

Participation, resilience and sustainability for Kibira National Park in Burundi

Title

Kibira National Park, the second largest natural reserve of Burundi, is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) and an Afromontane Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) with a rich and diverse forest ecosystem. It covers 36,000 ha at an altitude between 1,600 m and 2,600 m, and is home to thousands of species of fauna and flora, many of which are endemic to the area.



Refugees and surrounding populations have caused enormous damage to the forest by cutting lumber for heating and clearing large patches of land for agriculture. As a contribution to solving these complex problems, [Resilience Now](#), through a small grant project funded by the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) through the [Eastern Afromontane Hotspot](#) Regional Implementation Team, has started a series of activities to introduce sustainable practices among local communities, in the field of agriculture, energy and income generation.

The project is based on the premise that for local people to participate in the conservation of the KBA, they need to have the will to protect the site, the knowledge as to how to sustainably manage natural resources and viable alternatives to their damaging practices. They also need

to take a first step toward action. To reach these goals, Resilience Now has developed a methodology that uses behavior change psychology and develops in three steps: a participative resilience assessment makes the community aware of the need to change, a peer-to-peer training develops its capacities in various fields, and the participative definition of a community action plan compels participants to make a decision to change.



The preparatory work of the peer-to-peer training consisted in mapping successful initiatives in all Burundi, in the field of sustainable agriculture, energy and income generation. Many of them were identified, and 6 were retained for the tour, each of them presenting several solutions. The 30 beneficiaries who went on the peer-to-peer study tour were very excited. According to Florence Gibert, who manages the project: "The beneficiaries were passionate discovering the solutions, and the host communities were no less thrilled to present their work. Each time, both communities were feverishly sharing technical advices and phone numbers."

In parallel, a workshop in Bujumbura brought together different organizations working for the protection of the environment in Burundi, to meet and share experiences with each other and create opportunities for synergy. More news about the sustainability of this project in a next article!

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