

# PROJECT: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO VIRUNGA ALLIANCE IMPACT EVALUATION

---

IRB2015-0618D

PI: Dr. Edwin Price

## 1. Executive Summary

Protracted violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has long disincentivized investment in the region, and yet pervasive and persistent poverty itself fuels banditry, armed groups, and violent conflict. Insecurity and poverty not only significantly hinder investment in the region, but these dynamics also present multiple threats to the survival of Virunga National Park (PNVi), the oldest park in Africa and one of the most ecologically rich regions in the world. To address these issues, the Virunga Alliance makes investments in the region's natural resources in order to support sustainable development that leads to increased security, local employment, regional productivity, reductions in poverty, and improved conservation outcomes for Virunga National Park.

This is the final report on the mixed-methods research program by the Center on Conflict and Development at Texas A&M University, that serves to monitor, analyze, and communicate the impact that Virunga Alliance investments are having in Rutshuru and Lubero territories, and in the Mutwanga sector of Beni territory in North Kivu.

In particular, this project seeks to understand the economic impacts of electrification in previously unconnected communities, and how these impacts are connected with measures of household wellbeing, regional conflict mitigation, and conservation outcomes for PNVi. To accomplish these objectives, quantitative and qualitative datasets were established at two separate points in time in the Mutwanga region of Beni Territory, as well as full baseline studies in Rutshuru and Lubero Territories.

The mixed methods utilized in this research are household surveys, focus groups, business interviews, and local-level market tracking. Additional data from publically available sources to establish metrics and indices of conflict, environmental security, human wellbeing, and economic development. This study is a collaboration among PNVi, Texas A&M University (TAMU), the *Université Catholique du Graben* in Butembo (UCG) and other local Congolese institutions.

## 2. Goals and Objectives

Goal: Impact evaluation of Virunga investments to better understand socioeconomic, environmental, and conflict outcomes due to these investments - ultimately for adaptive management in these investments as well as utilization of these findings for the procurement of further funding.

- Objective 1: planning and implementation of mixed-methods studies in Mutwanga sector, Lubero territory, and Rutshuru territory.
- Objective 2: analysis of findings and quarterly reporting of analysis delivered to park management.
- Objective 3: analysis and publication of study in academic journal(s) – underway.

### 3. Achieved Outcomes and Results to Date

- Objective 1: planning and implementation of mixed-methods studies in Mutwanga sector, Lubero territory and Rutshuru territory.
  - Outcome: Literature review, log frame, and overarching hypotheses developed. See attached Methodology document.
  - Outcome: Rutshuru territory: Large-scale qualitative and quantitative fieldwork carried out in Q3 2015, establishing a baseline prior to launch of Matebe hydro-facility. 215 individuals interviewed (including focus groups) and 1,854 households surveyed.
  - Outcome: Lubero territory: Large-scale qualitative and quantitative fieldwork carried out in Q1 2016, establishing a baseline prior to commencement of construction on Luviro hydro-facility. 235 individuals interviewed (including focus groups) and 928 households surveyed.
  - Outcome: Mutwanga sector: Large-scale qualitative and quantitative fieldwork carried out in Q1 2015, establishing a quasi-baseline two years after the launch of the hydro-facility but prior to launch of Sicovir soap factory. 251 individuals interviewed (23 focus groups and meetings) and 910 households surveyed. Followup fieldwork carried out in Q3 2015. 110 individuals interviewed (including focus groups) and 508 households surveyed.
- Objective 2: analysis of findings and quarterly reporting of analysis to park management and project funders.
  - Outcome: April 2015: Summary analysis of Mutwanga Q1 2015 fieldwork provided to park management.
  - Outcome: October 2015: Summary analysis of Matebe (Rutshuru) Baseline and Mutwanga Q3 2015 fieldwork provided to park management.
  - Outcome: Summary analysis of Lubero Baseline Q1 2016 fieldwork provided to park management.
- Objective 3: analysis and publication of study in academic journal(s) – underway
  - Outcome: Publication of Mutwanga case study, *Conflict Trends*, (2017)1.

## 4. Lessons Learned

The impact evaluation component of the project depends primarily on the establishment of a mixed-methods baseline with periodic follow-up fieldwork. This funding period has allowed for baseline fieldwork and analysis of Rutshuru and Lubero territories, as well as a smaller-scale 'case-study' analysis of impacts in Mutwanga sector of Beni Territory. Going forward, follow-up work in all three territories will be vital to facilitate credible analysis of medium- and long-term impacts. The funding source for this follow-up work has not yet been identified.

Working with the bureaucracy at TAMU to access money was a significant impediment to our ability to function on the ground. On multiple occasions, delays in processing slowed our ability to carry out our workplan, delayed salary payments to local staff and risked putting field staff in danger.

There were a number of factors which contributed in significant ways to the success of the project to-date, and which future iterations of the evaluation should follow. For one, access to a PNVi vehicle did much to facilitate survey and qualitative fieldwork, enabling safe and simple passage through informal and formal roadblocks and simplifying logistics while providing a measure of safety in areas where a Ranger was necessary. For qualitative fieldwork, experienced and well-connected translators facilitated both access to community groups and leadership, and their multilingual and cultural expertise facilitated dialogues, interviews, and the subsequent data analysis from these conversations. In addition, using an experienced, cohesive and well-educated survey team in Lubero territory ensured easier management. As with previous work, close attention to on-the-ground informants regarding safety was also essential throughout fieldwork periods.

## 5. Advocacy Opportunities

Key findings from this project could be applied in order to provide preliminary support for further investment in hydroelectric generation capacity as a driver for employment in North Kivu. In particular, early evidence from the Mutwanga facility indicates that the figure cited by Virunga management of "800-1,000 jobs per megawatt of installed capacity" is defensible - evidence indicates that, on a per-megawatt basis, 969 jobs are supported by the Mutwanga hydro facility, of which 420 are directly attributable to the facility. In addition to HGBF, Virunga leadership, and ConDev at Texas A&M, these and other findings have been presented to CDC finance corporation and the European Union delegation to Virunga.

In addition, rich datasets compiled in the course of this project provide valuable (anonymous) data with regard to socio-economic, agricultural and conflict dynamics in North Kivu. These datasets incorporate rural areas where very little research or NGO activity arrives. These datasets include variables describing:

- Key agricultural crops by locality and incomes by economic sector - potential applications in the development of the agricultural sector, informing investments in the area of seeds, services and inputs as well as agricultural transformation and markets.
- Employment by economic sector, age, and gender, in addition to rich qualitative data - potential applications in the development of job markets and hiring mechanisms which mitigate future conflict through equity, transparency and informed policy.
- Village-level experience of conflict disaggregated by gender - potential applications in the development of policies, interventions and further research at the intersection of gender, conflict and conservation.

## **6. Completed work plan**

The effectiveness of the overall objective of “telling the stories” of the impacts and consequences of Virunga’s investments in communities around the Park will be diminished without long-term investment. The goal of the project was to understand complex socio-economic outcomes of investments in the region - a mandate that can only be fulfilled through rigorous baseline assessments (which were completed and reported upon within the duration of the project) and future follow-up studies (which will require additional investment, the source of which is unidentified at this time).