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## The Role of Communities in Developing Sustainable Tourism in Rwanda

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**Key words:** Community Involvement, Community based Tourism, Tourism Development, and Sustainability.

**Abstract:** Over the years, views on tourism have changed from pleasure seeking activity to a mere economic activity. Today, tourism is the major source of income and economic activity for developing countries. It generates employment, foreign exchange earnings, and also supports in development of infrastructure of the destination. Tourism may also have potential in addressing socio economic issues through sustainable tourism development. Local community participation in tourism activities has also become one of the major principles of sustainable tourism. Tourism is a people oriented industry and its major functions depend on human resources. Tourism is a major source of employment and it has all the capabilities in contributing towards the livelihood of the local community by providing employment and involving them in all kinds of tourism activities. The major objective of the study is to find out how local communities are involved in various activities and practices adopted by resorts for the development of the local community.

Tourism in Rwanda is the largest source of foreign exchange earnings in Rwanda and was projected to grow at a rate of 25% every year from 2013-18. The sector is the biggest contributor to the national export strategy. Total revenue generated from the sector in 2014 alone was USD 305 millions. Tourism in Rwanda is rapidly increasing. The economy is growing with tourism leading the export sector; however communities around tourism sites continue to live in poverty. This paper explored the participation in and contribution of the local population to tourism development. The main objective of the study was to assess community participation in tourism development and its role in poverty reduction among the indigenous people living around tourist destinations in Rwanda. Research in this study was conducted with the help of secondary data.

Related literature was collected from text books, reports from government, NGOs and journal articles available on both Internet and in the university library. The gathered information explains the role of the indigenous people in tourism improvement, the involvement of local communities in tourism development and the different ways in which tourism profit is shared with the host community. The paper discusses barriers and challenges ahead and how to overcome those challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

*"The Earth is one but the world is not. We all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives (WCED, 1987)."*

There are 194 countries in the world. The world population is currently approaching 7 billion and the number is expected to increase to 10.1 billion in the next 90 years (UN 2011). Along with population growth, concern about depletion of natural resources is increasing. There is limited natural resource available but the human carrying capacity of the Earth is uncertain and diverse since the situation varies by human choices such as the areas of economics, environment and culture (Cohen 1995). As the term "So many men, so many minds" stands, the world is of great variety. Regarding Sustainable Development schemes, many countries have agreed to the goal of creating a sustainable global future. However, this never seems to be an easy task because our values differ by circumstances. For example countries that have a stable economy often focus on protecting the environment and preserving culture; while other countries, which struggle with poverty, tend to put economic development as their top priority and tend to ignore negative impacts on the environment that stem from economic development. Moreover, when we focus on a country and its inhabitants, there is sometimes a huge gap between national strategies/policies and awareness of these strategies and policies by the public. A bottom-up approach is often taken to bridge the gap between national decision making bodies and the public, as well as to build the capability of local people so that they can make appropriate choices when it comes to developing their livelihoods.

Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Modern tourism is closely linked to development and encompasses a growing number of new destinations. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key mechanism for socio-economic progress in developing countries as well as Rwanda, tourism can be used as a source to encourage the economic development. Tourism creates better living conditions to the local residents, provides tax revenues to governments, creates new tourism jobs and businesses, and keeps rural residents from moving to overcrowded cities (WTO, 2007).

As tourism becomes increasingly important to communities around the world, the need to develop tourism sustainably also becomes a primary concern. Human communities represent both a primary resource upon which tourism depends, and their existence in a particular place at a particular time may be used to justify the development of tourism itself. Communities are a basic reason for tourists to travel, to experience the way of life and material products of different communities. Communities also shape the 'natural' landscapes which many tourists consume. Communities are, of course, also the source of tourists; tourists are drawn from particular places and social contexts which in themselves will help shape the context of the tourist's experience in the host community. Sustaining the community/particular communities has therefore become an essential element of sustainable tourism. The rationale of sustainable tourism development usually rests on the assurance of renewable economic, social and cultural benefits to the community and its environment. An holistic approach to sustainability requires that the continuing/improved social, cultural and economic well-being of human communities is an integral component of environmental renewal. This is equally applicable within notions of sustainable tourism; without community sustainability, tourism development cannot be expected to be sustainable.

For this reason, as Taylor (1995:487) argues, 'the concept of community involvement in tourism development has moved nearer to the centre of the sustainability debate'.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the service Industry. From the international financial context, ten percent of the total revenue in the world economy has been generated from the tourism industry and ten percent of the world's workforce has also been generated from the tourism industry. These figures are expected to double by the year 2015, with an anticipated one billion tourists per year. So, tourism has enormous potential to contribute towards the growth of developing countries, particularly for local communities, where wildlife tourism exists (Ashley & Roe, 1998).

Today, tourism has become one of the major sources of income. It generates employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings, and supports the development of infrastructure in any destination. Compared to other sectors, tourism has the capacity to generate economic support even in remote areas. However, in several areas it has minimized economic benefits because of leakages (Ashley & Roe, 1998), which is a major threat to the growth of the industry.

Tourism can affect the lives of the local community in various ways. For some local community, tourism can be a driving force of the overall development, and for others it may cause negative impacts (Ashley & Roe, 1998) such as displacement of local people to make way for tourism facilities, depletion of local resources, increase in cost of living and commercialization of culture. The active involvement of local community in tourism activities is highly essential in order to increase the benefits of tourism, and to minimize the negative impacts.

### **The changing concept of community**

Even in the 1950s, dozens of different interpretations of 'community' could be identified (Hillery 1955). John Urry (1995) extended the Bell and Newby (1976) analysis of the concept to include four different uses of the term. First, the idea of community as belonging to a specific topographical location. Second, as defining a particular local social system. Third, in terms of a feeling of 'communitas' or togetherness; and fourth as an ideology, often hiding the power relations which inevitably underlie communities. Community as an ideology has certainly permeated the sustainability literature, and there are few sustainable tourism policies which do not refer to the importance of long-term benefits for the 'community'. This renewed interest in the community as a basic unit of tourism development, management, planning and marketing can be traced to the changing meaning of the concept of community. Lash and Urry (1994) argue from a postmodernist perspective that having been initially threatened with extinction through modernist rationalisation and disembedding, through the increasing mobility of society and the 'end of geography' through global communications, the place-based notion of 'community' has actually reemerged as a vehicle for rooting individuals and societies in a climate of economic restructuring and growing social, cultural and political uncertainty. As political, social and economic structures based on the nation state begin to be questioned, so local communities have come to be seen as essential building blocks in the 'new sociations' and political alliances of the emerging 'third sector'.

### **Sustainability**

The detraditionalization associated with modernity is also marked by a growing reflexivity both at individual and institutional levels. As Urry (1995) points out, one of the most important consequences of this reflexivity is an increased concern for the environment, and a growing awareness of the links between the local and the global environment. In the shift from an 'industrial' to a 'risk' society (Beck 1992), the need for development to be 'sustainable' becomes paramount. Local communities become not only important in terms of actions taken to preserve their own immediate environment, but also form part of wider alliances to preserve the environment globally (act local, think global). These involve the NGOs

and pressure groups which, representing a membership of like-minded environmentally aware people, can themselves be viewed as communities of interest.

Sustainability is important because communities need to support themselves on the basis of available resources. As Jan van de Straaten points out in his study of sustainable tourism development in the Alpine region (Chapter 14), economic necessity is usually the driving force behind the growth of tourism. Without tourists, spatially marginal communities that find it increasingly hard to compete in other spheres with the major metropolitan centers may cease to exist. In this sense, environmental Sustainability is inexorably bound up with concepts of economic, social, cultural and political Sustainability. The 'principles of sustainable tourism management' outlined by Bramwell et al. (1998) indicate the need to involve local communities in the process of sustainable tourism management and development.

**Table 1. The community: a sustainable concept in tourism development**

1. The approach sees policy, planning and management as appropriate and, indeed, essential responses to the problems of natural and human resource misuse in tourism.
2. The approach is generally not anti-growth, but it emphasises that there are limitations to growth and that tourism must be managed within these limits.
3. Long-term rather than short-term thinking is necessary.
4. The concerns of sustainable tourism management are not just environmental, but are also economic, social, cultural, political and managerial.
5. The approach emphasises the importance of satisfying human needs and aspirations, which entails a prominent concern for equity and fairness.
6. All stakeholders need to be consulted and empowered in tourism decision-making, and they also need to be informed about sustainable development issues.
7. While sustainable development should be a goal for all policies and actions, putting the ideas of sustainable tourism into practice means recognising that in reality there are often limits to what will be achieved in the short and medium term.
8. An understanding of how market economies operate, of the cultures and management procedures of private-sector businesses and of public- and voluntary-sector organisations, and of the values and attitudes of the public is necessary in order to turn good intentions into practical measures.
9. There are frequently conflicts of interest over the use of resources, which means that in practice trade-offs and compromises may be necessary.
10. The balancing of costs and benefits in decisions on different courses of action must extend to considering how much different individuals and groups will gain or lose.

Source: Bramwell et al. (1998)

## Literature Review

Sustainable Tourism Current understanding has to highlight that sustainable development is standing over some pillars: economy, ecology or nature, and society, considering that sustainability is an effort to meet current demands without neglecting future needs. In contemporary human civilization, tourism has to take a critical role to be more developed, especially in Indonesia. The government and the local government are putting a massive consideration on developing tourism in this country. This consideration is probably reasonable because Indonesia has a vast tourism potential from natural and cultural heritage. As a potential sector, it has already positively impacted the economic sector (M. S. Amerta, 2018). However, sustainability tourism should also be given a positive impact on the social, cultural, and ecological environment. In other words, sustainable tourism development must be beneficial for all stakeholders. Conceptually, sustainable tourism is managed in improving the welfare, economy, and even

public health. Furthermore, it is said that the principles of sustainable tourism development are (1) maintaining the quality of the environment, (2) providing benefits to local communities and tourists; (3) maintaining the links between tourism and the environment; (4) maintaining harmony among local people, and environment, (5) create dynamic conditions tailored to carrying capacity, and (6) all stakeholders must work together on the same mission to realize sustainable development (R. Musaddad, et al. 2019).

There is no specific set of boundaries in the term “community” in community-based tourism. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF 2001) states that the social and institutional structures in an area define community. The definition implies, to some extent, a collective responsibility, particularly among those who have collective rights over lands and resources - such as groups of indigenous people. However it also indicates that it is necessary to involve as many people as possible since CBT should generate broad and fair benefits throughout the community. Moreover Halstead (2003: 7) emphasizes that community involvement is vital within tourism development and the degree of community involvement is the only consideration.

People who live around the tourism destination are the most important because they have a close relationship with the cultures and places. They are also providing necessary information and protecting the cultures and places. Therefore, the role of the community around the tourism places is significant. On discussing sustainable tourism, it is also linked to community-based tourism (CBT) as the main actors (Amerta, I. M. Suintastha, 2017). Sunaryo in Rizkianto (2018) has cited that the tourism- International Journal of Architecture and Urbanism Vol. 05, No. 01, 2021 62 based community is involving the community for particular benefit by mentoring and empowering the local communities to provide better opportunities and welfare. The community should be aware of their presence around the tourism destination. Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has listed some indicators on the public perception of tourism. The indicators are (1) Availability information of required tourism promotion Easy access to information regarding the sustainable tourism planning, (2) Satisfaction with the quality and quantity of tourism information provided, (3) Understanding the meaning of sustainable tourism, (4) Taking an active role in tourism activities and (5) Fully understanding on the benefits of tourism.

Spenceley (2008:230) defines community tourism as “tourism which is owned and/or managed by communities with the aim of generating wider community benefit”. In the same vein, Choi and Sirakaya (2006:1275) argue that the main aim of community tourism should be to improve the residents’ quality of life by maximizing local economic benefits, protecting the natural and built heritage, and providing a high quality of experience for the visitors. However, taking a slightly different view, Petric (cited in Viljoen & Tlabela, 2007:3) emphasizes that community tourism should aim at giving visitors personal contact with the physical and human environment of the countryside, and allow them to participate in the activities, traditions and lifestyles of the local people.

Community-based tourism (CBT) is sustainable tourism that is run and managed by the community that is being visited by tourists. Because local people are the decision makers for the tourist destinations, profits go directly to the community (Khanal & Babar 2007). This is used as a tool by rural areas to develop sustainably and CBT is regarded as a preferable approach in many developing countries’ development agenda to alleviate poverty while building capacity at the local level. UN World Tourism Organization (Bao 2008) defined CBT ‘as a promising alternative to conventional approaches to development, a participatory, holistic and inclusive process that can lead to positive, concrete changes in communities by creating employment, reducing poverty, restoring the health of natural environment, stabilizing local economies, and increasing community control’. The idea of CBT is therefore to foster sustainable development with local empowerment, considering the three dimensions of sustainability: social, environmental and economic.

There are a lot of stakeholders in a community. The Tourism Management Team (TMT) is made up of community members and represents the community and controls resource utilization in tourism development. Community people participate as tour guides, cultural performers, craft makers, providers of accommodation and can get profit from tourists both directly and indirectly. There are also development partners giving direct supports to the community by assisting the production of items such as souvenirs and building capacity etc.

### **The relevance of Community Tourism**

According to Okazaki (2008) community-based tourism (CBT) is a form of sustainable tourism with the specific aim of alleviating poverty in a community setting. Likewise, Oh and Hammitt (2010) point out that the goal of community tourism is the beneficiation of indigenous people and villagers through tourism ventures. Regardless of the angle from which community tourism is viewed, the participation of local communities seems to be pivotal to its implementation. Zahra and McGehee (2013) assert that tourism literature has advocated the inclusion of local communities in tourism since the 1980s. Developing tourism from the local community level is considered crucial to the success of tourism at the national level. This is because communities play a key role in the tourism product sustainability and their positive interaction with tourists helps to build a good image for the destination (Sebele, 2010). Tosun (2006) further adds that involving local communities in tourism helps to ensure a balance between communities, developers and local authorities. In this way, communities benefit from tourism taking place in their local environment, exhibit positive attitudes towards tourists and work towards the conservation of resources. Some researchers have indicated that the sustainability of tourism depends to a large extent on the feeling of ownership, sense of responsibility and practical involvement in tourism issues by local people (UNWTO, 2004; Ballesteros & Ramirez, 2007; Simpson, 2008; Zahra & McGehee, 2013).

### **Community Involvement in Tourism**

While considering the involvement of local community in tourism, it is essential to identify the communities that can actively be engaged in tourism activities. According to Gilmour & Fisher (1991), “a community can be defined as a set of people with mutually recognized interest in the resources of a particular area rather than as people living in that area”. The above definition clearly states that a community, which is living in or adjacent to wildlife areas has to be considered and involved in the tourism activities. The below table shows how a local community can be involved in the tourism sector.

**Table 2. Different forms of Community Involvement in Tourism**

<b>Enterprise/ Institution Type</b>	<b>Nature of Local Involvement</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Private business run by an outsider	Employment Supply of goods and services	Kitchen Staff, Sales of food, building materials etc
Enterprises or Informal operational sector run by a local entrepreneur	Entrepreneurship, Self- employment, and Supply of goods and services	Craft Sales Set up, Food Outlet campsites, Ancillary services like, Guide, Home stays, Food, Fuel etc
Community Enterprises	Collective Ownership, Group or Individual Management, Employment or Contributed Labour	Community Camp Site, Art and Craft Centre, Cultural Hub

Joint venture between community and private sector	Contractual Commitments, Share in the revenues, Lease or Investment in resources, Participation in Decision Making Process	Income and Expenditure sharing with the local community on agreed terms, community leases/land/resources/concession to lodge, and community holds equity in lodge.
Tourism Planning Body	Consulting, Representing, Participation	Legal consultation in regional tourism planning, community representatives on tourism board

Source: Enhancing community involvement in wildlife tourism: issues and challenges (Vol. 11). IIED

Local community can be involved in various ways such as employment in tourism sector, local entrepreneurship, leasing out land for tourism, making partnership agreement with tourism operators, and participation in planning and decision making related to tourism, wildlife, parks and land uses (Ashley & Roe, 1998).

Cernea (1991) defines community participation as giving people more opportunities to participate affectively in developing activities and empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors rather than passive subject, manage their resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives. Participation is not a one way process, but a mutual learning and action experience for all concerned parties including professionals, academics, facilitators, government officials, entrepreneurs and local communities.

Chaisawat and Chamnina (2006) mentioned role of community in sustainable tourism development to bring local people to participate and get involve in tourism development. It is very useful to create public awareness to the tourism towards the development of an educational curriculum about the value of tourist exchange, their economic, social and cultural benefits and risks associated with tourism industry. These educational curriculums should be applied in the local primary and secondary community schools.

Community participation is the central of many tourism development strategies, both in the developed and the less developed world and constitutes one of the key objectives for the sustainable management approach of resources (Plamer and Lester, 2005). Stating the value of community people, community people can provide in-depth insight into heritage tourism and have a clearly practical dimensions and indicators relating to community identity in the assessment, planning and management of this type of tourism (Esteban and Macarena, 2006). In addition, Roberta and Lee (2003) identified the importance in heritage tourism and mentioned that culture, which is often well preserved in rural areas, is a valuable resources to include, and that community-based partnerships such as cooperatives be very effective.

On the other hand, Li (2006) had completely different idea about community participation. Indeed it is an interesting finding itself and needs to further verification. Generally, Western scholars think that active local participation in decision- making is a precondition for benefits reaching communities. In developing countries, however, this paradigm is difficult to put into practice owing to various constraints. It is demonstrated that despite weak participation in decision-making processes, the local community can benefit sufficiently from tourism. It means that some scholar has given more preference in participation and some give less preference. But can conclude that the developing countries like Cambodia it is very important to have community participation in decision making in order to implement tourism plan successfully.

To create sustainable tourism, it must fulfill several sustainable tourism principles, namely community participation, stakeholder participation, local ownership, sustainable resources, accommodating community goals, attention to carrying capacity, monitoring, and evaluation, accountability, training, and promotion. The community's role in developing tourism or tourism based community (TBC) is one of the critical principles that must be fulfilled because it is the component closest to and tied to regional tourism.

Tourists are interested in people's value, attitudes and way of life as they are part of culture in addition to the more significant culture monuments. Culture tourism is a learning experience either about them or about other culture. Many people see culture tourism as a way of being involved in cross-cultural exchange that provides for contact with people from other places and cultures. For other, it is an opportunity for celebration and pilgrimage and finally for some it is an important intellectual and learning exercise entered on various dimensions of cultures (Provincial Investment Plan, 2007-2009).

Cultural heritage tourism is a major force in tourism planning and development. It requires multidisciplinary participation and involves a large number of specialists and actors to deal with the tension of preservation culture on one hand, on the other hand, using it as a mean of creating income. From the challenge Cambodia adopted an integrated professional approach to dealing with various dimensions of its cultural heritage. It requires well planned and managed research and demonstration.

### **Role of the Community for Sustainable Tourism Development in Rwanda**

Rwanda's tourism sector serves as the largest source of foreign exchange and is key to employment creation and economic development. The country's National Tourism Policy (2009) and the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (2009) consider capacity building, strong marketing and the diversification of tourism products as competitive tactics to increase its tourism revenue and upgrade the tourism value chain. Between 2009 and 2019, the country's tourism receipt experienced robust annual growth of nine per cent on average in the tourism sector with a record of 1.63 million visitors. Tourism revenue increased by 17 per cent from USD 425 million in 2018 to USD 498 million in 2019 and continued to be Rwanda's leading income earner (Goodwin H & Santilli R., 2009).

Rwanda's tourism strongly relies on its national parks, especially the famous mountain gorillas in the Volcanoes National Park. The country has also prioritised meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) tourism amongst its main products for economic growth. Rwanda has strategically invested significant efforts in becoming a hub of international meetings and conferences in the African region. In 2019, 25 per cent of total arrivals were for business (with MICE) purposes.

According to GIZ Report, 2021; Rwanda considers community involvement in the tourism sector a fundamental strategy for developing sustainable eco-tourism in the country. Since 2005, the government has initiated the Tourism Revenue Sharing Policy, where 10 per cent of all revenues generated from wildlife tourism is directed back to the communities residing around the national parks for economic development. The policy complements efforts by the public and private sectors to create diversify and improve CBT in the country. Rwandan rural communities benefit from offering paid tourism experiences mainly in agro-tourism, cultural and traditional performances. Additionally, communities also gain other business opportunities like selling food, beverages and souvenirs to their visitors. This has resulted in a strong relationship between rural communities, tourism, and conservation with poachers becoming conservationists and tourism revenues used to build facilities such as schools, roads, and health centres.

According to Anne Franze-Jordanov, 2018; Banana beer, botanical gardens and handmade baskets are part of sustainable tourism best practices that empower local communities and protect Rwanda's natural areas. Rwanda is gifted not only with breathtaking landscapes, diverse flora and fauna as well as rich traditional culture but with people who love their country and stand up for nature conservation and the

wellbeing of their communities. The initiative promotes conservation and community development around the Volcano National Parks. Through facilitation, training and education, capacity building, funding and encouragement, the initiative supports community members in developing their unique tourism products and services for sustainable income as well as conserve nature and their health.

Red Rocks Initiative for Sustainable Development emphasises that everyone has a part to play when leveraging tourism as a means of sustainable community development, without harming the environment. The people behind the initiative are convinced, when they manage to take care of their environment and when more tourists come to see and experience pristine nature and traditional culture, the community's living standards can be improved both responsibly and sustainably.

There are many more exemplary best practices in sustainable tourism development in Rwanda. In the recent „World's Top 10 Sustainable Destinations“ awards during ITB 2018, the Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda has been awarded as the „Best of Africa“. The award winners showcase best practice experience to lead the way towards sustainability, attractiveness and quality in Tourism.

Let's keep an eye on this promising African country and see what we can learn from their sustainable tourism activities. Around 400 families have been involved so far in planting tens of thousands of trees. The botanical gardens around the parks invite locals to collect seeds instead of going into the forest and threatening the lives of plant species there. A homestay and village walk program creates a learning platform for tourists while generating income for locals. Local women demonstrate how to make banana beer, there is a dancing troupe and talented youth can produce their music songs for free. Greg Bakunzi and his team believe that if the local communities around their national parks are empowered enough and if they have the means to support themselves as well as uplift their livelihoods, then they will have no reasons to encroach on the parks and harm their natural environment.

Community Tourism goes a long way in ensuring that the local people benefit from tourism and in turn ensure the sustainability of tourist attractions.

**Brick Making:** Pure clay soil is mixed with water and covered with banana leaves or grass for 2 days. A piece of timber functions as frame for the bricks. After the frame has been filled with the soil-water-mixture, the newly formed brick is detached from the frame with another piece of timber and some water.

**Bee Keeping:** Members of various bee keeping associations produce bee hives that they place in swamps or forest areas rich in certain types of plants. Depending on what kind of honey is desired, these plants for example could be banana trees or certain flowers. Honey is an important means to cure a number of local diseases, so that it is shared with traditional doctors. The remaining honey is sold to local people.

**Traditional healing and the Medical garden:** The Rwandan traditional healers use a total of 138 different types of local herbs. Among the 23 diseases that they regularly treat are ulcers, skin diseases like scabies, complications with the monthly period of females, breast pain after delivery, allergies, snake bites, sexual problems, and even heart attacks. During a visit to the local traditional healers you can learn about the use of different herbs and certain treatments, or simply listen to the rich stories of these interesting people.

**Handicraft production:** The production of local handicrafts is one of the few sources of income generated through tourism at the moment. The formidable crafts are sold as souvenirs in shops or at stalls in Kigali or Butare. Among the various products are beautiful African wood carvings, baskets, pots, saucers, old masks and swords, as well as the famous Rwandan banana leaf cards.

**Sustainable farming:** Over the centuries farmers in Rwanda have developed their own special methods of sustainable farming processes. Some selected plantations are regularly visited by our groups, and visitors are always impressed by the comprehensive thoughts given to the activities and the sophisticated traditional methods used. Farming products include fruits such as bananas, as well as vegetables such as manioc, sweet potatoes or millet.

**Traditional dancing:** The famous Rwandan dancing troupes are known under the name Intore. Various local groups in different regions of the country have specialized in performing traditional dances. Apart from regular shows for the local people, special presentations for visitor groups can be booked.

**Fig 1. Nyungwe & Akagera National parks Cultural Communities groups**



Akagera & Nyungwe National Park, 2023

**Table 3 Some of the initiatives' achievements of the local community are:**

*Art and handicraft products made by youth and women who sell their products as souvenirs to tourists.*

*Locals become tour guides, waiters and waitresses in the hospitality industry.*

*Families grow nutritious foods in their backyards and gardens.*

*Community members are educated about good hygiene and sanitation and implement measures to prevent the development and spread of infectious diseases.*

*Local sport athletes became ambassadors for conservation.*

*Botanical gardens conserve plants through horticulture and cultivation, act as seed banks to safeguard species, help conserve indigenous and local knowledge and encourage the sustainable use of plant resources.*

*A conservation research center supports conservation efforts.*

**Source: Anne Franze-Jordanov, 2018**

**Fig.2. Developing Tourism destinations by RDB, GIZ and Chamber of Tourism Rwanda**



**Source: GIZ Report , 2021**

Tourism had not been the initial focus of the project, but had emerged strongly as a theme of interest to students during its first stage, which explored the use of another adaptive concept, “quality” (Gough, Oulton, & Scott, 1998). Tourism had been targeted locally as a potential growth industry which was central to national development planning. Students were encouraged to consider local tourism development issues both in general terms and with a particular focus on the country’s coastal regions, which are ecologically rich but under pressure for development from a variety of economic directions.

**Fig. 3. Local community with partners’ initiatives for capacity building in Rwanda**



**Source: E&E Green Farms, October 2020**

***“If there is no training in tourism, the circle of poverty will continue and young people will be forced to opt for informal, poorly paid, and occasional employment (Natalia Bayona, 2021).”***

The community members earn revenue as land owners, entrepreneurs, workers, service and produce providers. Tourism business is reliant on host communities’ participation, in the course of their responsibility as workers or business owners, and local peoples’ friendly atmosphere to tourists. (Laws 1995; Dann 1996; Cole 1997; Taylor and Davis 1997).

Rwanda Tourism chamber took more initiatives to organize meeting, Conferences, Workshops, exhibitions and gala dinner in terms of motivating some key players in tourism to contribute to Rwanda sustainable tourism development, they attended also meeting and workshops with different stakeholders and partners to improve tourism, they had also a proper time of meeting tourism and hospitality educators with tourism institutions and hoteliers to see how different people who are being trained in within the said sector may be empowered with practical skills. The local business owners are in the same spirit. (CoT, 2020).

**Fig 4. Some competitions were organized by the Chamber of Tourism Rwanda to motivate the local community for sustainable tourism development**



Source: RCOT, 2022

*“Through the Chamber of Tourism Rwanda, Many hotels and tourism institutions are involved in sustainable tourism development of Rwanda with the provision of industrial attachment and internships opportunities to empower young generation with practical skills needed on the labor market.”*

Community-based tourism is defined as tourism owned and/ or managed by communities and intended to deliver more comprehensive community benefits, benefiting a wider group than those employed in the initiative (Goodwin H & Santilli R, 2009). CBT initiatives directly benefit rural communities by providing income generation opportunities and creating more and better jobs. Likewise, CBT itself is a tool for the communities to manage their knowledge and cultural resources. It allows them to take part in the direct development and benefit from the tourism activities. CBT considers all aspects of social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability. When visitors visit local communities, they receive insights into their culture and daily lives. This form of sustainable tourism allows travellers to connect closely to the local communities they visit.

**Fig 5 Rwanda Chamber of Tourism with The 4- day training session of improving the guides skills and knowledge, enhance visitor experiences, and promote sustainable tourism development.**



Source: Chamber of Tourism, 2023

According to GIZ, 2020; Rwanda considers community involvement in the tourism sector a fundamental strategy for developing sustainable eco-tourism in the country. Since 2005, the government has initiated the Tourism Revenue Sharing Policy, where 10 per cent of all revenues generated from wildlife tourism is directed back to the communities residing around the national parks for economic development. The policy complements efforts by the public and private sectors to create, diversify and improve CBT in the country. Rwandan rural communities benefit from offering paid tourism experiences mainly in agro-tourism, cultural and traditional performances. Additionally, communities also gain other business opportunities like selling food, beverages and souvenirs to their visitors. This has resulted in a strong relationship between rural communities, tourism, and conservation – with poachers becoming conservationists and tourism revenues used to build facilities such as schools, roads, and health centres.

#### **The different ways in which tourism profit is shared with the host Community:**

Permanent employment of at least 455 people and unofficial employment of a minimum of 136 from poor conditions. Salaries for these beneficiaries have been anticipated at just over \$1 million per year. The host community also gain from expenditure for cultural tours to the tune of a projected amount of \$14 000 per annum on traditional dances; \$30 000 per annum on unofficial guides and \$26 000 per annum on transport. Approximations of the benefits from buying of fruits and vegetables fluctuate, but appear to fall between \$110 000 and \$266 000 per annum. When it comes to communal gains, a joint venture tourism function offers an anticipated \$100000 per annum to its society organization associate, whereas the profit allocation of 5 % of the Park's revenue is equivalent to \$115 000 per annum for indigenous community projects. Gifts from tourists to local programs add an extra revenue of \$300 000 per annum, and shopping is expected to offer an extra benefit of \$91 000 per annum. (SNV-Rwanda, 2009a; Ashley, 2007; Sandbrook, 2009).

#### **Challenges/Constraints of the community to the Development of Tourism in Rwanda and ways to overcome them:**

Getting financial capital, inadequate skilled manpower, inadequate understanding of consumer needs were acknowledged as the major business challenges that weaken Rwanda's tourism industry's capacity to compete. (Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) 2009).

The Presence of a Small Number of new SMEs Limits Growth: there are few linkages within the sector, and creativity or innovativeness among tour operators is still limited. The shortage of real business opportunities constrains local tourism enterprises and businesses within their supply chains. Government of Rwanda (GoR/UNWTO, 2009). There is also partial awareness of sustainable and accountable tourism that pays due attention to the environmental, social and economic sustainability in the industry as a whole besides a handful of notable private sector exemptions and some parts of government. (SNV-Rwanda, 2009a)

Bushel & Eagles (2007) who urged that that lack of formal education and foreign language skills, are significant barriers that block local communities to utilize tourism opportunities.

According to recommendations of the Mastercard from the 2017-2018 Report; Governments must take the step of prioritizing youth engagement and sector development, mobilizing resources to support youth to shape the agenda, and developing a supportive policy structure to deliver this. Training institutions must take a stronger leadership role in the sector, helping to develop industry standards that respond to priorities identified by and delivered for young people. Organizations in civil society and those working in communities must play a connecting role, working with young people to raise awareness of sector opportunities at the community level and convening strategic discussions of how to approach sector solutions that incorporate all actors, including young people. Training institutions should design curricula that target the priority soft skills identified above, establishing standardized guidelines on how they are

instructed and how student performance is measured. They should consult the private sector in designing curricula to ensure that they are responsive to employer environments and needs. They should also design training programs that are more flexible in duration and content, providing a diverse menu of training programs, including professional development opportunities for mid-career young practitioners in the sector. Training institutions should include practical components in their training programs by providing direct sector exposure through work placement programs, attachments, or internships. They should work with employers to design these programs to meet company needs as well as building in training and experience with priority hiring skills. Additionally, they should provide pre-employment services to graduating students in the form of coaching, mentoring, and field visits to help enhance their practical skills while also expanding their network. Prospective employers should communicate opportunities through means other than print media. They should consider how best to make use of existing informal social networks to communicate available positions. To better assess potential candidates, employers should contribute to the development of industry guides on soft skills measurement and integrate these into their recruitment processes. They should incorporate more practical exercises in recruitment to assess young candidates' soft skills and practical exposure.

**Perception that Rwanda is Not a Safe Tourism Destination:** the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi has left a negative impression on Rwanda's picture which has been compounded by negative travel advisories from the US and Europe. Rwanda is investing more efforts in a general public relations campaign to address this perception issue. (Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) 2009).

**Limited range of tourism experiences** as it stands, Rwanda over relies on gorillas for its tourism. The country needs not only to vary its products to include its rich cultural heritage and other natural attractions, but also to invest in improving the general visitor experience. Need for a tourism culture to increase service quality, lack of a tourism culture amongst Rwandans Demoralizes Rwanda's capacity to offer good services to the progressively more demanding international tourists.

**Inadequate and Dependable Information on the Tourism Industry:** the industry needs to develop an appropriate data gathering system to update the formation of statistics. Weak public and private sector partnership with the Rwandan private sector being in its formative age, is a major handicap.

Some tourists may need to visit many places, to eat food in any restaurant, to have a drink sitting in any Resto-bar; some of the small businesses are scattered and not found easily where there is lack of the localization and common awareness of the local community businesses on Tourism industry. There is a need to identify and recognize different activities of the community which are so helpful to sustainable tourism in order to give them proper assistance if any. There is a need also to channel all the small businesses which have direct impacts on tourism in Rwanda to be in Rwanda chamber of Tourism to be monitored as helped properly.

At the local level domestic tourism creates understanding of attractions, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The strong awareness of conservation of the environment and demand by potential travelers translates into increasing demand by an ever growing number of foreign visitors, there is need for destinations in Africa to cooperate more closely in areas of product development, research, manpower development and training as well as exchanging of tourism expertise and tourism information Bushel & Eagles (2007).

## **Conclusion:**

The major principle of sustainable tourism is involvement of local people and local community in tourism activities. To develop tourism, local community participation is very essential. Local food, local culture and festivals are add-on products to tourism and it also provides authentic experiences to the tourists. Indigenous knowledge of the local community helps in the conservation of environment and local culture.

Wildlife resorts have to take initiatives for the overall development of the local community by involving them, both in internal and external activities of the resorts since they are also stakeholders of the environment in which the resort is located.

The information gathered in this study reveals that there is significant contribution of the local community towards sustainable tourism development in the country, reimbursements to the poor from gorilla tourism and related tourism activities in the region of Rwanda's Volcano National Park. The general value of accommodation, food and beverages, tour operators and shopping value chain around the Park is estimated at \$42.7 million in turnover, with an allied \$2.8 million in payments on salary, fruit and vegetables and non-food purchases. (SNV-Rwanda, 2009b). The revenues from gorilla tourism provide funds to the national parks and facilitate preservation activities. Five percent of park revenues are disbursed for community projects. (Hannah Nielsen; Anna Spenceley, April 2010). This means that much of the income continues to benefit the local residents. With this idea, real tourism practices develop, which sustain the peoples' progress whilst preserving society uniqueness, standards, traditions, civilization and values. Discussions and productive Consultations with government, the private sector, research agencies, non-government organizations; development agencies, and civil society conclusively agree that Responsible community based tourism has great potential to reduce poverty. Stakeholders need to shift from the usual way of doing business, to an approach that supports local economic development, and raises opportunities for the local manpower and entrepreneurs.

RDB established a new public private partnership unit in 2010, in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. A concessions policy was developed by legal experts. This is an effort of the government of Rwanda geared towards community tourism development. Improving prospects for local community and people from the poor environment to achieve employment in tourism would rapidly raise the pro-poor earnings. Improving vocational hospitality training in Rwanda is a priority in the new Sustainable Tourism Master plan for the country. (Government of Rwanda GoR/UNWTO, 2009). Employment opportunities for community members around the park and different touristic area can be guaranteed by the act of signing agreements or Memorandums of Understanding between community leaders and tourism based business entrepreneurs as it can create a sense of ownership of the entire tourism properties and process.

Identification of the local community businesses and creation of the proper platform is a professional way of resolving the problem of poor service delivery and increase employment opportunities within the sector.

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