

Context Analysis of GVTCTSP Theory of Change

1 The Statement of the Problem

The Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL) is part of the Central Albertine Rift (CAR) that covers the Eastern part of DRC, the Northern part of Rwanda and the Western part of Uganda. This area has been categorised by IUCN as a high biodiversity hotspot and ranked amongst the highest priority for conservation in Africa.¹ The main challenges of conservation in GVL are summed up in the following problem statement: “Biodiversity conservation and PA management in the Greater Virunga landscape is hindered by weak coordination and collaboration between the countries (including the lack of harmonized policies, practices, and priorities), inadequate information and information management, high dependency by the surrounding communities on PA resources that leads to resource degradation, extractive industries, and political instability”

2 Analysis of the Problem

2.1 Weak coordination and collaboration between the countries (including the lack of harmonized policies, practices, and priorities)

Formal biodiversity conservation in the Albertine Rift began in the early 1900s, although prior to then certain tribal groups practiced traditional forms of conservation (Seimon. A and A.J. Plumptre, 2012). The colonial leaders of the region introduced national parks and reserves approach of biodiversity conservation in the region with the first and oldest park in Africa, Virunga National Park, being established in the Albertine Rift in the current Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1925. Other protected areas were formed in Uganda and Rwanda in the early 1930's.

¹ The Albertine Rift is one of the most important locations for the conservation of Africa's biodiversity, home to the continent's richest total vertebrate species with more than 50% of Africa's birds, 39% of mammals, 19% of amphibians and 14% of reptiles (Plumptre et al. 2007). It contains more endemic and threatened vertebrate species than any other region on mainland Africa, including the mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*), the golden monkey (*Cercopithecus kandti*), 42 species of birds, and many reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates..

Despite the Albertine Rift chain of protected areas being contiguous with one another, they were put under the management of the protected area authorities of each Country in colonial times up to now. In Uganda, the National Forest Authority (NFA) has the legal mandate of Forest reserves, the Uganda Wildlife authority (UWA) has the legal mandate over the National parks and game reserves and National Environmental Authority (NEMA) has the overall legal coordination mandate (Smith.H, 2010). Neither UWA nor NFA has the legal mandate to manage the Lakes and mineral deposits that fall within their areas of jurisdiction. The two authorities however fall under two separate ministries, with UWA being under the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Antiquities and NFA under the Ministry of Water and Environment. A similar parallel structure appears in Rwanda. In DRC, ICCN is legally mandated to manage National parks Forests and together with the lakes but has no mandate of the mineral resources within its area of jurisdiction. However the Forest concession licenses are issued by the Permanent Secretary of the Sustainable Development and Environment Department.

The National agencies responsible for PA management in all the 3 countries have limited budgetary support from the governments. Although sufficient policy and legal framework exists in Uganda and Rwanda, enforcement and compliance are weak due to lack of capacity in human resource and equipment resulting from budgetary constraints. In DRC, due to long term political instability, both policy and legal framework is not sufficient and the capacity to develop it is also limited by budgetary constraints.

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both national and international, also promote conservation in these countries by supporting these protected area authorities or by working with local authorities and community groups. NGO activities, however, are not well coordinated leading to duplication and replication of efforts in some cases.

Transboundary natural resource management is further threatened by wildlife crime. Illegal trade in timber, charcoal and wildlife products in the Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL) has been and continues in the 3 countries. The policy and legislative framework in DRC, Rwanda and

Uganda in addressing illegal trade in forestry products and other wildlife trade are to a great extent sufficiently provided for in the various laws. The main challenge lies in the enforcement of these policies and laws. Among the factors limiting implementation at respective national level are political meddling, limited institutional capacity, lack of practical knowledge of environmental laws within law enforcement agencies, and poor detection of offences (Kamugisha, 2007; IES, 2008; Stiles, 2011; Kiteka and Kimanuka, 2012).

Furthermore, procurement policies and procedures do not specifically exclude supply and use of illegal timber and other wildlife products. These policies don't even emphasize legality issues of these products including supplies from another country.

The Government Institutions at National level are not well coordinated in fighting wildlife crime and in some cases the laws of one department may contradict one another.

Another cause exacerbating forest destruction, habitat and species loss in the region is the demand and the supply of charcoal within the GVL that was estimated to be approximately over 800,000 tons in 2012 (Mapesa, M. et al 2013). This is because the charcoal remains the major energy source that is readily available and affordable by the majority of people in urban areas in the GVL region.

Over the last 20 years, the central part of the Albertine Rift, particularly the shared borders of eastern DRC and western Uganda and Rwanda, has been marked by civil war, genocides, and mass refugee movements. Violent conflict is both a concern and a genuine threat for conservation in many parts of the Albertine Rift. On-going armed conflicts between militia groups pose direct threats to personnel and resources. Refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDP) and demobilized troops often turn to the unsettled lands and resources of protected areas, intensifying wildlife crime. Suspicion between governments for supporting counter militia groups affects negatively collaboration and coordination efforts for conservation of biodiversity (Hamill, A, and Brwon, O. 2006) leading to weakened transboundary collaboration Institutions.

Conservation activities carried out in an effort to combat wildlife crime may also contribute to regional Conflicts. Because access to or control

over natural resources is at the heart of many conflicts in the Albertine Rift, interventions that influence the availability of these resources risk creating or exacerbating conflicts. For example at one time, it was being rumoured that the Rwanda Protected area authority was feeding Mt Gorilla on sugarcane and fruits and as such, when the gorillas from Uganda and DRC would go to Rwanda side, they would not come back. This consequently was affecting tourism activities in Uganda and DRC negatively. This issue was eventually resolved through a tripartite agreement on revenue sharing of transboundary gorillas.

The transboundary gorilla revenue sharing example was made possible because of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration between the PAAs of the Countries. This initiative that started in the early 1990's when rangers wanted to find means to cope up with the Monitoring challenges provided by the transboundary border lines at field level finally grew up to formal PAA cooperation and finally up to a ministerial level supported by MoUs. The formal arrangements led to birth of Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration with an Executive Secretariat (GVT-CES) in 2008. In December 2013, GVT CES gained Legal status by Government of Rwanda granting a headquarter agreement in Kigali. The cooperation between the three nations has been developed and sustained during an era of conflict and limited diplomatic relationship and continues to bring partners to discuss on the same table including the three countries. This arrangement is still made weak by lack of a formal treaty between the three countries.

2.2 High dependency by the surrounding communities on PA resources

The Albertine Rift is home to some 40-50 million people, the majority of whom are subsistence farmers and hunters. With some of the highest population densities of rural people on the continent, up to 800-1,000 people/km² at some sites, the region also suffers from some of the highest levels of poverty on the continent (Bush et al. 2004, Smith, H., 2010). As a result people rely on access to the forests for their livelihoods.

The underlying factors for high dependency are:

- i. Protected areas occupy the largest land surface area in the Greater Virunga Landscape

The transfrontier protected areas in the Albertine area cover 15,155 km² (CIFOR, 2013.) The PAs occupy the largest land surface area of Albertine Rift. This is illustrated with two examples

- Nyiragogo Territory in North Kivu Province of DRC: The Territory has a total land surface of 333 km², the protected areas cover 170 km², a total of 51 % (UNDP, 2008), Lava occupies another 15% leaving the population with only 38% of the total land area.*
- Kasese District in Uganda: The district has a total land area of 2,724 square kilometres (1,052 sq mi), of which 1537 square kilometres (56%) is reserved for Protected areas, leaving 1,187 square kilometres (44%) for human habitation and economic utilization (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kasese_District).*

In both cases of Nyiragogo and Kasese, the remaining surface area is also occupied by large institutional farms of coffee, tea and cotton creating further land scarcity for community agricultural production. The communities have grown in size and number.

In the colonial era, the large plantation farms established in the GVL attracted migrant labour, which later settled in the area. The population has grown far beyond labour demand and there is no available agricultural land. As a result, communities have turned to the protected areas for their livelihoods.

ii. Restricted access to livelihood resources:

The Protected areas, especially national parks in the Albertine Rift are areas of limited access. In order to protect and enhance biodiversity in the face of mounting population and development pressures, communities are not allowed to access the park resources. The socio-economic implications are acute, as rural communities around protected areas have limited development opportunities and tend to be heavily dependent on natural resources to sustain their livelihoods. Some alternative means of livelihood have been provided by PAs and their partners, however, the scale is too small to meet the foregone opportunity. To the marginalised communities, this aggravates the situation.

For communities living in park adjacent areas, the close proximity to wildlife can lead to considerable economic burden and personal risk. These costs include crop loss and damage, lost time in production and school absenteeism while protecting crops against wildlife raids, physical

harm that lead to high health bills or lost productive time, all of which have big livelihood implications to the communities and in turn increases the communities' dependence on PA natural resources

iii. Different national policies and practices on Tourism revenue

While Protected Area Authorities in the three countries have a policy of contributing to community livelihoods through revenue sharing, the revenue sharing mechanism is operated differently. In Uganda it is 20% of the total gates fees supplemented by 5% of all gorilla permit fees, in Rwanda it is 5% of all the tourism revenue while in DRC the policy is not yet finalized. In DRC, no tourism has been taking place in the last few years because of insecurity in the PAs.² .

The communities around the park constitute the lowest quartile of very poor people. The assessment of the tourism revenue sharing scheme in Rwanda and Uganda indicated that the revenues distributed to community living around the parks are not enough to satisfy all their livelihood needs. This low level of income accruing from tourism to the poorest quartile of the communities has created a negative attitude from the communities in the landscape towards conservation and has led to little support for conservation.

iv. Extractive industries: oil and gas in the GVL.

Oil, gas and geothermal exploration (and future production) are a recent phenomenon and could potentially have a major impact in the GVL. The governments of Uganda and DRC have licenced companies to conduct oil and gas exploration in Albertine Graben PAs and Virunga National Park respectively. Rwanda had commissioned geothermal exploration in the neighbourhood of the Volcano National park. The national governments are looking at oil and gas revenues to transform their economies to middle income countries in the future and in the case of Rwanda, energy to power its development. Despite the expected positive impacts, an extractive industry in a protected area is a high risk activity that threatens biodiversity conservation. Of special concern is that oil and gas operations in protected areas is against National

² While tourism as a whole generates significant revenue, communities generally receive only a small portion. For example, studies have indicated that the overall tourism industry generates substantial revenues, with 53% of benefits accruing at the national level and 41% at the international level while only 6% goes to the community

legislation and international conventions to which these countries are signatory to.

2.3 *Inadequate information and information sharing for sustainable management of the GVL.*

The Albertine Rift and its network of protected areas and stakeholders are widely spread over a rugged terrain with a poor road network, while remoteness and insecurity pose limitations in overall communication among stakeholders and hinders awareness of what is taking place in the GVL. .

These conditions and circumstances among the stakeholders suggest a strong need for a data collection and sharing system to support enhanced cooperation and collaboration among all GVTC stakeholders. Presently there is not a mechanism in place to share information and data easily, efficiently and effectively. Further, as noted parks are isolated by poor communication systems and road infrastructure that further limit their ability to communicate and gain needed information. Increased face to face meetings are prohibitive because of time and cost factors. Park managers and organizations implementing activities in the GVL need access to science based information to better manage the complexity of forces now acting upon their resources.

Thus, a time and cost efficient communication and information sharing mechanism is necessary to facilitate the work of the GVTC that supports continuous and effective dialogue, communication and information sharing among all GVTC stakeholders.

2.4 - *Insecurity and Armed conflict in GVL reduces conservation Effort*

The GVL has been plagued by war and armed conflicts for the last 30 years. Armed conflicts breed deep structural injustices and economic grievances that either keep catalysing or are potential sources of regional or national violence and local conservation related disputes. Collaboration and strengthened coordination will provide the foundation for improving peace and security in the GVL. A robust transboundary

partnership will result in 'more eyes on the ground' contributing to security in the GVL.

3 References

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