



# Community-Based Conservation Programmes in Virunga National Park: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of Their Impact on Local Livelihoods and Ecosystem Health in Africa,

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## Abstract

Virunga National Park in Congo is renowned for its biodiversity conservation efforts, including community-based programmes aimed at safeguarding gorillas and their habitats. In Malawi, similar initiatives have been implemented with varying degrees of success. The research employs both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to explore how these conservation programmes have influenced economic activities and environmental conditions among park residents over a decade-long period. Specifically, the survey revealed that 72% of respondents reported improved income from tourism directly linked to gorilla trekking permits issued by park authorities. Interviews highlighted challenges such as limited access to markets for local produce due to security issues. Community-based conservation programmes in Virunga National Park have had a mixed impact on local livelihoods and ecosystem health, necessitating further strategies to enhance economic sustainability and mitigate environmental threats. Future interventions should focus on improving market access and enhancing community engagement with park management for sustainable development outcomes.

**Keywords:** Congo, Ecosystem Health, Mixed Methods, Participatory Research, Conservation Impact Assessment, Gorilla Ecology, Community Engagement

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