic situation is fairly similar to that of Rwanda,
- To present a case study of at least one ecotourism destination, examining the potentials and challenges of ecotourism in Rwanda and its potential role in poverty alleviation.



## 1.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

### 1.3.1. Rationale for the case study area

The motivation of the researcher to undertake studies on ecotourism in Rwanda arose from his professional background and personal working experience as a tourism practitioner, over a period of one year, in different parts of the country.

As a development practitioner, the researcher has a conviction and responsibility to identify challenges and potentials of ecotourism in poverty reduction from the context of Rwanda.

The research focuses on one case study area, namely the Volcanoes National Park in the northern part of the country, a well-known destination for gorilla trekking. The Volcanoes National Park forms a unique destination to thousands of tourists from all over the world who come to see the mountain gorillas (*gorilla-gorilla berengei*).

### 1.3.2. Summary of methods

The use of secondary literature review gave a theoretical background to the study and built a logical framework for the research. As it has been indicated by Mouton (2001), the importance of the literature review is to avoid duplication of efforts, to save time, and to guide the researcher towards conceptualising the research question by locating it in a body of theory.



A broad overview was done on Rwanda to identify relevant stakeholders and their perceptions towards ecotourism development in the country. This being a secondary data analysis research, references included academic journals, books, magazines, conference papers, reports, archives, published and unpublished data, newspapers, internet resources, government documents, information from the tourism board, non-governmental organisations and practitioners in Rwanda. The availability of all this information was facilitated through email contacts, telephones, and faxes. Some other data was sent through the researcher's country mates who were travelling to and from Rwanda during the course of the year.

Sarantankos (1988) has written on the use of secondary data in doing a research study. He records several steps in conducting this type of research. Identification of relevant documents to the study is a crucial first step. Data collection, which includes collecting of all relevant material that is in line with the topic, is a logical second step. Data analysis and the interpretation of findings complete the research cycle. The researcher applied all the steps pointed out by Sarantankos (1988) while he was dealing with the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda.

## 1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was done to find out the role of ecotourism in the reconstruction of post-war Rwanda. A study of this nature is potentially relevant to a range of stakeholders involved in poverty alleviation and, more specifically, in the ecotourism sector. Thus, policy makers, NGO's, private investors involved in ecotourism in Rwanda are likely to benefit from the research. This study could add to the currently limited literature on ecotourism in the country.



## 1.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This section deals with the limitations of the research that were faced during the process of this study. Due to shortage of finances, the researcher was not able to travel back to Rwanda for his fieldwork study. This limited the researcher from meeting with the relevant government offices and other stakeholders who are directly involved in the promotion of nature based tourism. In the process of undertaking this study, in order to build a theoretical framework on the topic, the reviewing of literature was an important stage in this research. However, insufficient studies and literature material on Rwanda, especially those relating to

ecotourism and poverty, were major limitations of the study. In relation to this limitation, it is a fact that much data was lost along with most of the infrastructure during the 1994 civil war.

This research was carried out based on secondary data analysis; hence, this situation was a limitation to the study as some information was not accessible from reliable sources. During the course of this research, the researcher was faced with the bias of some documents since they represented the personal views of the authors.

During the process of undertaking this research, there were delays in the responses to posted mail, faxes, or even phone calls as a result of distance and the fact that it incurred some expenses. Being among the least developed countries in Africa, the communication system in Rwanda is not reliable. This delay in the arrival of data prolonged the writing of the thesis.



In addition to the above, there was another limitation in relation to confidentiality. The researcher was first denied access to the revenues collected from the protected areas in Rwanda; yet this formed an important section of this research. Because there was no physical contact with the researcher, a lot of doubt was generated. The authorities did not know if the information was genuinely wanted for research purposes. The researcher made it clear to the authorities and they, in turn, permitted access for the needed information. This was a limitation in the sense that the researcher had to wait for such a long time before getting this information. This limitation, therefore, delayed the process of the research.

Moreover, reliance on one person from the tourism office for the supply of information became a limitation. Whenever he was out of the country on official duties, the researcher would have to wait for him to return so as to get any more data. This caused further delays and inconvenience in this thesis writing.

The researcher was faced with a problem of documents that were not complete, affecting the overall aim of the study.

## 1.6. OUTLINE OF THESIS CHAPTERS

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Following this introduction, which makes the first chapter, a summary of key issues discussed in each of the remaining three chapters is presented. These are as follows:

- **Chapter 2** – This chapter presents a review on poverty, reconstruction and ecotourism literature. It also addresses the poverty situation in Rwanda, covering both the extent and the government's strategies of addressing it.

- **Chapter 3** – This chapter presents the example of Volcanoes National Park as one of the key destination for ecotourism in Rwanda. It explores the ways in which ecotourism can contribute to poverty alleviation, as well as some of the challenges experienced.

- **Chapter 4** – This chapter presents a discussion of the findings and a conclusion. It does this through summarising the key issues emerging from the earlier chapters. Finally, it presents the research and policy implications emerging from the study.

## 1.7. CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter has tried to describe clearly the situation currently prevailing in Rwanda, in relation to poverty and post-war reconstruction. The problem statement, aims and objectives guiding the study, are outlined. This chapter also lays out the research design and the other chapters comprising this thesis. The next chapter reviews literature relating to poverty, reconstruction and ecotourism worldwide in Africa and in Rwanda.

# CHAPTER 2: POVERTY, RECONSTRUCTION AND ECO-TOURISM. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.

## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Following the presentation of rationale and objectives of this study (Chapter 1), this present chapter seeks to lay foundation for future discussions by exploring poverty, and strategies adopted by government, for alleviating it in Rwanda. Thus, the chapter starts by providing a discussion of the poverty situation in Rwanda. This is followed by a discussion of the Rwandan government's strategies for alleviating poverty and other inequalities. The next section reviews the role that ecotourism plays and can play in contributing to poverty alleviation in poor countries in Africa and beyond. The last section presents conclusions for the chapter.



## 2.2. POVERTY IN RWANDA

The subject of poverty has occupied many scholars for a long time. This pre-occupation with studying poverty has resulted in a number of ways to define poverty. Most of these definitions focus on the difference between absolute and relative poverty (Atkison, 1991; Bigsten, 1993, World Bank, 1998, World Bank, 2000; cited in Fitamo, 2003). Relative poverty is a poverty measure based on a poor standard of living or a low income relative to the rest of society. Unlike absolute poverty, it does not necessarily imply that physical human necessities of nutrition, health and shelter cannot be met; instead it suggests that the lack of access to many of the goods and services expected by the rest of the contemporary

society leads to social exclusion and damaging results for the individuals and families in relative poverty (Gurunet, 2005).

Johnson *et al* (2000) have referred to poverty as a condition experienced by many people who have a shortage of financial and other resources, and who are likely to face difficulties in obtaining and maintaining sufficient nutrition, adequate accommodation, and long term good health. Ibrahim (1999), who defines poverty as insufficiency of income to meet basic food needs, offers a more direct definition.

Chambers (1983) identifies five clusters of disadvantage that are directly associated with poverty or the dimensions of poverty. These have been grouped as poverty itself, physical weakness, vulnerability, and powerlessness.

- *The household is poor*: This aspect as a cluster of disadvantage characterising poverty the lack of all basic necessities of life ranging from shelter, clothing, food, and land, plus the dependency on family labour for production, be it domestic or commercial.

- *The household is physically weak*: This is due to the high number of dependants on the able-bodied adults and these may be categorised ranging from the young children, the elderly, the sick, or the handicapped.

- *The household is isolated*: The location of the house is far from the access to discussion, information, and communications, and is located in a remote area. The members of the household are not informed of any affairs beyond their neighbourhood. In this case the children have no

access to schools. The members of the household normally travel to either seek employment or beg for material needs from other relatives

- *The household is vulnerable*: This simply implies the household is vulnerable to all sorts of problems such as famine, outbreaks of fire, sickness, accidents, funerals, weddings, bride price and the like. This requires spending not readily available; thus the household becomes poorer as assets have to be sold to meet these expenses.

- *The household is powerless*: This is due to the ignorance of law, which results in easy victimization by a more powerful class of people.

This discussion will, however, be based on the definition brought forward by Johnson *et al* (2000), which specifies the problem as shortage of financial and other resources. The reason for this is the fact that most poor countries in Africa do experience this problem of shortage of finance, and Rwanda is not an exception. Rwanda is one of many countries in Africa that have been experiencing poverty for a long time as a result of many prevailing factors. Among these factors, are over-population, dependency on subsistence agriculture, and prolonged conflicts. According to the household survey of 1985 (NPRP, 2002), about 40 percent of the total population was poor, with their average per capita income below the poverty line which was US$110. During the early 1990s, diminishing agricultural productivity and the decline in the international coffee price caused a significant reduction of per capita income. By 1993, 53 percent of the population had incomes that were below the poverty line (UNDAF, 2002). It is after the 1994 genocide, which resulted in extensive destruction of personal

assets, that there was a dramatic increase in poverty. The proportion of households below the poverty line rose from 53 percent to 70 percent between 1993 and 1997 (RDI, 2002). Since then, the country has been recovering and the current estimations indicate that about 65 percent of the population are living below the poverty line (NPRS, 2002). Like in any other low-income country, poverty in Rwanda is prevalent in both rural and urban areas. However, since the rural areas account for 90 percent of the country's population, poverty is primarily a rural phenomenon.

Poverty in Rwanda is intimately related to a series of interlocking issues. These include land, demography, environmental degradation, as well as low and limited sources of growth (MINECOFIN, 2000). These issues and constraints have contributed to continued degradation of welfare overtime, making poverty a widespread phenomenon in the entire country, as well as making Rwanda one of the poorest countries in the World. The country's per capita income is among the lowest of the least developed countries and its reliance on subsistence agriculture is among the highest in this group. Poverty in Rwanda is widespread among the greatest percentage of the population.

A situation that makes things even more difficult is that Rwanda's exports cover only 30% of imports and trade is essentially based on cash crop exports of coffee and tea. These commodities depend on international price volatility and their prices have been unstable lately. Take for example the case of coffee export revenues, which have declined from $ 45 million in 1997 to $ 26 million in 1999 (World Bank, 2002).

The weak export base, low investment coupled with the high levels of poverty, have made the country highly dependent on foreign aid, as well as highly indebted. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in their Human Development Report of (2004), has classified Rwanda as the 164th among the 174 poorest countries in the World. The death rate of children is high; one child in every five dies before their fifth birthday.

In addition to this gloomy picture relating to poverty, illiteracy is noted as being high, particularly among women. Studies show that about 25% of women have never attended school or any literacy programme, compared to 17% of men. Sixty percent of women and 64% of men had a chance of getting educated, while 11% of women and 14% of men have gone through secondary education or further (UNDP, 2004).

## 2.3. GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES OF ADDRESSING POST-WAR POVERTY



In the light of the gloomy picture painted above (see section 2.2), the government of Rwanda has embarked on a number of strategies and implemented several policies to attempt reverse the poverty situation. Among these is the concerted effort to properly manage the delivery of social services in the entire country so as to achieve at least three objectives. These are (i) the prevention of disease, (ii) increase in the accessibility of social services, and (iii) an improvement in the quality of social services (MINECOFIN, 2000). According to the information obtained from the Government of Rwanda's document, the 2020 Vision shows the

strategies that the policy makers have put in place to try and alleviate the poverty that was accelerated by the 1994 genocide. The 2020 Vision is a Government document that was designed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning as a guiding framework to help in the reconstruction process of the country, especially after the tragic period that was characteristic in 1994. It was designed and its implementation was started in 2001. It was to deal mainly with the poverty issue that has been accelerated by a combination of other issues today, such as poor education, high birth rate etc. The 2020 Vision is targeted for achievement in 20 year's time. In other words, the Government of Rwanda, with the guidance of this document wishes to accomplish several long term development goals and objectives, which are discussed below.

In its effort to try and facilitate the easy implementation of the 2020 Vision and alleviation of poverty, the Government of Rwanda has stressed the importance of good political and economic governance. This factor is indeed very vital in all aspects of development, especially for a country like Rwanda that has been through such a devastating civil war. Good governance in the Rwandan context, and the approach put forward, is the bottom-up approach and participation for all through decentralisation in order to bring about sound economic management and macroeconomic stability.

As a means of reducing the high dependency on subsistence agriculture that characterises most poor households in Rwanda, the Government of Rwanda has introduced new technologies that will improve agricultural production. The

Government is also planning on building on the traditional strengths of the rural Rwandan economy.

The 2020 Vision is also targeting the development of services and manufacturing and mining industries. This strategy is aimed at trying to transform the economy as incomes rise such that the economy, instead of largely depending on subsistence agriculture, may be diversified to include other sectors as well. As a part of this strategy, the 2020 Vision has, therefore, identified the tourism sector as having potential. It will also seek to re-establish Rwanda as a regional trade and service centre. Additionally, the 2020 Vision aims to strengthen the use of information and communication technology through the setting up of tertiary institutions that can promote this technology.

The 2020 Vision also bases its operation on human resource development so as to alleviate poverty in Rwanda. It is evident that one of the factors accelerating poverty's prevalence in Rwanda is the high level of illiteracy that can only be broken by the Government's investment in human resource development. It is because of such a background that Rwanda has for a long time imported and exported human resources to the countries within the region and beyond.



Another goal of the 2020 Vision of Rwanda is the promotion of the private sector because this calls for further liberalisation, privatisation, and enhanced public/ private partnership, all of which will play a major role in filling the gaps of the country's economy and lower the risks and costs of doing business in Rwanda. Finally, the Government of Rwanda, in its 2020 Vision, has aimed at joining the regional and international economic integration as a means of improving the

economy. For example, it has already joined the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) as a means to improve on its bilateral agreements with the neighbouring countries. Rwanda has also joined the East African community and is committed to exploring the opportunities offered by international trade agreements, including the World Trade Organization and the recent Africa Growth and Opportunities Act in the USA. In light of this picture on poverty in Rwanda, and how government is attempting to address it, the next section focuses on ecotourism.

## 2.4. ECOTOURISM- A REVIEW OF THE CONCEPT

After having looked at the various ways through which the Government of Rwanda would like to rebuild its economy in the section above, a review of literature on ecotourism will be dealt with in this section. More specifically, this discussion focuses on ecotourism's role in poverty reduction.



Different schools of thought on ecotourism have emerged in the past few decades and accordingly, a range of views are reflected. Box. 1 below briefly elaborates the different understandings of the term ecotourism.

**Box. 1. Definitions of Ecotourism adopted from Roe, et al (1997: 4).**

Visits to national parks and other natural areas with the aim of viewing and enjoying the plants and animals as well as any indigenous culture" (Boo, 1990).

"An enlightening nature travel experience that contributes to the conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of host communities" (Carter and Lowman, 1994).

"Responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people" (Lindberg and Hawkins, 1993).

"Tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any cultural aspects both past and present found in these areas" (Ceballos- Lascurain, 1993).

"Tourism which is based upon relatively undisturbed natural environments, is non-degrading, is subject to an adequate management regime and is a direct contributor to the continued protection and management of the protected area used" (Valentine, 1991).



"Tourism that is environmentally sensitive" (Muloin, 1991).

"Purposeful travel that creates an understanding of cultural and natural history, while safeguarding the integrity of the ecosystem and producing economic benefits that encourage conservation" (Ryel and Grasse, 1991).

"Low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through contributing to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for people to value, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage areas as a source of income" (Goodwin, 1996).

The Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, the case study area for this thesis, can be cited as a good example of this type of tourism, in that it contributes not only to the protection of valuable natural resources, but also benefits the local community and national economy. In this particular national park, ecotourism is contributing towards the conservation of mountain gorillas, as well as improving the well being of the local population that live nearby (IGCP, 2002). Ecotourism in this case may be looked at as a tool that benefits different people involved in relationship between tourism and environment.

### 2.4.1. Ecotourism and poverty alleviation: A global Analysis

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and is already growing significantly in most poor countries (Jaura, 2004). The secretary general of the World Tourism Organization, Francesco Frangialli, has supported this idea in Jaura (2004: 1) by arguing that:



"Tourism can be harnessed as a significant force for the alleviation of poverty as well as for environmental protection, giving economic value to cultural heritage, creating employment and generating foreign exchange earnings."

Certain characteristics of tourism enhance its potential as a tool for fighting poverty and improving the lives of the poor. Tourism can be labour intensive, inclusive of the women and the informal sector; based on natural and cultural assets of the poor, and suitable for poor areas. Harnessing tourism for pro-poor strategies of development means capitalising on these features while reducing negative impacts on the poor (Roe et al, 2003).

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World Tourism Organization (WTO) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2001) note that tourism can make a substantial contribution towards development of poor countries, as well as poverty reduction. Nature-based tourism was the major leading export earner in 31 Least Developed countries (LDC), and it is the first source of export earning in seven of these countries. This is because of plenty and unique natural habitats that characterise these poor countries and attract many foreign tourists. The tourism receipts to these LDC's have more than doubled between 1992 and 1998, from US$ 1 billion to US$2.2 billion (Roe et al, 2004). Further to this, tourism is a primary source of income for most of the poor countries except for Angola, Yemen, and Equatorial Guinea, which depend on the export of oil. Encontre (2001) stresses that steady tourism development is likely to have a measurable socio-economic impact, and can drive a least developed country near the threshold of graduation, in other words moving out of the LDC status.

The economic impact of tourism in international trade has been growing significantly in the past years. The value of exports of tourism services was about 4% of international trade in 1980, 5% in 1990 and 6% by 1995 (Roe et al, 2003). Tourism is a major earner for many low-income countries and it has been an important foreign exchange earner for a number of newly industrialised countries, including Mexico and Thailand, among others.

Roe et al (2004: 12) cited the idea of Deloitte and Touche, International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) and Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (1999), Ashley et al (2001), and WTO, (2001:99) that ecotourism can help in poverty alleviation in the following words which in the long run results on economic development.

"Tourism is not a panacea for economic development. In any context decisions about whether or not tourism domestic or international presents viable opportunities for local economic development need to be made locally in the context of the other opportunities, which exist for pro-poor development. As with other industrial sectors, economic growth as a result of tourism development does not necessarily result in poverty reduction. However, tourism does have some advantage over other sectors for delivering pro-poor growth".

These advantages that accrue to tourism and poverty reduction have been summarised as follows:

- Tourism delivers consumers to the product rather than the other way round. This opens up huge opportunities for local access to markets for other goods and

services. Development strategies can enhance potential links to local enterprises and poor producers

- Tourism does not face tariff barriers, although taxes on air travel can have a similar effect

- Tourism has considerable potential for linkage with other economic sectors particularly agriculture and fisheries. Realising these linkages will increase the proportion of tourism revenue retained in the host country.

- There is a possibility of other types of linkages, for example demand for tourism may add sufficiently to another sector's demand for the combination to provide a basis for introducing local provision of goods and services such as transport

- Tourism provides opportunities for off-farm diversification. Tourists are often attracted to remote areas with few other development options because of their high cultural, wildlife and landscape values.

- Tourism provides relatively labour intensive opportunities. It is more intensive than manufacturing and non-agricultural production, although less labour intensive than agriculture.

- Tourism includes relatively a high proportion of women and can contribute to gender equality. This is, however, less true in developing countries where there is higher male unemployment than in developed countries.

- Tourism can provide poor countries with a significant export opportunity where few other industries are viable. The large number of countries for which tourism receipts are important is evidence that it is a much less demanding sector in terms of initial investment than many other commodities.

- Tourism products can be built on natural resources and culture, which are assets that some of the poor have.

- The infrastructure associated with tourism development (roads, electricity, communications, piped water) can provide essential services for rural communities, which would otherwise be excluded from general infrastructure provision.

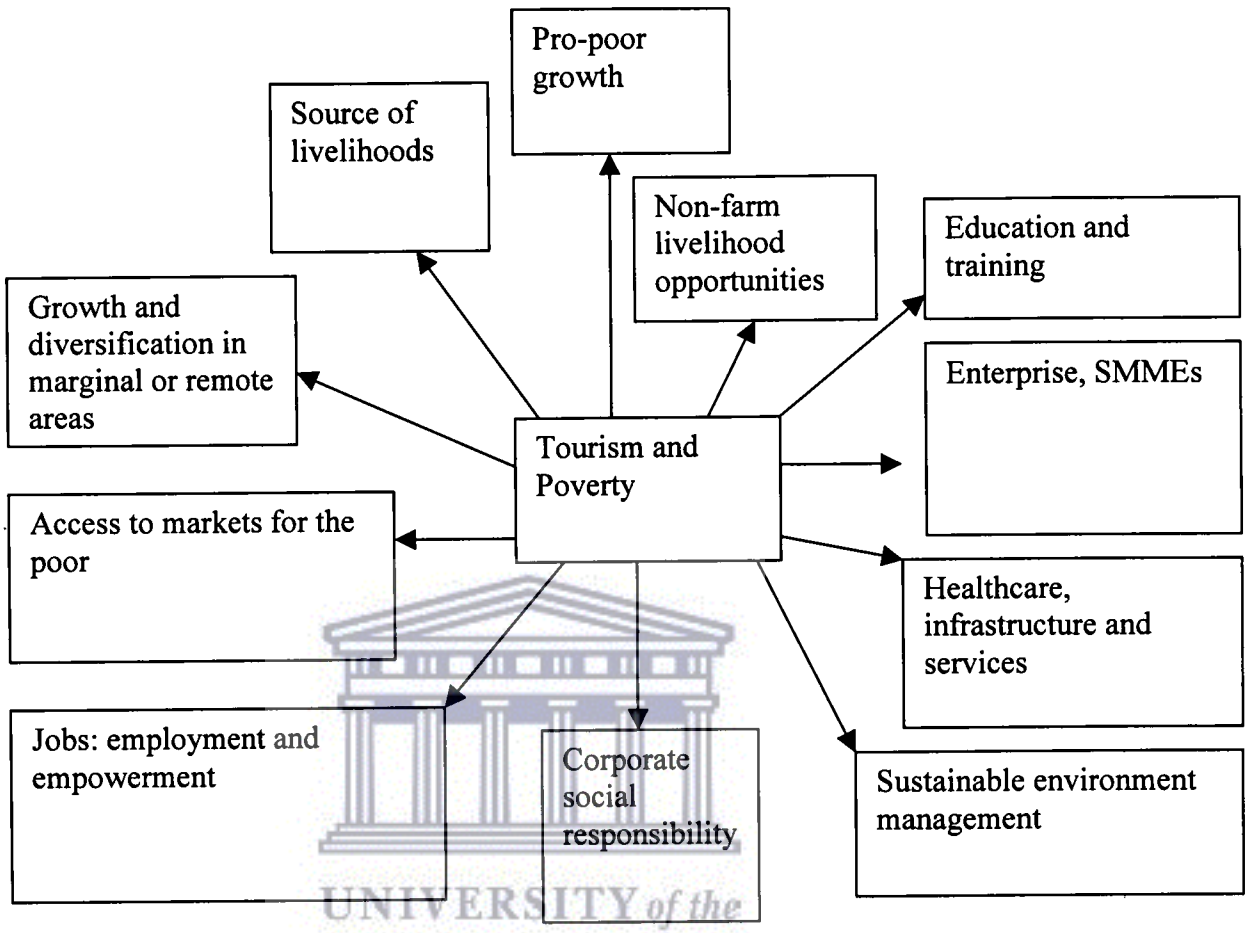
- Tourism has high-income elasticity, and therefore offers a relatively rapidly growing market. Tourism may be expected to perform better than traditional commodities, but not necessarily better than newer exports such as manufactured goods.



- Tourism can take different forms using different inputs, and is therefore available to a wide range of countries and regions within a country.

The development of tourism also contributes to poverty reduction through direct taxation and the generation of taxable economic growth. Taxes can then be used to alleviate poverty through education, health and infrastructure development (Goodwin, 2000). It is worth noting that the development of tourism also improves accessibility, recreational and leisure opportunities available for the poor themselves at the local level.

**Figure 1: Linking tourism and poverty reduction**






**Source:** Goodwin et al (2004).

The above figure elaborates the relationship between tourism and poverty reduction.

The World Tourism Organization and United Nations Environmental Program (1992) in Roe et al (1997) have gone further to summarize the potentials of tourism in the fight against poverty through the following ways (See box 2 below).

**Box. 2: Potential Benefits of Tourism in Protected areas Source WTO and UNEP (1992).**

Tourism to protected areas, when well managed, can have the following benefits:

It generates local employment, both directly in the tourism sector and in the various support and resource management sectors

It stimulates profitable domestic industries, such as hotels, restaurants, transport systems, souvenirs and handicrafts and guide services

It generates foreign exchange

It diversifies the local economy, particularly in rural areas where agricultural employment may be sporadic or insufficient

It stimulates the rural economy by creating demand for agricultural produce and injecting capital

It stimulates improvements to local transportation and communications infrastructures, which brings benefits to local people.

It encourages local government to provide extra resources to promote development in surrounding areas, particularly for those protected areas where tourism establishes the area as a showpiece for the country

It encourages productive use of hands which are marginal for agriculture enabling large tracts of land to remain covered in natural vegetation

It improves intercultural understanding and global communication

If adequately conducted, it can provide a self financing mechanism for the park authorities and consequently serve as a tool for conservation of the natural heritage

It creates recreational facilities which can be used by local communities as well as domestic and foreign visitors

It promotes conservation by convincing government officials and the general public of the importance natural areas

**Source:** WTO and UNEP (1992).

### 2.4.2. Eco-tourism in Africa

Most African governments are showing increased interest in the development of nature-based tourism in their respective countries, due to its potential as a source of growth and diversification (Chachage, 2003). There are a number of arguments that have been put forward, for nature-based tourism as a reliable tool for poverty reduction. For example, Chachage (2003) points out that barriers to entry into the international market in eco-tourism are lower than for most of external trade sectors. He explains that the tourism expenditures can provide a significant stimulus to other production and service sectors. Properly managed tourism has the potential to alleviate poverty, preserve cultural heritage, and protect natural resources, and international tourism is a relatively high growth industry.

Tourism in Africa plays a major role in the economy of most African poor countries (Broadus, 2004). In 2001, international tourism receipts accruing to developing countries amounted to US$142,036 million, and tourism was the principal export in a third of these poor countries (Broadus, 2004). Additionally, amongst the 49 least developed countries, it has been identified as the primary source of foreign exchange earnings. Nature-based tourism in Africa has been some African countries' crucial aspect of their sustainable development strategy.. A good example of an African country that ceased being an LDC in 1994 as a result of the contribution made by this sector is Botswana (Yunus, 2004). The United Nations first used the category of least developed country in 1971 to encourage the international community to recognise most LDC as structurally disadvantaged. Since 1971 only Botswana has graduated from LDC status, and

tourism played a very significant role in that process, with the annual number of international tourists increasing by more than half a million visitors between 1985 and 1998. Cape Verde, Maldives, Samoa and Vanuatu have all been considered for graduation since 1994 and in all four of them tourism has been the single most important factor explaining the socio-economic progress which would form the basis of their graduation.

Take for instance in Maldives, annual visitor arrivals tripled between 1985 and 1998. In the same period the proportion of tourism exports to gross national product (GNP) increased from 75% to 89%, making the Maldives the LDC most dependent on international tourism, followed by Samoa and Vanuatu, both with over 20%. International arrivals to other LDC grew fast between 1995 and 1998. Cape Verde, Gambia, Lao, Mali and Zambia all enjoyed growth above 20%. It is also evident that despite this tremendous increase in the number of international tourists, there are some African countries that were faced with a decline; these include Sudan, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome, Kiribati, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Central African Republic, and Burundi as a result of political instabilities characterised by war.

Tourism can contribute to development and the reduction of poverty in a number of ways. Economic benefits are generally the most important element, but there can be social, environmental and cultural. Tourism in most African countries provides employment, both skilled and unskilled labour, and diversified livelihood opportunities. This is turn provides additional income, or contributes

to a reduction in vulnerability of the poor, by increasing the range of economic opportunities available to individuals and households.

Revenue from tourism is an important economic benefit at national and local level. Taxes can provide the financial resources for the development of infrastructure, some types of attractions, and other public facilities and services. It can also provide for tourism marketing and training required for developing tourism, as well as to help finance poverty alleviation programmes by governments. In addition, tourism related tax revenues can, and do, help to finance general community and services used by all residents.

### 2.5. Regional Cases of Eco-tourism

In this section, three countries have been selected, from which the policy makers of Rwanda can draw lessons. These are countries that have been experiencing political upheavals for past couple of years, but are now under reconstruction, using, among other things, ecotourism to fight poverty and boost economic development.



#### 2.5.1. The case of Tanzania

Tanzania, like many of the least developed countries, is characterised by a large traditional rural sector and a small modern urban sector (NBS, 1999). Agriculture is the primary economic activity accounting for 50 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and approximately 80 percent of the export earnings. The tourism industry in Tanzania, especially nature-based tourism has contributed greatly to the entire economic growth and poverty reduction. The tourism industry is

mainly based on wildlife attraction and is largely concentrated in the Northern Wildlife Area (NWA), the city of Dar es Salaam, and the historic isle of Zanzibar. There has been a tremendous increase in incomes from foreign earnings, from US$95 million in 1991 to over US$500 million in 1998. This is also reflected by the increase of tourist arrivals from 190,000 to 480, 000 respectively (Wade, Mwasanga & Eagles. 2001).

The rapid increase of benefits from nature-based tourism in Tanzania has been attributed to the increase in the tourist expenditure from US$425 in 1990 to over US$1,000 per person in 1998. Ecotourism has also created employment opportunities for the people of Tanzania. Employment was 170,718 jobs, equivalent to 1.6% of the labour force; the total jobs within the tourism sector were 53,279 (Kweka, Morrissey & Blake, 2000).

Ecotourism has become a saying for Tanzania and its in this sense that the government has made it possible for nature lovers to enjoy the beautiful beaches, take wildlife photographs on safari, and visit the historic sites and wildlife sanctuaries, whilst minimising their impact on the environment.



### 2.5.2. The Case of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the African countries that have relied greatly on tourism development as one of the major economic sectors contributing to the economy.. The number of visitors in Zimbabwe has been increasing tremendously, from 268,418 in 1980 to 879,501 in 1993, an annual average growth rate of about 10 percent. Nature-based tourism has continued to attract investment, as evidenced by the construction and renovation of hotels around the country (Harrison, 2001).

Various factors have contributed to the expansion of nature-based tourism in Zimbabwe. These include the abundance of natural resources and a rich cultural and historical heritage. The industry is very conscious of this, and environment conservation plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of tourism in Zimbabwe. The attractions range from game parks and reserves to wildlife estates, which make up approximately 13 percent of the country's surface area (Zimtrade, 1995). Wildlife tourism is the mainstay of this sector of the economy but, in addition, the majestic Victoria Falls, the Great Zimbabwe national monument, the beautiful and varied scenery of the Eastern Highlands, and the Matopos make Zimbabwe one of the most spectacular tourism destinations in Africa. The mighty Zambezi River, Lake Kariba and numerous smaller dams offer a diversity of water-based sports ranging from white water rafting and cruising to canoeing and game fishing (Zimtrade, 1995). However it is faced with a number of problems like land reform, economic decline and political instability.



### 2.5.3. The case of Uganda

Uganda's tourism industry reflects the extraordinary diversity of the country: a region of many lakes, marshes, rolling plains, dense grasslands, woodlands, forests and mountainous areas. Having a variety of natural habitats, Uganda supports high biodiversity (Bukenya, 2000). In order to protect and effectively manage these invaluable resources on a sustainable basis, the Uganda government established the Uganda National Parks Authority in 1952. This organization presently manages ten gazetted national parks, which include the Kibale National Park, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Mgahinga Gorilla, Mt. Elgon, Semliki,

Rwenzori Mountain, Lake Mburo, Queen Elizabeth, Kidepo Valley and Murchison Falls which differ from each other and offer a different kinds of experiences to the visitors. It is evident that in Uganda nature-based tourism has created a lot of opportunities for Uganda as a nation.

In comparison to other sectors of Uganda's economy, nature-based tourism has been seen to be a relative source of employment opportunities. Teye (1987) tries to explain as to why the tourism industry offers more job opportunities than any other industry and relates all this to the fact that it is labour intensive and its expansion will necessitate more employees. In addition, allied improvements in the tourism infrastructure also catalyse other economic activities. Ringer (1996) estimates that over 219, 000 people in Uganda are deriving their livelihood from nature-based tourism.

Not only has nature-based tourism created employment opportunities, but it is also a major source of foreign exchange for the country's economy. Income from tourism contributes to exports and the GDP, and provides higher and more stable earnings than those from other products (Ringer, 1996). Nature-based tourism contributes greatly to the government's revenue through entry fees to game parks, value added tax to tourism services, customs and excise duty, licence fees.

In addition to the advantages attributed to nature-based tourism in Uganda, the development of infrastructure is also closely related to the tourism industry. These include hotels, restaurants, roads, airports, communication networks, power and constant supply of fresh water plus other related public utilities. The development of these structures enhances the overall development at the local

level, at the same time encourages greater economic diversification (Ringer, 1996).

Schaller (1999) argues that tourism has a large multiplier effect than any other sector in the economy simply because every unit of tourist expenditure goes through several rounds of income creation and expenditure before its effect is exhausted. He goes on to elaborate by giving an example that money spent by a tourist on hotel accommodation, food and beverages, shopping, entertainment, and transportation provides income to the hotel staff, taxi operator, suppliers of goods and services and shopkeepers. As a result, money accruing from tourism circulates through segments of the economy through the multiplier process.

Moore and Carter (1993) have described tourism as a major promoter of international goodwill and understanding. At the same time, it is a prime means of developing social and cultural understanding at the local level. In Uganda, therefore foreign visitors coming to enjoy the large diversity of the nature-based tourism are considered the best ambassadors of their respective countries. Ecotourism in Uganda has contributed significantly to international commerce and good relation among countries especially with the neighbouring East and Central African countries. Eagles (1997) has noted that tourism development may serve as an important vehicle for promoting economic advancement to less developed areas that are not endowed with alternative resources. In this regard, such developments play an important part in redressing regional development and income distribution imbalances (Sanchez, 1998).

Eagles (1997) considers that tourism is a vital medium for widening the scope of human interests and for contributing positively to the nurturing and exploration of cultural heritage of nations. At the local level, domestic tourism in Uganda has created an understanding and appreciation of the attractions, which has resulted in sustainable tourism development (Eagles, 1997). The use of local resources and expertise in Uganda has translated into environmentally sensitive patterns of resource use and local participation in the ecotourism industry (Pigram, 1980).

In general, not only has ecotourism in the three countries mentioned above been successful, but it has been associated with a number of challenges, as Ankomah and Crompton, (1990) have identified. These challenges among them include lack of trained personnel in the field of ecotourism, weak institutional frameworks for planning and management, prevalence of political instability in the region, and lack of foreign exchange for capital development.



**2.6. Conclusion**

It is necessary that the Government of Rwanda, together with other stakeholders, to develop similar strategies as the above mentioned countries or pay immediate attention to matters that relate to tourism and development. Due to the abundance of natural resources, ecotourism as a strategy has been embarked on as well. Even though the government has decided to diversify the economy to include ecotourism in the development strategies, much attention is still needed to maximise the opportunities in this industry concerning its sustainability. Therefore, detailed information on the ecotourism industry in Rwanda, its potentials, and its challenges will be discussed in the next chapter (chapter 3).

# CHAPTER 3- CASE STUDY OF POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES OF ECO-TOURISM IN RWANDA

## 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to explore opportunities presented and challenges faced by ecotourism in its role of contributing to the reconstruction of post-war Rwanda. The objective of this chapter is to try and link the previous chapters dealing with the general introduction of Rwanda, the problem statement, major aim and objectives of the study (Chapter 1); the literature review on the poverty situation in Rwanda and ecotourism as one of the strategies for poverty reduction in African countries (Chapter 2). The present chapter presents a case study of ecotourism in Rwanda, through the example of Volcanoes National Park. The case study mainly deals with stakeholders within the ecotourism industry in Rwanda, as well as with the relationship of ecotourism destinations with the surrounding communities, including ways of dealing with revenue sharing.



This chapter is comprised of five main sections, the introduction and background information of the Volcanoes National Park, the list of stakeholders and their contribution to conservation of the park, details of the communities surrounding the park and their relationship with the park, the potentials and challenges of the ecotourism sector in Rwanda plus the conclusion.

## 3.2. CASE STUDY: VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK.

### 3.2.1. Background information

Volcanoes National Park is situated in North-western Rwanda, bordering Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. It was established in 1929 as part of the Albert National Park in the Belgian Congo, which included the entire Volcanoes area. It became the Volcanoes National Park in 1960, following the independence of Rwanda from the Belgian rule. The park, which is 160 square kilometres, is close to the Mikeno sector of Parc National des Virunga in DR. Congo (250 square kilometres) and Mgahinga Gorilla national park in Uganda. Five volcanoes mark the park boundary with Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, and are from East to West: Karisimbi; Visoke; Sabyinyo; Mgahinga and Muhabura. All these volcanoes belong to the Virunga chain, forming part of the watershed between the Nile and Congo River systems (Vedder and Weber, 1990).



Volcanoes National Park is known as the home of the rare mountain gorilla (*gorilla-gorilla berengei*) (Rwanda Tourism, 2004). The park is part of the Virunga conservation area, which covers Rwanda, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo. It is approximately two hours' drive from the capital Kigali. The road from the capital is tarmac up to the town of Ruhengeri where the park's office is located. An all-weather road sets off from the centre of the town of Ruhengeri to the slopes of the Volcanoes where guided tours to the gorillas start. The roads are good enough for accessibility though there are some small parts that need immediate attention from the policy makers.

Volcanoes National Park and the surrounding areas are the most fertile regions of the country thereby favouring the easy multiplication of both plant and animal species (IGCP, 2002). Most of the food consumed in the entire country is produced in the same northern region where the park is located. This is as a result of the alluvial fertile volcanic soils favourable for agricultural production. Over the last few years, this park has been faced by encroachment from the communities living nearby the park, who are attracted to the fertile soils (Morland, 1994). Not only is this park fertile, but also has favourable rain distribution.

Being a mountainous area, the Volcanoes National Park has afro-montane vegetation and a cool climate compared to other parts of Rwanda that are not hilly (Behn, 2002). The ecosystem is composed of four major vegetation zones: bamboo (base altitude), hagenia and hypericum forest (2600-3300 m), sub-alpine (3300-4000m), and afro-alpine vegetation (4000m and beyond) (Great Lake Safaris, 2003). The dominant flora in the park is the bamboo, covering almost 60% of the vegetation and is very palatable to the mountain gorillas. The other types of flora that are favoured by the climate in this park include the *lobelia* and *haegenia* plant species that form part of the tourist attraction (Great Lakes Safari, 2003).

The Volcanoes National Park is home to 185 species of birds, 245 species of plants, including 17 dominant ones of which 13 are internationally protected orchidaceas, 115 species of mammals, 27 species of reptiles, and amphibians and 33 species of invertebrates (Weber, 1987). Volcanoes National Park experiences

two rainy seasons, February-May and September-December year. The greatest amount of rainfall is received in October totalling to 250mm and the minimum is received in the month of July amounting to 10mm.

As mentioned earlier, the park is dominated by the mountain gorillas, which are a major attraction. However, there are also other fauna that exist. These include buffalos, elephants, bushbucks, golden monkeys(Rwanda Tourism, 2004).

**Figure 2: Map of Greater Horn of Africa showing location of Rwanda**
**Source:** Africa data dissemination, 2004

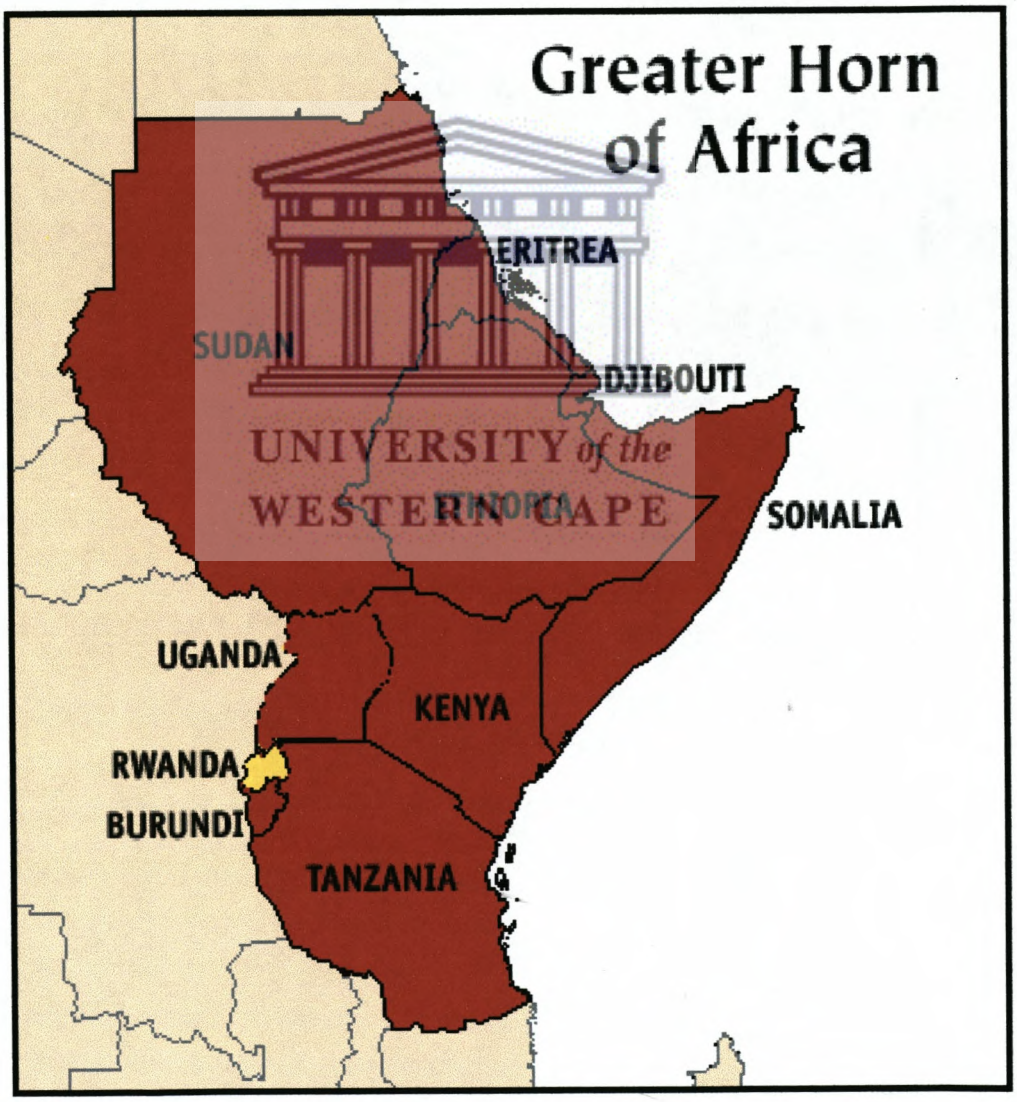
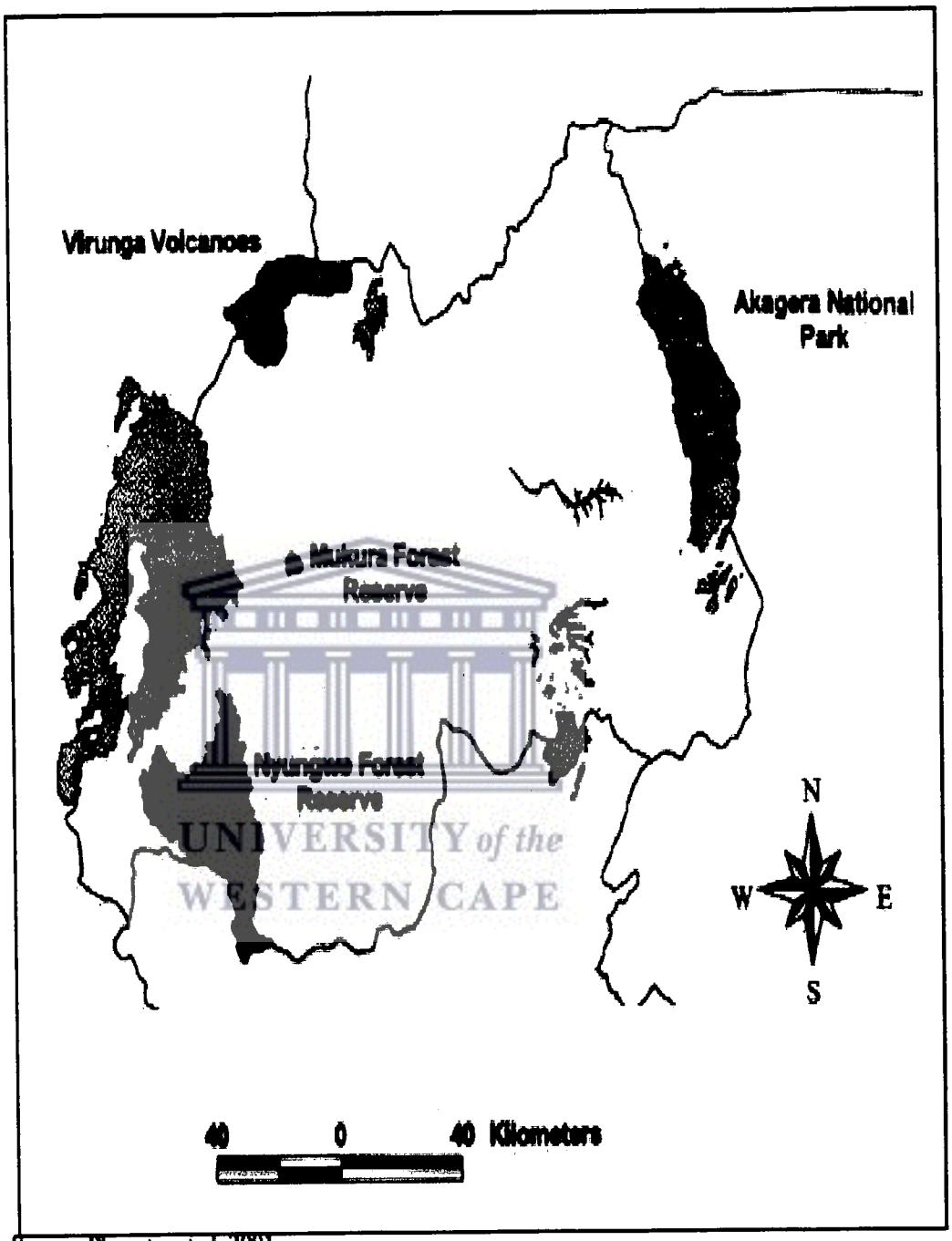


**Figure 3: Map of Rwanda showing the location of Volcanoes National Park**




Source: Plumptre et al. 2001

## 3.3. STAKEHOLDERS IN VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

In order for ecotourism to fulfil its promise of contributing to poverty alleviation, a range of stakeholders should be involved. These range from government and non-government agencies to communities and individuals living near the areas of tourist attractions. Table 1 below presents an analysis of stakeholders involved in ecotourism in Volcanoes National Park. It also shows the extent to which these stakeholders are involved and their contributions toward the conservation of this National Park. These stakeholders use a range of resources identified below to achieve all these development goals. This is a very important contribution to the Rwandan Office of tourism and National Parks, in the sense that this office is relieved of expenses that are catered for by the different stakeholders.

**Table 1. Stakeholders in Volcanoes National Park**

| Name of stakeholders | Resource they have to offer | Type of participation in development program |
|---|---|---|
| Office Rwandais du Tourisme et Parcs Nationaux (ORTPN) or the Rwanda Office of Tourism and National Parks | Local level, expertise, financial resources and local level office. | Links all relevant actors and in terms of tourism development, research, taking care of all monuments and implementation of biodiversity conventions and agreements |
| Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (MINICOM) | Senior level expertise | Management of national tourist sites, including game parks and administer programs to enhance balanced and sustainable growth of domestic industry including agro-industry, mining and tourism |
| Ministry of Agriculture, Animal resources and Forestry (MINAGRI) | Expertise and funds | Develop and manage ecologically suitable national forestry |
| Ministry of Energy, water and Natural Resources (MINIRENA) | Local level expertise and logistical facilities such as vehicles, bicycles. | Local level development planning, and environmental awareness programs on how to manage natural resources and water. |
| Ministry of land, Human Settlement and Environmental Protection (MINITERE). | Senior level expertise | Provide information on land use plus ways to make this land sustainable |
| Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) | Manpower, finance and local information | Policies on government decentralisation and provide information to the population on their rights |
| Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) | Funds, and economic strategies to follow | Making national and sectoral developmental plans and programs. It also develops, oversees, and co-ordinates programs of external support |
| Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGF-I) | Senior level researchers, finance | Long-term research data collection on gorillas and eco-tourism development. |
| International Gorilla conservation programme (IGCP) | Training officers and finance | Help Rwanda Tourism Office financially in training and with technical advise |
| Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund Europe (DFGF-E) | Expertise and funds | Support financially community conservation activities |
| Mountain Gorilla Veterinary project (MGVP) | Veterinary doctors and researchers | Ensure the existence of the gorillas through treating and protecting them from infections |

## 3.4. COMMUNITIES NEIGHBOURINGVOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

The area surrounding all the afromontane and medium altitude forests of Rwanda are densely populated with a countrywide per capita rural population density of approximately 300 people per square kilometre (RIPA, 2002). There are a number of factors contributing to this; among the main ones is the presence of rich volcanic soils. In this particular case study area, references collected from the Rwandan Office of Tourism indicate that the population density of people living around is much higher in comparison to other forested areas. This population exceeds 400 people per square kilometre.

The total population around the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda is 134,000 people with an average regional population growth rate of 3 percent. The dominant population living around this park is comprised of poor people who depend largely on agriculture as a source of income and hunting as a supplement their livelihood (Briggs, 2004). The villages adjacent to this park are Kidaho, Kinigi and Nkumba.



Rwanda's earliest known inhabitants the Ba'Twa Pygmies, the third and smallest ethnic group who make up approximately 1% of the population. They inhabited the Volcanoes National Park. Originally they settled in the forest and mountain regions where they lived as hunter gathers, taking from the forest only that which they needed to survive (Briggs, 2004). By the 11th century Hutu farmers had migrated to the area, followed later in the 14th and 15th centuries by the Tutsis, and gradually the Ba'Twa were displaced as so many indigenous peoples have been throughout history. The struggle to establish their land rights and preserve

their culture is one which continues today as the Ba'twa fight for recognition and protection (Briggs, 2004). They are currently living in different parts of the country as beggars and workers for well to do people. An estimated 30,000 Ba'Twa live in Rwanda today, half of which live in the area around the Volcanoes National Park.

Many people in these communities access the park to compliment their food and livelihood production strategies because there is no buffer zone between the local communities and the park's resource base (IGCP, 1996 and Waller, 1996).

The Rwanda Office of Tourism certifies that the protected area authorities around the Volcanoes National Park, argue that the existence of this park has had more of a positive impact on the lives of the local communities. For example local communities rely on and exploit the protected area's resources for water, bamboo, animals, wood for fuel and construction, plants for food and medicinal purposes, as well as bee-keeping for commercialised honey.



The relationship between Volcanoes National Park and the local communities is a key factor in the long-term conservation of the park habitat, particularly its flora and fauna. In many cases, the relationship has been more of a conflict than one of support or collaboration. Local communities around the Volcanoes National Park perceive the protected area as a burden on their land use. Conservationists view the rapidly growing population of the local people and their basic needs as a major threat to the conservation of this protected area. Therefore, this attitude must be changed together with willingness to engage with the issues to try and find solutions if protected areas are to be sustained (Briggs, 2004).

Information obtained from the Ministry of Land, Resettlement and Environment in 2003, clarifies that a large number of development and conservation projects around the world, including places such as the Volcanoes National Park, are trying to transform this conflict into cooperation. However, this has proved difficult simply because of the high illiteracy and conflict between long-established and new approaches to the problem.

People living around Volcanoes National Park have subsistence needs that are in direct opposition to the needs and management of the park. Currently in Rwanda, not much attention is paid to the process of involving local people in decision-making and park management. It is, therefore, of great importance to involve the local communities in the decision making of any protected area, if sustainability of that particular area is to be achieved. It is in this context that Plumptre et al (2001) emphasized that in order to ensure long-term conservation of protected areas, local communities in the periphery have to be directly empowered.



## 3.5. POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES OF ECOTOURISM IN RWANDA

### 3.5.1. Potentials

Ecotourism, as one of the fastest growing industries in the World, has been seen as a source of potential revenue to help public sector subsidies to manage conservation and at the same time replace declining economic activities such as forestry (WTO, 2003). Ecotourism in Rwanda has in this sense favoured the existence of forests, especially the montane forests that are under threat in the country. It is through the government's awareness programs, and having realised a great potential in ecotourism as being a reliable source of revenue, that it has

embarked on the development of the ecotourism sector. The quality of the environment, both natural and man-made, is essential to tourism growth.

In the case of Rwanda today, the ecotourism industry has contributed to environmental protection and conservation (Morland, 1994). It is one of the ways to raise awareness of environmental values and it can serve as a tool to finance protection of natural areas and increase their economic importance. The more people become aware of the usefulness of the environment, the more the chances of achieving sustainable ecotourism development (Kanyamibwa, 1998).

The rapid expansion of the ecotourism industry in Rwanda has led to significant employment creation of both skilled and unskilled labour in Rwanda (MINECOFIN, 2002a). Indirectly, the development of the ecotourism sector has necessitated the establishment of and renovation of services like hotels, restaurants, night clubs, taxis, camping sites, lodges, and souvenir sales. Through the supply of goods and services needed by tourism, related businesses have also been established which offer long-term and short term employment to a majority of Rwandans.



Other revenue earned from the development of ecotourism in the Volcanoes National Park is through local vendors, informal guides, and rickshaw drivers. The Ministry of Finance notes that the positive part of this indirect employment in Rwanda is that the money earned is directly returned to the local economy, and has had a great multiplier effect as it is spent over and over again (MINECOFIN, 2002a). The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that tourism generates an indirect contribution equal to 100% of direct tourism expenditures worldwide

through many tourism related activities. For instance, if a tourist visits a particular destination, he will end up spending money on accommodation, food, transport and other recreational activities from the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Ecotourism development in Volcanoes National Park has been of value, as it has created both skilled and unskilled job opportunities. With this creation of jobs, the local peoples income levels increased, thus they have more to spend, which leads to more economic activity within the area (MINECOFIN, 2002b). This may occur on a regional basis whereby ecotourists, as they arrive in a country, tend to spend a few days in the capitals. As they move to the countryside, there are a number of hotels, restaurants and other shops that benefit from the consumption from these tourists.

The most frequently mentioned benefit from the Volcanoes National Park is the boom in the hotel industry as a result of the thriving ecotourism in the area. It is in this context that new hotels have been constructed recently to respond to the pressures of the increase of visitors into the park. An outstanding example of the benefit mentioned is the people living by the roadsides that lead to the protected area have directly benefited from the visitors. On the way to Volcanoes National Park, there is a newly renovated guesthouse, Kinigi, and camping sites that have expanded as a result of the influx of the ecotourists (RIPA, 2002).

Ecotourism in places like the Volcanoes National Park has potentially increased public appreciation of the environment and spread awareness of the environmental problems by bringing people into closer contact with nature and the environment.

This blend has heightened awareness of the value of nature and led to environmentally conscious behaviour that has preserved, conserved and restored the biological diversity that have led to sustained use of natural resources (IGCP, 1996).

Despite the period of political upheaval in the Volcanoes National Park in northwestern Rwanda, there has been the establishment of the gorilla trekking permits, which are currently being sold at US$250. The estimated number of habituated gorillas to human visitors are 38, subdivided into three groups. These tourism funds have contributed to local and national development. The presence of such a valuable ecotourism source of revenue in the fragile afro-montane forests ensures that these critical habitats are protected, thus fulfilling their valuable ecological function including local climate regulation, water catchments, and natural resources for local communities (Plumptre et al, 2001).

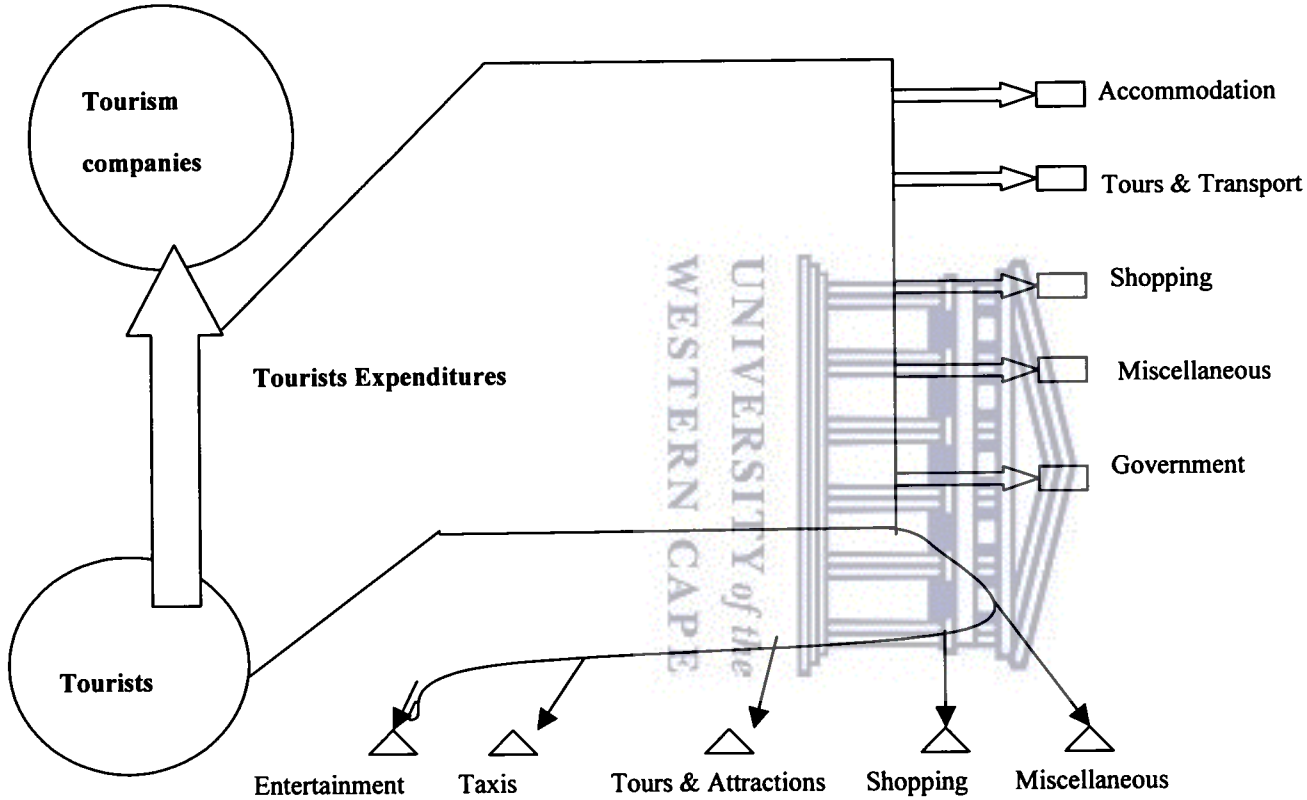


The development of the ecotourism industry in Rwanda has increased government revenue directly and indirectly. Directly, revenues have been generated by levying taxes on incomes from tourism employment and tourism businesses and on tourists from departure taxes. Indirect contributions are those originating from taxes and duties on goods and services supplied to tourists.

Tourism is labour intensive in the sense that people serve in the various sub-sectors of the industry. These include tour guiding, nature and cultural interpretation, game viewing, travel and transport services, promotion and sport. In addition, entertainment, arts and handcraft curios offer other tourism related employment is in entertainment, the arts and handcrafted curios.

Also, infrastructure development such as road construction and hotel construction may provide many short-term jobs. Tourism supports other areas such as money and banking. It may also be mentioned that tourism attracts a number of activities in the informal sector. These include male and female prostitution, begging, hawking of various merchandise and professional friendships.

**Figure 4: Summary of the different ways through which tourism can be potential directly or indirectly.**




Metropolitan (mixed) Tourist industry

Periphery dominant Capitalist tourist industry sectors

Periphery marginal tourist industry sectors

**Source**:Brohman,1996

The following table elaborates the changes in tourist arrivals in the Volcanoes National Park from 1994 to 2003. Source: ORTPN, 2003.

**Table 2: Tourist numbers, revenues and respective years from Volcanoes National Park**

| Years | Volcano National Park | Revenue Us $ |
|---|---|---|
| 1994 | 61 | 10475 |
| 1995 | 1663 | 430542 |
| 1996 | 2653 | 346164 |
| 1997 | 1192 | 149145 |
| 1998 | 0 | 0 |
| 1999 | 417 | 87333 |
| 2000 | 1313 | 281693 |
| 2001 | 2155 | 233176 |
| 2002 | 5575 | 1,024,137 |
| 2003 | 7305 | 1,377,028 |

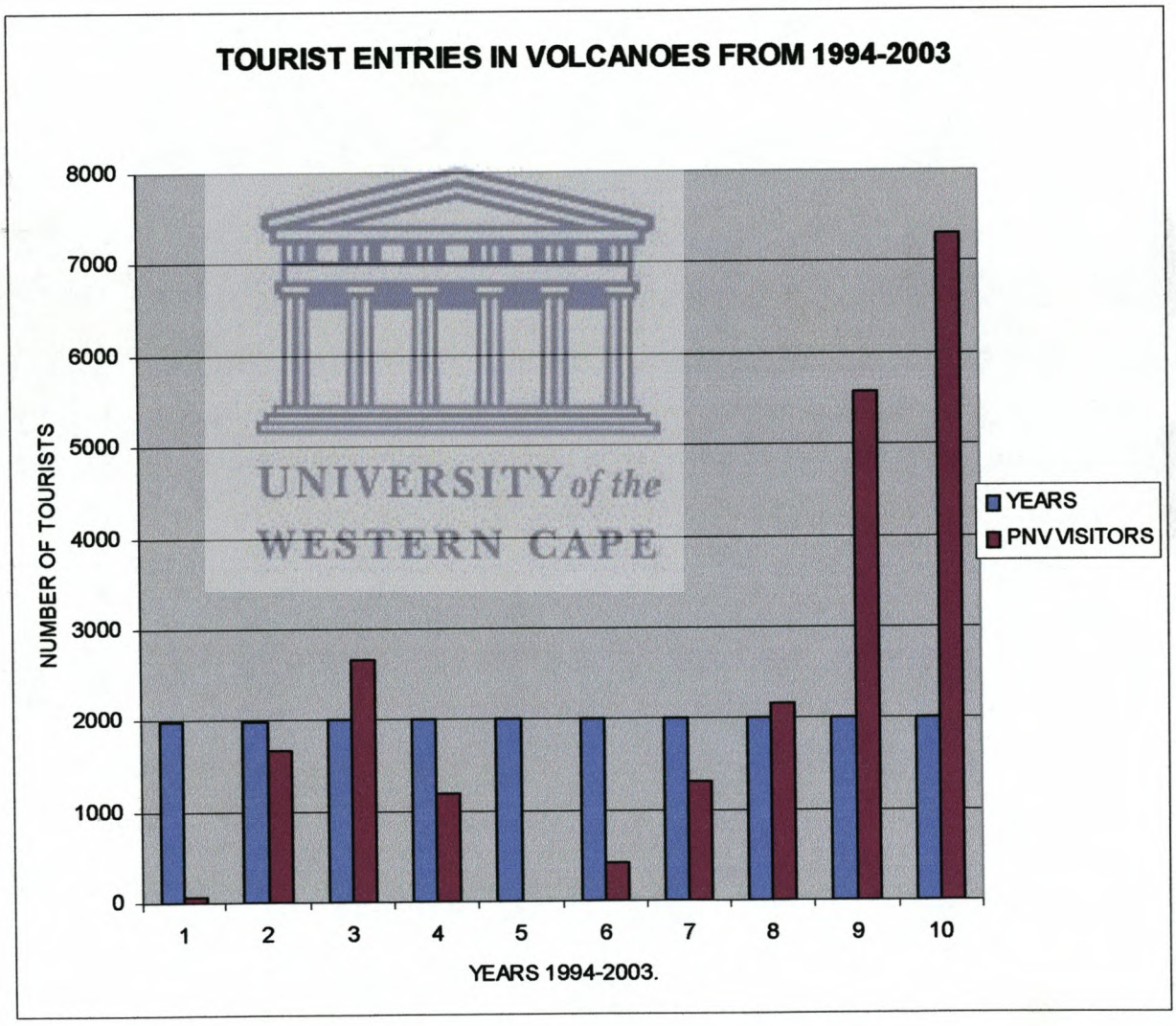


Note: Rates of the dollars, 1995 FRW 120 =1US$, 1996 - 1998; FRW 300 = 1US$, 1999 – 2001; FRW 400 = 1US$, 2001 – 2002; FRW 470 = 500 1US$, 2002 – 2003; FRW 540 = 600 1US$.

NB. The above table reveals the impact of tourists on ecotourism. The decline is between 1997 and 1998. It is evidenced that the numbers have since 1999 been increasing at a stable rate.

Graphically the tourist entries in the Volcanoes National Park from 1994 – 2003, can be presented as follows:

**Figure 5. Tourist entries in Volcanoes National Park from 1994-2003.**




**PNV-** Volcanoes National Park **Source:** Rwanda Office of Tourism, 2004.

As may be seen from figure 3, during the period from 1994 to 1998, there was a fluctuation in the tourist numbers because of the war around the national park that affected the tourist arrivals. It is only after 1998, after the restoration of security that tourist numbers began increasing at a stable pace. The number of tourists to Rwanda is expected to increase only if the situation continues to be conducive.

### 3.5.2. Challenges facing ecotourism

The consequences of the last Rwandan war, on wildlife and the environment, have not been well reported. Most of reports understandably have focussed only on human suffering (Gatarabirwa et al 1996). However, important losses have been registered in Rwanda in terms of the environment and wildlife, and the consequences will be felt over a long period of time in the entire country. Kalpers and Lanjouw 1999; Biswas et al. 1994; Henquin and Blondel, 1996 have noted that the challenges faced by ecotourism in Rwanda have been described in different reports and articles. The Rwandan civil war, like in so many other African countries that have been affected by war, has had an effect on all spheres of the economy, be it political, infrastructure, social, or environmental of which ecotourism is one. Masozera (2004) indicates that Rwanda is facing yet a number of challenges as barriers to development. Being a nature conservator of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Rwanda, he points out that political instability and conflicts among most of the African countries, result in poverty, which pushes people to be dependent on natural resources

Languy (1995) identifies deforestation as one of the challenges Rwanda is facing, in its effort to develop the underlying potential in ecotourism, as the effect of

deforestation. This factor was noticed in the Volcanoes National Park especially when the refugees from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo fled to refugee camps that shared borders with the park. The deforestation around the camps was driven by the refugees' need for cooking fuel and construction material, as well as the commercial demand for charcoal and timber in the neighbouring town of Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Languy, 1995). Within a period of two years, 105 sq Km of the park was destroyed (Henquin and Blonde 1996).

The big challenge that ecotourism is facing lately is the human pressure in Rwanda as an effect of the high population (MINECOFIN, 2002c). High population growth rate and density, which characterises the country in the whole continent that is combined with poor agricultural practices and poor infrastructure. The rapid population growth in the area puts the park and the management at risk as a serious challenge to balance the two factors; the park and growing population such that this population causes more pressure on both renewable and non-renewable resources.

As indicated by Weber (1987a; 1989; Olson et al., 1995), the country has the highest population density in Africa because of the high soil fertility, due to rich volcanic soils. The outcome of this major problem on the environment is the destruction of wildlife, the destruction of habitats, the pollution of rivers and aquatic ecosystems, and the fragmentation of parks and reserves. Death of local environmentalists and conservationists due to the civil war and ethnic differences that resulted in genocide have left the country with no skilled people in the field

of environmentally related activities. As well, research and conservation in general has been interrupted (The New Zealand Gerald, 2004).

The US Department (2004) stresses that one of the challenges that the Rwandan government has faced in its effort to develop ecotourism is the fact that Rwanda is not open to the sea (Landlocked). This factor has made transport very costly. At the same time, it has affected import and export goods of which ecotourism lies as a potential foreign exchange earner. In relation to this is the poor infrastructure such as hotels, inaccessible roads, poor communication network like mobiles phones that cannot be used in places far from these protected areas, power blackouts and inadequate supply of water. These should link Rwanda to the neighbouring countries of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

Conservation efforts in Volcanoes National Park have historically faced a variety of problems. As in many protected areas throughout the world, obstacles to the conservation of the Volcanoes National Park largely derive from the conflicts of interest over land use specifically the desire on the part of local community members to utilise the park resources, as they may have been doing traditionally. The management problems and challenges of the park include poaching, deforestation for timber encroachment of the local communities, mining of gold and other minerals, illegal forest product removal, lack of trained personnel, poor equipment and infrastructure, hostility of the local community to the park, and lack of sufficient ecological knowledge to facilitate conservation management. The majority of other illegal activities have been brought under control through law enforcement though all of these can be classified as major challenges for the

entire country to achieve conservation goals (Kanyamibwa, 2002). All these can be addressed fully through an analysis of the relationship that exists between the park and its neighbouring communities

Policies and practices of the national park have also fostered conservation conflicts. Local people have historically been excluded from the decision making concerning planning and management of protected areas. This has contributed to damage and illegal activities like hunting bush burning, thus increasing the park costs and reducing effective conservation. In addition local people incur high conservation costs in the form of loss of access to resources, but receive no direct substantial benefits from the establishment of the park. This situation therefore puts at risk the security and existence of the parks Lanjouw et al (2004).

## 3.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the case study area, Volcanoes National Park, the background, and the different development stakeholders in sustaining this natural resource. The communities surrounding the national park have been mentioned as well because they play a vital role in the ecotourism development. Lastly, the potentials and challenges of Volcanoes National Park have been highlighted. In conclusion, it has been found that there is potential in the ecotourism industry in Rwanda that has not been fully utilized. Therefore the government and other policy makers should embark on the development of this sector. More especially, it is evident from chapter 2 that in some African countries there has been success in poverty alleviation through ways like creation of employment, development of

infrastructure like hotels, roads, and communication facilities, and the creation of environmental awareness.

# CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this thesis was to explore opportunities presented and challenges faced by ecotourism in its role of contributing to the reconstruction of post-war Rwanda (See section 1.2, Chapter 1). The main goal of government has been to alleviate poverty that was accelerated by the civil war of 1990 to 1993, the genocide of 1994, and further ethnic differences in Rwanda. Through a review of government's key policies on poverty alleviation and of the literature on ecotourism, this thesis sought to explore possibilities for the exploitation of Rwanda's natural beauty in fighting poverty. The main approach used in this study was the review of literature on ecotourism and poverty alleviation, exploring how the two elements are related. The example of Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, an area popular to tourists for gorilla trekking, was used.



Following the introductory chapter, which presented the overall aim and objectives of the study, Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature on poverty, reconstruction efforts, and ecotourism potential in poor African countries like Rwanda. Chapter 3 presented the case study of ecotourism efforts in Rwanda, particularly the case of Volcanoes National Park, and dealt with potentials and challenges of ecotourism. This chapter presents the conclusion to this study, covering key issues that emerged from the review of the government's policies on poverty alleviation, as well as ecotourism as an economic strategy for poverty alleviation.

## 4.2. POVERTY AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

The Rwandan government has addressed poverty reduction and improvement of peoples' livelihoods with strategies, policies and programmes, which they consider to be well designed. Evidence from the review of literature indicates that poverty is still far from being eradicated in Rwanda, and this is especially so in rural areas. Among the broader strategy to address post-war poverty are good governance, introduction of new technologies, development and improvement of services, improvement of manufacturing and mining industries, human resource development, promotion of the private sector and joining the regional and international economic strategies and bodies. Detailed information on these issues was covered in Chapter 2. All these long-term goals have been outlined in government document referred to as the 2020 Vision. It is my view, therefore, that ecotourism, while facing challenges, offers some chance of success in poverty alleviation.



## 4.3. ECOTOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

In this thesis, ecotourism was discussed as one of the major tools for poverty alleviation. This was done through examining ecotourism in some African countries that have been hit by poverty in the same way as Rwanda. As noted by Jaura (2004), ecotourism has been used by many countries for pro-poor growth. My view, however, is that although ecotourism can help in poverty alleviation, development strategies should not rely solely on nature-based tourism. This

dependence at times is not predictable because there are factors that are not easily influenced by man. These include environmental factors and weather changes.

After analyzing the above debates on the role of ecotourism in poverty alleviation, the case of Volcanoes National Park helped to highlight some of the issues that are positive or negative about the role of ecotourism in poverty alleviation. This park has unique flora and fauna that is not in existence in other neighbouring countries in the region, and has the most outstanding mountain gorillas living in the chain of the Volcanic Mountain. This alone presents an amazing opportunity for Rwanda, in terms of competing with its neighbours for foreign tourists. The immediate spin-offs include the employment of local people in the tourism ventures in the park. However, all these positives can easily turn into negatives, as shown in the case study, when opportunities in the park help to attract large numbers of poor people to its neighbourhood. Given that not all these people can be employed in the park, the impact on the natural environment surrounding the park, as a result of resource utilization and farming for livelihoods proves negative for ecotourism. Additionally, the very existence of the park represents conflict, as people are often displaced during the creation of many national parks globally. In addition, the fact that real profits often go to already rich tour operators, rather than to the poorest of the poor, then you have a real challenge.

## 4.4. CHALLENGES OF ECOTOURISM IN RWANDA

While ecotourism has been largely discussed in this study as a strategy for poverty alleviation, there are still lots of challenges that the government of Rwanda is facing. Firstly, the existing insecurity in some parts of the country, that brings

continued social instability, present a major challenge for ecotourism efforts in Rwanda. This is such a big challenge such that some foreigners are still afraid of visiting the country thinking that the situation is still the same as in 1994. Therefore, the government of Rwanda should focus its effort on improving the image of the country through proper advertising and marketing. The second challenge that Rwanda is facing is the level of poverty in the country. This factor has affected many aspects of the economy like education system, human resource and ecotourism. It also affects the marketing strategy because there are no sufficient funds to promote this sector. In fact the government has put more emphasis and priority on other sectors that need immediate attention at the expense of environmental awareness, which is important if local people are to contribute in promoting ecotourism. The third challenge is that Rwanda's ecotourism sector is currently faced with the problem of high population growth that is encroaching on the natural habitats, particularly in search for better livelihood opportunities. As mentioned earlier, protected areas become easy targets for poor people to derive livelihoods. With weak security and continued poverty, Rwanda is not in a strong position to protect its ecotourism resources, leaving many questions to the long-term future of this poverty alleviation strategy.



## 4.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to draw out major observations that have been drawn from the literature and the study at large, regarding the role ecotourism in the reconstruction of post war Rwanda and as a tool for poverty alleviation. I conclude that while ecotourism may have potential, this cannot be successful

without direct government intervention and the direct involvement of the local communities. As a final word, I wish to concur with MINECOFIN (2002d), who argues that the provision of security and direct community involvement are very vital in sustainable ecotourism development.

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