

# Natural resource conflict management: the case of Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla National Parks, southwestern Uganda

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## **SUMMARY**

Blomley analyses a conflict management process involving communities near two protected areas in southwestern Uganda. Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), an international non-governmental organization (NGO), facilitated negotiations about re-establishing local resource use rights in forests that had been incorporated into national parks. The conflict management process included initiatives to address both livelihood and conservation priorities as a means of defusing conflict between the communities and state resource managers. The paper concludes with reflections on the changing roles of the international NGO in the process of conflict resolution.



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

### KEY ISSUES

- What is the relationship between livelihoods and conflict management?
- Who are the stakeholders or interested parties in this conflict?

### CONTEXT

- How have shifts in official policy influenced the conflict?

### CONFLICT BACKGROUND OR HISTORY

- What are the differences between the interests of local and external stakeholders?
- Have differences in power affected the relationship among stakeholders?

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION PROCESSES

- How has CARE attempted to bring the stakeholders together?
- What is the relationship between conflict management and economic development?

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION OUTCOMES

- How has CARE monitored the outcome of its conflict management efforts?

### LESSONS LEARNED

- Has this conflict been resolved or managed?
- If you were a villager or a member of the park staff, do you think that you would agree with the author's conclusions about CARE's role as a mediator?

## KEY ISSUES

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This study provides a detailed account of a long-term initiative to reduce and manage conflict between the local development interests of resource-poor households and the national and international interests of biodiversity conservation around two critical ecosystems in southwestern Uganda.

Bwindi Impenetrable Forest represents one of the oldest (50 million years), most complex and biologically rich systems on earth. In addition to its biodiversity value, Bwindi also has a significant regulatory function on local climate and acts as an important water catchment area. Previously designated as a forest reserve, with relatively liberal (and rarely enforced) regulations regarding access rights, it was accorded higher protection status in 1991 as a national park, in recognition of its high levels of biodiversity and the perceived threats to its long-term integrity. The new national park was renamed Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP). This had the immediate effect of closing all access to the forest for adjacent communities, resulting in huge amounts of conflict and resentment.

Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) is contiguous with the *Parc National des Virunga* in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and with the *Parc National des Volcans* in Rwanda, which together comprise the Virunga Conservation Area. The creation of MGNP in 1991 was followed by the eviction of more than 2 400 people in 1992, with minimal compensation, and the closure of the area to local access of any kind. Around the same time as the creation of the two parks, there was heavy investment by international conservation agencies in the protection and policing of the two parks. This increased local antagonism still further.

This case describes a negotiated conflict mitigation process, facilitated by an international non-governmental organization (NGO), Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) International, to re-establish the rights of access to, and use of, key biodiversity products and services by resource users living around the two protected areas (PAs). This is followed by observations on the degree to which these initiatives have been able to address both livelihood and conservation priorities, and thereby diffuse conflict between local communities and PA managers. The paper concludes with reflections on the changing role of CARE in the process of conflict resolution, from one which purported to represent the interests of marginalized local interests, through one of "honest broker" and convenor of conflict resolution fora, to a more conscious recognition of internal organizational interests and a more explicit statement of its position within the conflict resolution process.



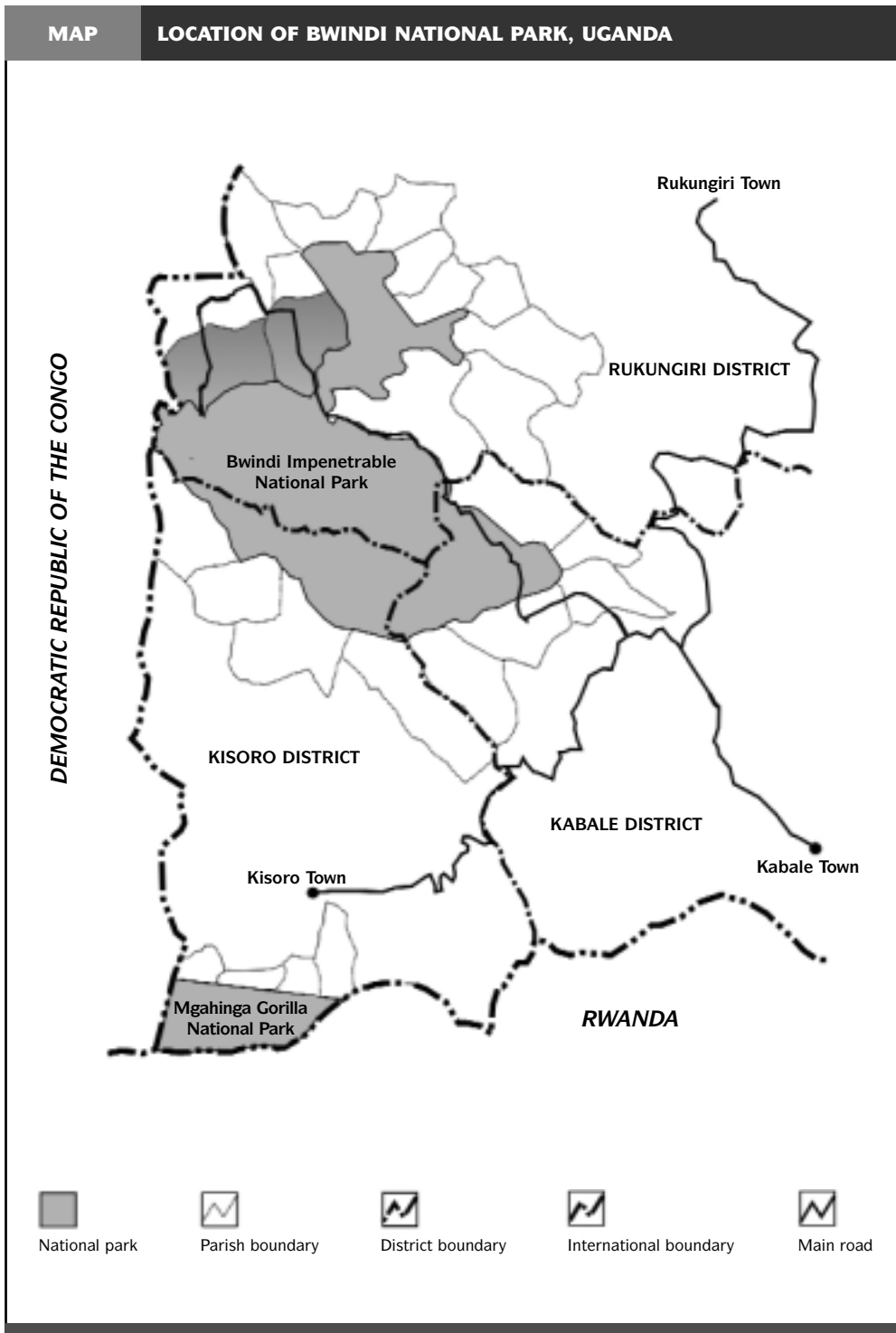
## CONTEXT

BINP, designated a World Heritage Site in 1994, is a diverse natural forest area with a continuum of low-to high-altitude forest types. The national park also possesses a diverse primate population, with just less than half of the world's population of mountain gorilla. Gorilla trekking in Bwindi is a major tourist attraction, generating substantial revenue for Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). Under the park revenue sharing scheme, 20 percent of park entry fees (a small proportion of total revenue, generated by gorilla tourism), is shared with local governments. MGNP is located in Kisoro district in the very southwestern corner of Uganda on the borders of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see Map). Like BINP, MGNP contains rare afro-montane forest vegetation, but owing to the elevations of three volcanoes, Muhavura (4 127 m), Sabinyo (3 645 m) and Gahinga (3 475 m), it offers a particularly rich diversity of habitat that includes montane, bamboo and alpine fauna, and extensive marshes lying between the volcanoes.

Surrounding the two PAs is the steeply sloping terrain of the Kigezi Highlands, supporting one of the highest human population densities in Africa. Rapid population growth in the southwest of Uganda has placed acute demands on the region's natural resource base. With an average population density of 246 people/km<sup>2</sup> (exceeding 350 people/km<sup>2</sup> in some areas), and with a high population growth rate of 2.8 percent per year (MFEP, 1992), cultivation extends to and covers most hilltops, wetlands are being drained and very little of the original forest cover remains. Despite these trends, the rate and extent of environmental degradation have been contested, and recent work suggests that in the last 50 years, there have actually been increases in fallow, woodlots and a relocation of grazing land from sensitive areas (Lindblade, Carswell and Tumuhairwe, 1998).



*Throughout the Kigezi Highlands of southwestern Uganda, population densities are some of the highest in Africa, and agricultural land is farmed intensively*





*The southwestern boundary of BINP near Nteko, showing the "hard edge" between privately owned farmland and government-owned national park*

The people who live adjacent to the two parks have a variety of interests regarding their use and management. Within the communities are specialist user groups with interests such as beekeeping, traditional medicines, basketry, pit-sawing, game hunting, fishing and gold mining. Of particular note are the Batwa, a marginalized ethnic group of hunter-gatherers, with their roots in the pigmy population of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and central Africa. Today, no Batwa are known to be permanently living in Bwindi, having been evicted in 1961 when the forest became a game sanctuary. Many of them now squat near the perimeter of the two parks, in very primitive conditions, eking out a living from illegal hunting and honey gathering, and selling their labour to farming communities. Livelihood analyses undertaken around the two national parks over the last ten years have also revealed wide variations in socio-economic status among local communities, together with indications that forest dependency appears to be inversely related to wealth. This may be explained by the fact that poorer households have fewer livelihood opportunities and therefore are most likely to engage in potentially risky activities such as (illegal) resource use and extraction.

The three districts of Kabale, Kisoro and Rukungiri surround BINP and MGNP. Directly adjacent to the park edge are 25 parishes, the lowest administrative level of local government. The local government structure in Uganda is a five-level system starting at the village and, in order of geographical area, rising up from this level through the parish, subcounty and county levels to the district level. Following the passing of the Local Government Act in Uganda in 1997, tax raising and government spending responsibilities have been largely decentralized from the national to the district level. Through a system of locally elected council representatives, supported by civil servant technical staff appointed by, and reporting to, the districts, district and subcounty governments have become important institutions of development and local governance.

The two national parks are managed by UWA, a semi-autonomous institution formed in 1996 through the merging of Uganda National Parks and the Game Department. Despite severe limitations imposed by lack of resources and low staffing capacity, UWA has made deliberate moves in recent years to engage more meaningfully with local stakeholders, and working with local communities now forms a central part of its overall strategy.

Conservation and development initiatives in this area are being supported by four principal external organizations, summarized in the Table.

<b>TABLE KEY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS SUPPORTING CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN AND AROUND BINP AND MGNP</b>	
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Primary focus and duration</b>
Institute for Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC)	Ecological monitoring, monitoring of resource use, biodiversity assessments and inventories, applied ecological and socio-economic research (since 1991)
Mgahinga and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust (MBIFCT)	Community development projects (rural infrastructure and income-generating projects), park management and research (operational since 1996)
International Gorilla Conservation Project (IGCP)	Gorilla tourism and conservation, community tourism, revenue sharing (since 1984)
CARE International's Development Through Conservation (DTC) Project	Community conservation, park planning and management, institutional development, sustainable agricultural intensification, income-generating projects (since 1988)

## **CONFLICT BACKGROUND OR HISTORY**

Prior to the designation of Bwindi Forest Reserve as a national park in 1991, local people had ready access to forest resources, such as fuelwood, timber, medicinal plants, fibres and game meat, although access to timber and game products was nominally controlled by the Forest and Game Departments. The upgrading of the forest reserve to a national park put an end to any form of legal resource use, leading to massive increases in prices for forest products, declining incomes for forest-dependent households and a reduction in local levels of food security (Wild and Mutebi, 1996).

The closure of resource use in both BINP and MGNP resulted in a heavy escalation in the conflict between local communities and park staff. This manifested itself in a number of very concrete ways. Sixteen fires were started in or around the park during a drought in 1992 following the establishment of BINP, and it was later established that a third of these fires had been started by local residents with the deliberate intent of destroying government property. Relationships with park staff (many of whom were recruited locally) reached an all-time low at about this time. In many cases, they were refused the sale of food, but most critically, they were refused membership of traditional "stretcher" groups (locally called *engozi*). These widespread traditional institutions are in effect local ambulance and burial societies, providing physical and financial support to members in times of sickness or death. Expulsion from these institutions is almost unheard of, leaving the individual exposed and "uninsured" in times of crisis (Wild and Mutebi, 1996).

In 1989, growing international pressure from the conservation lobby led to the establishment of the Gorilla Game Reserve Conservation Project (supported by a German Gorilla Conservation NGO called BRD) and the enforcement of strict protectionist policies in what is now MGNP. The establishment of the park in 1991 led to the eviction of 1 773 people who had been living permanently within this area since about 1970 (following the breakdown of law and order in Uganda at about this time) and of 680 people who were cultivating land but lived elsewhere (Adams and Infield, 1998). This eviction (and the closure of the area to any form of consumptive use) fuelled huge resentment and alienation among the local population, much of which is still felt today, ten years later.

Crop raiding by wildlife has also been (and continues to be) a further issue that contributes to hostility between the park and local communities. Around Bwindi, the problem is caused mainly by baboons in northern areas and bush pigs in the south. The frustration of local communities is heightened by somewhat unclear provisions within the Wildlife Statute and Local Government Act, leading to uncertainty over who should deal with the problem (UWA or the districts) and some reluctance on the part of UWA to consider the option of culling animals.

Furthermore, UWA's revenue sharing scheme remains hotly contested, in particular by local government. Before the passing of the Uganda Wildlife Statute in 1996, parks were required to share 12 percent of their total revenue. This changed in 1996 to 20 percent of gate fees. For many parks in Uganda this represented a net increase, as most parks made the greatest share of their revenue from entry fees. For the gorilla parks, however, it meant a dramatic decrease, as gorilla trekking permits (currently at US\$250 per person per day) far exceed the US\$15 entry fee. Not only has the net amount disbursed decreased dramatically, but on occasions payments have not been forthcoming (or they have been delayed), creating greater distrust and resentment.



In summary, conflict over forest resources in BINP and MGNP is ultimately an expression of divergent interests between different stakeholder groups at various levels and unequal power relationships between the stakeholders. National and international concerns for biodiversity conservation, watershed catchment functions and generation of foreign exchange earnings through tourism appear to have superseded and significantly displaced local interests in increased agricultural production, utilization of biodiversity resources and securing sustainable livelihoods. This is illustrated in the Table.

<b>TABLE CAUSES OF CONFLICT: AN ANALYSIS OF COSTS AND BENEFITS OF BINP AND MGNP AS REALIZED AT DIFFERENT LEVELS</b>		
<b>Stakeholder group</b>	<b>Conservation benefits</b>	<b>Conservation costs</b>
<i>International conservation interests</i>	<i>High (existence value):</i> Presence of rare afro-montane forests and endangered mountain gorilla population	<i>Negligible:</i> Ability to absorb financial expenses associated with conservation efforts without difficulty Lack of accountability to lower-level (community) stakeholders
<i>National government</i>	<i>Medium (economic value):</i> Foreign revenue from gorilla tourism subsidizing other protected area running costs Water catchment and local climatic regulatory functions Taxes from salaries and small businesses dependent on tourism	<i>Medium:</i> Costs of maintaining and protecting the national parks Costs associated with revenue sharing and other interventions designed to compensate local communities for loss of resources
<i>Local communities</i>	<i>Variable (depends on location and stakeholder group):</i> Limited access to forest produce, and water in some locations Revenue sharing from UWA (20 percent of revenue from entry fees paid through local governments to local community projects) Some employment opportunities from park and tourism Support to local development from MBIFCT	<i>High (depends on location and stakeholder group):</i> Crop raiding and damage to property by wildlife Opportunity costs of alternative productive land use (such as planting potatoes, tea) and forgone benefits (such as forest products) Lack of financial compensation for lost benefits created by the establishment of the two parks (material and cultural assets)

In other words, there appears to be an inequitable sharing of conservation costs and benefits between stakeholders at different levels. Conservation costs tend to be borne mostly by those least able to do so (marginalized poor households at the periphery of their districts and adjacent to the parks), and benefits tend to be enjoyed by wealthy nature lovers in the global community and stakeholders at the national level. The situation is summarized by one community member in Kitojo parish as follows:

*A long time ago before the forest department came in to manage this forest, it was ours because we could get all the resources we needed. The forest belonged to the people. During the forest reserve era, the forest belonged to the government because it regulated our access to the trees and the land. But now we are forbidden to get the resources we want because we have to preserve the trees and animals for the Bazungu (white people). We are told that we should not disturb the animals in the forest, and that we should leave them to feed wherever they want, even in our gardens. Mariiro Sadayo, Kitojo Parish. (Namara, 1999).*

As in many conflict scenarios, the situation is compounded by a lack of communication, and as a result no forum exists to resolve or address problems. Until recently problems have, therefore, largely been addressed in a reactive manner (such as arresting pit sawyers after trees have been felled, or visiting farms after crops have been damaged by wildlife).

## **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION PROCESSES**

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CARE's Development Through Conservation (DTC) project operates around BINP and MGNP by seeking to reconcile the two objectives of biodiversity conservation and local socio-economic development. Since its inception in 1988, DTC has undergone many changes in direction, in line with any other site-based integrated conservation and development project. Focusing initially on resource substitution, compensation and environmental education, the project is now adopting a more holistic approach to natural resource conflict, through the development of collaborative management and benefit sharing agreements between the parks and local communities, building the capacity of community and local government institutions and addressing the wider livelihood concerns of local people.

Drawing on experiences and lessons learned from this project and its partners, this section describes one of the key strategies that has been employed to reduce and mitigate conflict in recent years: developing negotiated agreements for the use and management of park resources by local communities.

## **The multiple-use programme**

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Recognizing the rising and acute levels of conflict caused by the establishment of the two parks, UWA developed and initiated a pilot programme in 1993 to re-establish and renegotiate the user rights of park-edge communities to key resources within both parks. Support to the process was offered by CARE, in the form of technical assistance and facilitation. Described in detail in Wild and Mutebi (1996), this was the first attempt within the Ugandan PA system to develop collaborative management agreements with local communities. The key stages of the process are set out in the following.

### ***Resource assessments***

Using a method known as rapid vulnerability assessments, developed by Cunningham (1996), which combines social and ecological data from a number of sources, information was generated concerning growth rates, abundance, response to harvesting, demand and traditional conservation practices of particular species that are important to local communities. A heavy emphasis was placed on the use of local indigenous knowledge gathered from resource users and specialists. This process assisted park management and community members to develop a comprehensive picture of levels of demand, high-value species and their status (or vulnerability), and the various options for their management.

### ***The negotiation process and its outcomes***

Through a series of meetings, workshops and discussion fora, facilitated by CARE project staff, park management and communities entered protracted negotiations concerning the types and amounts of resources to which community groups could have access. The resource assessments had revealed the range of forest products for which people had an interest, as well as a "social map" of local interest/user groups within the pilot communities, which included beekeepers, traditional healers, basket and stretcher makers, pit sawyers, hunters, fishers and gold panners. A series of meetings was held by park staff to discuss interests further, agree on allowable products and propose management and monitoring procedures. These started at the user group level and moved up to the village level. In all meetings with new groups of resource users, a number of tools were deployed to allow people to explain the cause of the conflict in ways that did not prevent further moderated discussion. This included allowing people to introduce themselves and their interests:

*My names are Ndemeye Matayo. I used to get enshuli from the forest when it was ours and then it was taken away from us and now I am starving. You ask me to introduce myself, but I don't know what to say because the chimpanzees are chasing me out. I used to survive on herbs and honey. First you stop me getting the herbs and now the chimps steal my honey. (Quoted in Wild and Mutebi, 1996)*

Other tools included asking people to describe forest history time lines and key events in this (such as evictions, loss of entitlements and so on). This was followed by stick graphs to represent the availability of forest products over time. Within small meetings of interest groups (user groups as well as different groups of young and old, women and men) people then listed and ranked valuable resources from within the forest. In some cases, high-value resources, such as gold, timber and game meat, were removed from the list of favoured products by community members themselves because, as one person said, "these will never be allowed by the park so why bother wasting time discussing them?" (Wild and Mutebi, 1996).

What was clear from these meetings, though, was that despite efforts to make them participatory, a wide range of products was "disallowed" (i.e. non-negotiable) by park staff, because of national policy restrictions on the consumptive use of game, timber and other high-value products within national parks.<sup>1</sup> A final list of products and requests (which admittedly fell short of local expectations) was developed, and included fibres, medicinal plants, honey, footpath access and drinking-water. A second provisional list of products and requests was agreed, which included stock watering points, mushrooms, wild fruit and fish, but which required further study to assess abundance and potential negative impacts. Following these negotiations and an agreement in principle, further discussions were held concerning the nomination of resource users, harvesting methods, resource management institutions and the roles and responsibilities of resource users with respect to the policing and reporting of illegal activities. For those resources identified as "under consideration" or "not suitable" for harvesting within the park, agreements were reached concerning the development of alternative (or substitute) supplies on-farm.

The output of the parish workshops, discussions and meetings was formal agreements setting out the rights, roles and responsibilities of each party. In these pilot agreements, 36 species of medicinal plants and 21 basketry species were agreed on for community use in three pilot areas.

### ***Monitoring programme***

Following the establishment of the pilot scheme, resource use monitoring began on a number of fronts. First, as specified in the agreements, resource user groups were required to monitor the levels of illegal activities within their respective multiple-use areas voluntarily. This has not been without its problems, as an increase in reported illegal activities does not necessarily imply the failure of the agreement, but could be due to increased vigilance leading to higher levels of

1. Following the re-establishment of user rights in BINP and other national parks, user rights by local communities were legally recognized in the Uganda Wildlife Statute of 1995.



*Katambara Sarapio, a resource user living around BINP, weaving a basket from fibres gathered in the park*

detection. Opponents of the programme have cited increased illegal activities in multiple-use zones, while resource users insist that their increased patrol efforts simply inflate the reported incidences with respect to areas monitored by regular ranger patrols (Worah, 2000). However, despite this, evidence from a number of fronts continues to suggest the effectiveness of the programme. Since the re-establishment of regulated beekeeping in Bwindi there have been no reported incidences of fires started within multiple-use zones in the park. This contrasts with the situation prior to the re-establishment of beekeeping, when fires were either deliberately or accidentally started by honey gatherers every year during the dry season. Second, resource users are required by the agreements to keep records of their own offtake, along with proxy indicators related to effort (time) in an attempt to track potential threats, such as increasing scarcity. These reports are triangulated by ranger-based monitoring to assess any impact on ecosystem health, through the use of permanent monitoring plots.

## **The Kabiranyuma Gravity Flow Water Scheme**

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The soils adjacent to MGNP are extremely porous as the area has seen recent volcanic activity, and surface water is therefore very scarce. As a result, in the dry season, women from this area spend many hours collecting water from places up to 8 km away from their homes. The water shortage, coupled with poor standards of hygiene, results in very high incidences of dysentery and diarrhoea, often fatal in young children.

In 1997, CARE, in collaboration with the Directorate of Water Development and UWA, initiated a scheme to provide drinking-water to 35 000 people living in nine parishes at the base of MGNP by rehabilitating a gravity flow system built in the 1950s. Water is drawn from a large, permanent swamp lying in a saddle between Muhavura and Gahinga volcanoes, and flows down the main pipeline to a total of 41 tap stands managed by local water and sanitation committees. Monitoring of the outflow is recorded, as are regular assessments of any recorded ecological changes in and around the wetland within the park.

## **Conclusions and emerging issues**

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The multiple-use programme was originally designed as a “high-value, low-impact” strategy in which limited amounts of useful forest products are harvested by a small number of people. In addition, it was intended to establish channels of dialogue and negotiation between park staff and local communities at a time of deep-seated mistrust and conflict. This objective appears to have been achieved, and at the time of formulating the agreements the process was heralded as innovative and forward-looking.

More recent reviews of the programme, however, have highlighted a number of problems (Worah, 2000). For example, there are still problems concerning the real numbers of direct beneficiaries (currently no more than 350 people); the degree to which the programme can be said to contribute to providing tangible benefits to a broad cross-section of park-edge households; and finally whether the benefits gained are sufficient to match the agreed responsibilities among beneficiaries for patrolling, monitoring and cooperation with law-enforcement efforts.

Perhaps a deeper and more fundamental question needs to be asked about the entitlements of local people to park resources. Section 24 of the Uganda Wildlife Statute (1996) states that the Executive Director of UWA “may issue a permit to any person for the use of resources in wildlife protected areas”, and that the Executive Director “shall be responsible for regulating and controlling harvesting in wildlife areas and shall ensure that the annual harvest does not exceed the sustainable yield”. Is resource use, therefore, a “right” that local people can exercise

and demand, or a “privilege” offered to certain communities under certain conditions? At a recent workshop convened by UWA to discuss issues relating to the utilization of resources from PAs, it was concluded that resource use and collaborative management are a “management tool which may be more applicable in some protected areas than others, and in some parts of a protected area than others” (Nyiramahoro and Blomley, 2000).

The role of CARE as an intermediary institution at a time of deep-seated conflict appears to have been important. However, this role has not been an easy one to maintain. One major problem has been the balance of power in the negotiation process, which appears to have favoured park staff, who adopted a stance of negotiating from a position of strength. Rather than entering into open-ended negotiations with compromises made on both sides, the quality of this process was limited by the unwillingness of park management to concede (or even discuss) access to resources of any significant value. This restricted the value of the agreements and meant that in some instances responsibilities appear to have outweighed benefits. This does call into question the feasibility and real value of developing negotiated co-management agreements in “flagship” biodiversity sites, where conservation interests dominate in power relationships with local stakeholders. A second and perhaps more worrying problem has been the park authorities’ perception that CARE was not neutral, but was “siding with the communities”. This sentiment may have been reinforced by CARE’s known objectives of rural development and poverty alleviation, and its somewhat limited track record in conservation.

More recent and complementary efforts by the project to respond to high-priority development needs (such as providing access to water sources within the park through a gravity flow scheme) appear to have been highly effective in instilling positive attitudes towards conservation among a wider range of local stakeholders. Perhaps more than any other single intervention supported by the project, this simple scheme has been able to respond to one of the highest development needs of the area, and provide park-edge households with a very tangible benefit, attributable entirely to the existence of the park. Conservation interests are also served by the scheme, as the risk of disease transmission to gorillas has now substantially decreased as a result of reduced human presence within the park.



## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION OUTCOMES

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If the dual objectives of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development are to be achieved, there must be substantial progress towards the resolution of the underlying sources of conflict described in the section Conflict background or history (p. 237). Indicators of changing perception of conflict can be captured in the associated changes in the perceptions, attitudes and “conservation behaviour” of park-edge communities towards the PAs, and have been used elsewhere on the continent for similar assessments (Abbot, Neba and Mbono Khen, 1999).

Changes in perception and attitude are being monitored jointly by CARE and the Mgahinga and Bwindi Conservation Trust. The first survey was conducted in December 1997 and sought to gauge the knowledge and attitudes of a random sample of people living near the two parks. A series of questions was posed that sought to reveal the extent, trends and causes of conflict, together with local perceptions of conservation costs and benefits (see Table on p. 239). Data were aggregated by wealth and gender to investigate whether conservation costs and benefits were equally shared by men and women, and by richer and poorer members of the community. A second random survey was conducted in December 1999 and further surveys are planned at two-yearly intervals. It is clear that in 1997, a large majority of respondents felt that the problems associated with living next to the parks outweighed the benefits and that, all things being equal, they would be better off living further away (CARE Uganda, 1998). By 1999, the results show a positive change over the two-year period, as illustrated in the Table opposite.

It is interesting to note that, while it appears that attitudes have changed substantially in recent years, women continue to view the parks in a more negative light than men, with over half of respondents still feeling that conservation costs exceed any positive conservation benefits. Further analysis of wealth-ranked data also reveals that for both years, poorer households express a more negative attitude towards the parks, compared with richer households. Possible explanations for this might be that the initiatives carried out by CARE, UWA and other organizations to resolve conflict may have inadvertently been subject to gender bias, or have favoured richer members of the community. An alternative theory is that poorer and female members of the community were traditionally more reliant on the parks as a source of livelihood or for subsistence uses, and that restrictions placed on use over the last decade are still being felt by these groups.

Overall, however, the studies appear to demonstrate strong and positive changes in attitude, but the degree to which this translates into changed behaviour (and therefore positive conservation impact) remains unproven. A similar study undertaken around another Ugandan national park was able to show clearly that



TABLE	CHANGING ATTITUDES AMONG PARK-EDGE HOUSEHOLDS AROUND BINP AND MGNP BETWEEN 1997 AND 1999					
	Overall (%)		Men (%)		Women (%)	
	1997	1999	1997	1999	1997	1999
Costs exceed benefits	68	44	66	36	71	56
Benefits exceed costs	32	56	34	64	29	44

Sources: CARE Uganda, 1998, and CARE Uganda, 1999.

despite huge shifts in local attitude, the conservation value of the park had decreased significantly as a result of encroachment, loss of wildlife through poaching and heavy pressure from pastoralists (Infield and Namara, 2001).

While the information in these two surveys appears to be encouraging, the sample size remains fairly small (144 respondents selected from all 24 parishes in 1997 and 122 respondents in 1999); consequently the results presented above may not stand up to more rigorous statistical analyses. However, plans are currently being made to develop a broader, inter-agency assessment of changes in attitudes (and any associated behavioural responses) among park-edge communities, using a wider range of quantitative and qualitative techniques. This study will attempt to verify the changes and, more importantly, to indicate which of the strategies being implemented by UWA and its partners – such as multiple use, institutional development, alternative livelihoods, revenue sharing (from the two parks and the Bwindi Trust) – have been most effective in reducing conflict.

However, beyond the assessments and questionnaires two observations would tend to confirm the shifting positive attitudes among local populations. First, there is the widely reported response from local communities to a number of fires that spread inadvertently into BINP at the end of the long dry season of 1999, as farmers cleared their land for planting. On at least three occasions, community members were quick to respond to fire outbreaks and assisted park management by swift reporting as well as active (and voluntary) assistance in extinguishing

the fires before more serious damage was caused. This positive situation was reported to have continued in 2000 as well (Kasangaki *et al.*, 2001). Second, since the establishment of the two national parks in 1991, there have been no recorded incidences of encroachment, despite the huge demand for land. This contrasts with previous decades, when large swathes of forested areas were lost to encroaching cultivators.

## LESSONS LEARNED

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### Changing roles

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This case has described a number of successful interventions that, combined with the work of other partners, appear to have resulted in positive shifts in attitudes among park-edge communities. The role of the DTC project in this process has also changed over time.

Early on in the project, DTC sought to represent the interests of the poor and marginalized, perhaps as a reflection of CARE's wider institutional mission of working with these groups. Staff spoke loudly and at length at local meetings and national fora on the importance of achieving social justice around the two parks. This approach quickly put the project into direct opposition with the park authorities, who in some cases saw CARE as a threat.

In the examples given in the previous section on the multiple-use programme, project staff led the process of conflict management through convening meetings, opening up and maintaining lines of communication and, ultimately, facilitating the development of negotiated management agreements on matters such as use of park resources (non-timber forest products and drinking-water). The project



staff assumed the role of convenors, facilitators and “honest brokers”, and CARE’s role as a mediator was central to the whole process. In the conflict-prone situation described in this case, the project saw itself as “disinterested” (or at minimum, as holding less polarized views than either the park or local communities). However, this position proved difficult to maintain, and more often than not the project found itself in the untenable position of being seen as being too pro-community by park management, and viewed as too conservation-minded by local communities.

More recent work by the project has emphasized the development of linkages between forest user groups and local government structures, and the establishment of local associations called Community Protected Area Committees, which have a mandate to resolve issues with the park management, and represent local community interests in this process. Described in detail in Blomley and Kubagenda (2001), the CARE project has become a convenor and facilitator of a process of developing conflict resolution fora. By supporting the establishment and growth of institutions such as these, the project has moved away from representing interests towards supporting processes and structures that allow local stakeholders, and in particular marginalized communities, to represent themselves more effectively. It is anticipated that a process that assists forest-dependent households to articulate their interests more clearly at higher levels will lead to the negotiation and development of lasting solutions, independently of project staff and beyond the life of the project.

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