

Evaluation Summary

Sustainable Financing for the Rwenzori Mountains National Park

Country : **Uganda**

Topic: Biodiversity

Evaluator : **Biotope**

Evaluation date: **November, 2019**

Key Data on FFEM Support

Project name: SFRMNP

Project number : CUG 1053

Amount of FFEM funding : Euros 700 000

Date of issuance : July 6th, 2014

Duration : 4 years (2015 – 2019)

Context

Rwenzori Mountains National Park (RMNP), established in 1991, is located on the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This ecosystem is part of the larger Virunga range and reaches an elevation of 5,109 meters. Its highly diverse habitats—including Afro-montane forest, Afro-alpine grasslands, wetlands, and glaciers—are home to numerous species such as chimpanzees, red duikers, and Rwenzori leopards.

The Rwenzori ecosystem provides essential environmental services. It serves as a water source for two million people and numerous businesses. The diversity of its landscapes makes it a unique, though little-known, tourist destination. In the buffer zone, some 805,000 residents are seeking land for subsistence farming, firewood, and protein sources; human pressure is exacerbating chronic erosion.

Participants and procedure

WWF France served as the project owner and project manager for the initiative.



Objectives

Establish sustainable sources of funding for Rwenzori Mountains National Park; increase tourism revenue for local communities; and engage the private sector through a pilot water-related social and environmental project, carbon credits, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Specific objectives :

- Private-sector engagement in the Rwenzori ecosystem;
- A national institutional and regulatory framework conducive to Payments for Environmental Services (PES);
- A pilot payment scheme for environmental services;
- Tourism development in and around Rwenzori National Park;
- Communication and sharing of project lessons learned using various tools,

Performance Evaluation

Relevance

The project's objectives were deemed clear and relevant. As a result, the project received broad support from local stakeholders.

Consistency

The project's coherence was also rated very highly: it demonstrated strong external coherence (the project is directly aligned with government and international policies) and internal coherence (the components complement one another).

Effectiveness

In terms of the project's effectiveness, the results were excellent, as most of the planned activities and outputs were carried out as scheduled and described in the logical framework. The main success was undoubtedly the design and implementation of a PES (Payments for Environmental Services) pilot project over the course of the project.

Efficiency

The project's efficiency was rated as moderate. Weaknesses were identified that have impacted the project and could also affect its sustainability; therefore, they must be addressed in the next phase of the project.

Impact

In terms of impact, the results are satisfactory, as most of the project's objectives and outcomes have been achieved. The project has had a significant impact primarily on governance, methodology design, and the institutional framework, but its environmental and social impacts have been more limited.

Sustainability

In terms of sustainability, the overall rating is satisfactory; most activities are likely to lead to improvements and benefits in the future. However, a clear roadmap toward a long-term goal—such as a fully self-financed system with an appropriate legal and financial framework—should be established. A clear and sustained exit strategy should have been put in place before the end of EU funding, in the project's final year.

Added value of FFEM support

The project's greatest achievement can be considered to be the design and successful implementation of a payments for environmental services system, a component funded almost exclusively by the FFEM. Furthermore, this project directly helped institutionalize and formalize the governance and management of watersheds among various Ugandan stakeholders, launch new economic partnerships among local actors, improve the living conditions of local communities, initiate sustainable water resource management practices, and reduce inequalities within social groups— achievements directly aligned with the FFEM's guiding principles.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Overall, this project was a success. This evaluation highlighted several strengths and a few weaknesses in the design and management of the SFRMNP project. At the conclusion of the project, the following recommendations were made:

- Consider decentralized financial operations for project management;
- Continue to build the capacity of various stakeholders on an ongoing basis;
- Strengthen engagement with the private sector throughout the project to diversify beneficiaries (buyers) for the PSE by leveraging the WWF network and other partners;
- Carefully select intermediaries and governance arrangements and/or transfer responsibility for them within the framework of service provider and microfinance contracts;
- Ensure synergies between PSE investments, tourism, forest landscape restoration, and carbon credits through a landscape-level approach;
- Design and implement an effective project monitoring and evaluation system;
- Establish a roadmap toward a long-term goal, such as a fully self-financing system with an appropriate legal and financial framework