

IMPACT OF HUMAN SUBSISTENCE ON GORILLA CONSERVATION IN THE KAHUZI-BIEGA NATIONAL PARK, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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The Kahuzi-Biega National Park counts an area of 600,000 hectares and is surrounded by a huge human population (over 300 people/km² and a 4% annual growth rate). Their major subsistence means come from farming Manioc, beans, plantain banana, sorghum and maize. Animal foods such as fish and livestock had been available from neighboring countries and other villages until 1980s. However, establishment of the national parks in 1970s prevented them from utilizing natural resources in the forest and limited their farmlands. The outbreak of civil wars broke the networks of food trade and transportation. In this decade, mining activities and bush meat trades has markedly increased. Gorillas are now facing the risk of extinction by such human disturbances. In order to decrease such illegal activities and implement alternative subsistence measures, we have conducted a socio-economic survey in two administrative sectors surrounding the park. We selected five households in each sector and asked them to measure all the materials they harvested, got, gave or sold every day. Seven out of 10 households are large families including distant relatives and orphans. They narrowly obtained grains and vegetables necessary to their subsistence and hardly got animal protein and fuels. The declining income by economic collapse after civil wars has increased such needs and has stimulated the local people to collect fire woods and bush meat in the park. Based on these results, we propose the alternative measures such as small-scale livestock raising and tree-planting to reduce illegal activities in the park.

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