

The Rights Equity and Protected Areas (REPA) Programme (2003-2008)

REPA programme is part of CARE Uganda's broader good governance work. It works with poor ethnic minority groups of the Banyabutumbi, the Banyabindi, the Batwa and the Basongora, as well as the very poor youth, women and landless or near landless people in Southwest Uganda. The programme aims at enabling poor natural resource-dependent households achieve sustainable livelihoods through the equitable sharing of costs and benefits and the fulfilment of rights and responsibilities from the use and management of high biodiversity forest and wildlife protected areas in Uganda. REPA has major components of reducing human-wildlife conflicts, promoting equity in protected-area benefit sharing, promoting transparency and accountability in service delivery, advocacy for minority rights, research into issues around the interface of natural resources and communities, civil society strengthening and economic empowerment. Project interventions focus geographically in the three protected areas of Queen Elizabeth National Park, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and Echuya Central Forest Reserve.

The programme is funded by DANIDA through CARE Denmark. Field implementation is by CARE International in Uganda with and through local civil society organizations.

Programme implementation is guided by six programme principles:

- ♣ Rights-based approach (RBA)
- ♣ Advocacy
- ♣ Working through others (primarily civil society organizations)
- ♣ Civil Society Strengthening
- ♣ Targeting the poor and marginalised
- ♣ Piloting and scaling up

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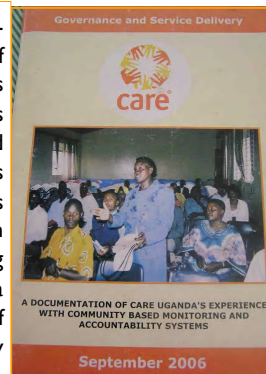
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CARE INTERNATIONAL IN UGANDA : The Rights Equity and Protected Areas Programme, May 2008



Promoting Equitable Sharing of Conservation Benefits in Uganda Using a Rights-Based Approach — by Edith Kabesiime, CARE Uganda

Since 1996, Uganda legalized sharing of 20% of protected area entry fees with the local communities surrounding protected areas from which the fees were collected. This is based on the recognition that communities living adjacent to PAs bare a disproportionate burden of the costs of biodiversity conservation. However, by 2003, it was evident from field experience that this benefit sharing scheme was not achieving its intended objective of resolving people-park conflicts and improved livelihoods of communities. Communities continued to perceive parks as only beneficial to government and the foreign tourists that visited them. CARE's Rights, Equity and Protected Areas (REPA) programme, working with and through local civil society organizations has applied the rights based approach (RBA) to the implementation of



Uganda's revenue sharing policy. The approach is based on a system of community-based monitoring that draws its legitimacy from procedural rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. This case study illustrates the success of this system in terms of improved livelihoods and conservation outcomes. It also highlights key lessons and challenges. This work is part of a broader programme of CARE Uganda on promoting accountability in service delivery which also addresses social and economic development services.

Specifically, monitoring implementation of the revenue sharing policy by civil society has focused on promoting community access to information on the law and policy, participation and promoting accountability of local government for fulfilling its obligations. Community-based monitors monitor all stages of the revenue sharing process from release of funds from Uganda Wildlife Authority to the point of project completion and accounting for funds. This work has highlighted many weaknesses and the results have improved implementation and informed policy revision now under way by Uganda Wildlife Authority in collaboration with CARE and the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP).



Community-based monitors in a dialogue with Local Government
Photo by Samuel Besigye, CARE

Procedural human rights addressed in REPA's accountability work

- ♣ Citizens' participation in decision making (inclusion of the poor, marginalised, vulnerable and minority groups)
- ♣ Access to information (raising awareness of the rights and entitlements) as regards protected area revenue sharing).
- ♣ Recognizing roles and responsibilities of citizens

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Conservation and livelihoods outcomes of RBA, Lessons and Challenges

Improving funds flow and investment in public infrastructure: As with most policies identifying and removing key implementation blocks is often what is needed. This is exactly what the community-based monitors have done. They have worked on making the local government contracting process during project implantation more transparent. As such money from the revenue sharing scheme has been used to build schools, health units and water sources in remote areas not reached by mainstream government development programmes. Communities now see value for money and cases of corruption are often identified and communicated to responsible official for redress.

Beneficiaries are making their own choices: The process is empowering. It practically addressees exclusion of poor and marginalised people. Marginalised people and communities can make their own investment decisions for the revenue sharing money. This is a departure from the old way where politicians and technocrats at district and lower local governments decided for the beneficiaries. This has resulted in increased economic choices, food security and better housing for households, especially where the money has been invested in problem animal control and income generating activities.

The approach builds the confidence of marginalised people to engage government on broader development issues: Monitoring implementation of the revenue sharing policy has been used as a stepping stone to broadened the scope of the policies that communities can monitor. This has had a multiplier effect. For instance, investment in problem animal control using revenue sharing funds has resulted into improved school enrolment in some park edge areas where children were considered as cheap labour in problem animal control. Children guarding crops is increasingly becoming uncommon. In addition children feel safe to go school unaccompanied by adults. School enrolment has also improved as parents invest income from rice into education of their children. The parents are now demanding upgrading of the schools to respond to the increased number of school children, want more teachers and separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls.

RBA improves community-park relations but it is initially difficult to sell! Increased awareness of the value of protected area, and clarification of roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders is achieved. However, the approach can easily be resisted both by park management authorities and beneficiaries at the start. From the protected area management side it can easily be viewed as arming the community against conservation, while from the beneficiaries side, it can be viewed as a waste of their time. This is because the benefits are not immediately realised. Consistency in engaging both the

Lessons Learned and challenges....

duty-bearers and communities is very important. As a facilitator, conservation agencies have viewed CARE as anti-conservation. REPA programme has had to deal with this challenge.

RBA increases participation of communities in protected area management: There is now more regular dialogue between the community and the park authority and issues are resolved amicably. Increased interface between the community and the park authority has improved stakeholder participation in decision making regarding use and management of park revenues and resources. The knowledge about RBA has affected both individuals and institutions in ways that would not have been possible before. Communities view themselves not as mere beneficiaries of the revenue sharing scheme, but also duty-bound. They see themselves as adding value to government's community development programmes. This is very central to success and sustainability of RBA as an approach.

RBA requires building strong skills, knowledge base and relationships. Park authorities and local governments agree that community-based monitors are playing a complementary role. They are seen as a great innovation because they reach where government monitors are not able to reach. In many ways, they help government to achieve its objectives. Therefore, RBA requires building strong relationships between duty bearers and rights holders. Winning duty-bearers to the communities' side is very crucial. We need a critical mass of decision makers on our side who are able to promote reforms in favour of the poor and marginalised people in the context of protected areas. We have seen this happen within both the PA institution and local governments! However, relationships are still fraught with suspicion. This is because issues of accountability are sensitive. In addition, holding duty bearers accountable is a long term process and requires immense skills and knowledge of how their systems work as a critical prerequisite for any successful community-based monitoring and evaluation system and application of RBA.

Conclusion

CARE has found RBA to be a very valuable approach for addressing issues of governance in natural resource management. It is powerful both as a lens and a tool box. RBA challenges inequality, power relations, marginalisation and lack of accountability. However, impacts are slow to realise, which makes the approach difficult to sell. In applying it to the revenue sharing policy implementation, it has proved that it increases citizens' participation and ownership of government development initiatives, and as such it translates into more sustainable impacts because it tackles root causes of poverty and injustice.