

**MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**



**ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF RESTORED FORESTS IN KIBALE  
NATIONAL PARK FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I, Mutesasira Moses, declare that this dissertation is my original work and has never been submitted to any other university or institution for any degree or its equivalent.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my mother, Madam Namulindwa Florence, the community members around the restored forest areas of Kibale National Park, and to all people interested in sustainable tourism.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|             |                                  |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>%</b>    | Percentage                       |
| <b>FACE</b> | Forest Absorbing Carbon Emission |
| <b>FGDS</b> | Focus Group Discussions          |
| <b>KNP</b>  | Kibale National Park             |
| <b>NDP</b>  | National Development Plan        |
| <b>UWA</b>  | Uganda Wildlife Authority        |

## **ABSTRACT**

Ecological restoration has become an important strategy for restoring degraded ecosystems while creating opportunities for sustainable socio-economic development. Despite considerable investment in restoring degraded sections of Kibale National Park, little is known about the tourism potential of these restored forests. This study assessed the potential of restored forests in Kibale National Park for tourism development. Specifically, the study assessed the tourism resources and attractions within the restored forest areas, evaluated local community perceptions towards tourism opportunities, and identified the key opportunities and challenges associated with tourism development in the restored sections. A mixed-methods case study design was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from 100 community respondents using structured questionnaires, supplemented by key informant interviews with Uganda Wildlife Authority staff and other stakeholders, as well as focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative information was analysed thematically. The findings revealed that the restored forests possess considerable tourism potential. Respondents identified diverse physical features, including swamps (44.4%) and streams (42.4%), abundant wildlife such as elephants (87%), chimpanzees (80%), monkeys (61%), and baboons (56%), as well as numerous indigenous tree species that enhance the ecological and scenic value of the restored landscapes. Birdwatching (100%), nature walks (97.9%), primate tracking (85.6%), and photography (70.1%) emerged as the most suitable tourism activities. Community members expressed willingness to participate in tourism through food services, craft production, cultural performances, and guiding. However, challenges including insufficient community involvement, security concerns, inadequate tourism infrastructure, limited awareness of tourism opportunities, and human-wildlife conflicts were identified as major constraints to tourism development. The study concludes that restored forests in Kibale National Park possess significant potential to diversify tourism products, enhance conservation financing, and improve local livelihoods. It recommends strengthening community participation, investing in tourism infrastructure and marketing, and integrating restored forest areas into Uganda Wildlife Authority's tourism development and conservation strategies to promote sustainable tourism and long-term ecosystem management.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

The African continent, and the tropics entirely, is threatened by acute challenges in conservation, where the protected areas are subjected to severe historical destruction and habitat fragmentation due to significant human pressure, such as severe logging, agricultural encroachment, and natural factors like climate change, and invasive species (Omeja et al., 2016).

Globally, the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation have triggered large-scale ecological restoration to the forefront of international practices and conservation policies. Initiatives such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 underpin a worldwide commitment to recover the destroyed ecosystems, recognizing that forest landscape restoration is integral for climate change mitigation, wildlife conservation, and the provision of ecosystem services (Desantis et al., 2021).

Beyond the immediate ecological goals, there is a growing need to connect restoration efforts with sustainable socio-economic development. This connection is essential because the long-term progress of ecological recovery usually depends on local people's support, which is typically secured by providing significant benefits. In this context, sustainable tourism, particularly ecotourism, has emerged as a promising financial and social mechanism to effectively catalyze these global restoration goals (Zebre.S, 2020). The development of the sustainable tourism dimension has been widely discussed in economic literature, recognizing that tourism demand has grown alongside the need for adequate planning and political tools. Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural destinations that conserves the environment and enhances the well-being of local people. It is fundamentally linked to the objectives of ecological restoration, protection, and sustainable socio-economic development.

The global trends focus on assessing the commercial viability of restored forested areas to create new, diversified, and sustainable financing streams for conservation initiatives (Morton et al., 2020). Despite the substantial investment in and the ecological success of the restoration program, there is a fundamental lack of strategic study to systematically assess whether these newly restored forests possess the significant attributes required to be transformed into viable tourism products. Such attributes include aesthetic value, the reestablishment of accessible and viewable wildlife populations, and the ability to provide fascinating visitor encounters, so the success of any new tourism product is entirely connected to the acceptance and support of the surrounding communities (Omeja et al., 2016). Today, there is uncertainty about how the local populations, many of whom

may have been involved in the restoration, perceive the tourism potential of these restored protected areas, or whether they would endorse and participate in such initiatives (Kigenyi et al., 2024). Understanding the credence of local communities and assessing the willingness to pay for access and conservation in those protected areas is imperative for securing necessary finance for future conservation and restoration efforts (Iranah et al., 2018)

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Protected areas in the tropics face severe historical degradation and habitat fragmentation due to anthropogenic pressures such as uncontrolled logging and agricultural encroachment, leading to significant biodiversity loss and human-wildlife conflict. (Byamukama et al., 2025). In response, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), supported by various partners like the Forest Absorbing Carbon Emission foundation (FACE - the future), started an ecological restoration program in 1993. In Kibale National Park, there has been successful rehabilitation of approximately 10,000 hectares of degraded land within the park's periphery to reestablish wildlife corridors and improve ecosystem integrity (M. Byemboijana, 2024). The ecological goals of such restoration efforts are clear: to increase forest cover and facilitate animal movement; the socio-economic potential, particularly for sustainable tourism development, remains largely unexplored and unquantified.

Despite substantial investments in ecological restoration, most of the research done focuses on monitoring the success of ecological restoration, the rise of animal populations in restored areas, and the effect of the restoration on the community; none focuses specifically on the tourism potential of restored ecosystems. This has led to a lack of strategic research assessing whether these restored ecosystems possess the required attributes, such as aesthetic value, accessible wildlife populations, and unique visitor experiences, to be developed into viable tourism products. Furthermore, it is unknown how local communities perceive the tourism potential of these areas they helped restore, or whether they would support such initiatives (Kigenyi et al., 2024). Without this assessment, there is a risk that a valuable opportunity to leverage restoration for community development, foster lasting harmony, and create a new, sustainable financing stream for ongoing conservation is being overlooked.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by systematically evaluating the tourism potential of Kibale's restored forests, which is a clear example of successful ecological restoration in Uganda, analyzing community perceptions, and determining the feasibility of transforming these restored areas into viable tourism products that support both conservation and local livelihoods.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 Main Objective**

To generate knowledge to promote tourism as a strategy for the sustainable management of restored forests in light of Uganda's fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV).

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To assess the tourism resources and attractions within the restored forest areas.
2. To evaluate local community perceptions of tourism opportunities in the restored areas.
3. To identify the key challenges and opportunities for developing tourism in these restored sections.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What unique tourism attractions and experiences do the restored sections of the park offer?
2. How do surrounding communities perceive the potential for tourism development in the restored areas?
3. What are the main constraints and enablers for creating viable tourism products in the restored forests?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study contributes to Ecological Restoration and Tourism Development Knowledge.

This research will generate integral scientific insights on the tourism potential of the restored forests, particularly in Kibale National Park. It will determine whether these restored areas possess the scenic, aesthetic, wildlife, and biodiversity attributes essential for supporting nature-based tourism. This contribution will be crucial in bridging the existing knowledge gap by linking restoration outcomes to sustainable tourism development.

The study supports Conservation Management and Tourism Planning.

The results of this study will assist agencies like the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other conservation stakeholders in planning future tourism diversification within the park. By identifying profitable attractions and visitor experiences in restored areas, this study will help reduce pressure on heavily visited destinations, enhance visitor experiences, and boost revenue generation for long-term conservation funding.

Contribution to the Enhancement of Community Participation and Socio-economic Benefits

The study will provide insights into how local communities will perceive and engage with tourism opportunities coming from the restored forests. This insight will support the design of tourism initiatives that will be socially acceptable, locally supported, and beneficial to surrounding

households. Therefore, the study will strengthen inclusive conservation and contribute to improved community livelihoods and harmonious park-community relations.

### **1.6 Justification of the study**

There remains a significant knowledge gap regarding the tourism and socio-economic potential of Kibale National Park's restored forests, as most studies focus entirely on ecological recovery. This limits UWA and other responsible conservation partners from fully utilizing restoration investments for sustainable tourism financing and development. Assessing the tourism potential of these restored forests is essential, as tourism is a primary foreign-exchange earner and a key source of revenue for Uganda's protected areas. If these areas offer attractions such as wildlife viewing, avian tourism, and guided nature walks, they can help diversify tourism products and reduce pressure on traditional hotspots. Understanding community perceptions is equally important, since residents participate in restoration efforts and their support influences co-management and benefit-sharing. This study aligns with both local and global frameworks, such as Uganda's fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), where chapter 8 talks about tourism being among the core things that will be used to achieve the goals of the NDP IV but the potential of tourism to generate revenue and create jobs is hindered by: inadequate research and data usage; under-developed tourism products; narrow product range. Globally, the study aligns with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration by linking ecological recovery to sustainable development, thereby justifying my study. Conclusively, it provides evidence to guide planning, investment, and community engagement for tourism in restored landscapes.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Forest Restoration**

Forest landscape restoration has emerged as a critical global response to ameliorating forest degradation, climate change, and biodiversity loss, most especially in the tropical regions. Though restoration initiatives increasingly succeed in the restoration of the forest cover and the ecological processes, there remains a limited understanding of how the restored forests can be integrated into sustainable tourism development arrangements. Tourism categories, particularly ecotourism, rely heavily on ecological integrity, wildlife availability, positive community relations, and scenic value. This chapter offers an in-depth review of literature relevant to assessing the tourism potential of restored forests in Kibale National Park.

### **2.2 Forest degradation and restoration in tropical protected areas**

Tropical forests have undergone extensive degradation due to human-driven influences such as illegal logging, settlement, agricultural expansion, and infrastructural development. In Uganda, these pressures have resulted in significant reductions in closed canopy forests, with protected areas increasingly becoming islands of biodiversity surrounded by human-dominated landscapes. Kibale National Park represents one of the most studied forest ecosystems in the world, particularly in Africa, hence offering insights into both the degradation and restoration processes and their outcomes (Kigenyi et al., 2024).

Large-scale forest regeneration research in Kibale reflects that the intensively degraded landscapes can recover substantial ecological value when protected from further disturbances. Long-term studies spanning over four decades show that regenerating forests now cover extensive areas that were previously cleared or heavily disturbed, hence supporting animal and plant communities. (Chapman et al., 2018). Most importantly, these regenerating forests mostly exceed the old-growth forests in spatial extent, which highlights their growing role in conservation planning.

Forest restoration in Kibale has involved both passive regeneration, where natural processes are allowed to proceed, and active restoration, including enrichment planting. Emphasizing that restoration success relies on site-specific ecological conditions, disturbance history, and appropriate species selection, noting that the indigenous species regeneration significantly contributes to the long-term ecosystem stability. (Ssekuubwa et al., 2019). These restoration mechanisms form an ecological foundation upon which effective tourism potential may develop.

### **2.3 Vegetation recovery, forest structure, and scenic value**

Vegetation structure and species diversity are integral determinants of the aesthetic and experiential quality of forest environments. Research on the woody seedling colonization in the restored forests of Kibale demonstrates that both active and passive restoration approaches enhance forest recovery, although the passively restored forests usually exhibit higher seedling diversity and richness over time. (Ssekuubwa et al., 2019).

Increased diversity and stratification significantly contribute to a visually appealing landscape and habitat quality, which are imperative for tourism experiences, such as guided forest walks. Tree diversity has been widely used as an indicator of forest recovery. Research shows a positive relationship between restoration age and tree species richness, with the older restored forests resembling the primary forest in structure and canopy development. (Toots, 2025). Though species composition may remain distinct for several decades, the growth of the closed thick canopies, the increase in the tree diameter, and the vertical stratification significantly enhance the aesthetic value of the restored forests. Such structural attributes are critical for tourism, as tourists normally associate mature trees. Dense canopies and the forest complexity with wilderness quality, thus the restored forests that achieve these characteristics can support diversification in the tourism products, including photography, educational tourism, and nature interpretation.

### **2.4 Wildlife recovery as a basis for tourism attractions**

Wildlife presence is a significant driver of tourism demand in protected areas, mostly in the nature based and ecotourism destinations where the tourists are motivated by the factors and opportunities of the wildlife viewing, animal tracking and conservation education in forested protected areas such as Kibale National Park, the abundance, diversity, and visibility of wildlife species play an essential role in shaping of the tourism destination attractiveness, repeat visitations, and the overall visitors' satisfaction. Extensive ecological studies that have been conducted in Kibale indicate that the restored and regenerated forest covers are capable of reinforcing substantial recovery of mammals as well as the primates, hence supporting their importance for tourism development.

Longterm ecological monitoring shows that forest restoration initiatives in Kibale have resulted in effective improvements in the faunal populations. (Chapman et al., 2018) documented significant increases in the primate numbers within the regenerating forest covers with several species recognizing the previously degraded habitats successively. Most importantly, some primate populations were found to be comparable in size to those in adjacent old-growth forest covers,

meaning that the regenerating habitats can regain ecological functionality ideal for tourism development.

Similarly, research on large-scale forest regeneration demonstrates that regenerating forests in Kibale support high mammal species richness, including elephants, primates, and other large-bodied mammals that are particularly attractive to tourists.(Omeja et al., 2016).

The availability of such species reinforces the attractiveness of the restored forests, particularly for wildlife viewing, animal tracking encounters, and most especially in the less congested zones of the park. Wildlife recovery in the regenerated forests also improves opportunities for specialized tourism niches, for example, primate tracking, birding, conservation education, as well as research tourism. Overall, these findings suggest that the restored forests can diversify the existing tourism products, reduce pressure on the existing tourism attractions, and expand the visitors' choices while promoting sustainable tourism objectives.

## **2.5 Community participation, perceptions, and tourism development**

Community participation is entirely recognized as a critical factor influencing the long-term sustainability of both ecological restoration and tourism initiatives in the protected areas. In the landscapes, for example, the Kibale National Park, participatory approaches to forest management and monitoring have been seen strengthening conservation outcomes while improving the adjacent communities' livelihoods simultaneously. Empirical evidence, particularly from Kibale, shows that when local communities are actively involved in forest monitoring activities, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility towards the restored forest areas. Community participation in forest monitoring significantly increases household income levels and fosters more positive attitudes toward forest conservation among residents (Kigenyi et al., 2024). These positive perceptions are particularly important for tourism development in restored forests, as the local community plays a decisive role in determining access, long-term viability of the tourism enterprises, and security.

Communities that perceive significant benefits from conservation, such as employment opportunities, skill development, and revenue-sharing arrangements, are likely to support infrastructural development and tourism-related activities. This collectively enhances visitors' experiences and minimizes the potential conflicts between livelihood needs and the conservation objectives; however, long-term conservation assessments in protected areas also highlight the complexity of park community relationships. Extensive research indicates that although improved livelihoods can enhance local perceptions of protected areas, they don't automatically curb illegal resource use and the related unsustainable practices (Sarkar et al., 2022). This finding underscores

the relevance of carefully designed tourism initiatives that align economic incentives with conservation objectives. Equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, inclusive governance structures, and continuous community engagement are thus imperative for ensuring tourism development in restored forests contributes significantly to both conservation and local socio-economic sustainability.

## **2.6 Opportunities for tourism development in restored forests**

The restored forests provide significant opportunities for diversifying tourism products beyond normal wildlife viewing. Research on canopy ecotourism in Kibale shows that forest ecosystems possess suitable biophysical attributes, for example, tree height, canopy openness, and the crown structure to support innovative tourism products and experiences such as detox tourism and forest bathing experiences. (Okech, 2022). As restored forests grow similar structural characteristics, they increasingly become suitable for such products. At a broader scale, sustainability assessments of Kibale National Park reveal high ecological, social, and economic sustainability, with ecotourism identified as a key driver of economic performance. (Byamukama et al., 2025). This institutional context offers an ideal environment for incorporating restored forests into the park's tourism portfolio.

Forest and landscape restoration frameworks emphasize connecting ecological recovery with human well-being. Natural regeneration and influenced restoration are recognized as cost-effective approaches that deliver multiple ecosystem services, including opportunities for sustainable tourism, recreation, and education. (Chazdon, 2016). These perspectives support the credence that the restored forests can serve as multifunctional landscapes that contribute to local development and conservation.

## **2.7 Challenges and constraints to tourism development in restored forests**

Despite their considerable potential, restored forests face a range of challenges that adversely affect tourism development if not carefully addressed. One of the most significant limitations relates to the inherently long-term nature of ecological recovery. Forest regeneration is a gradual process, and restored forests require several years to attain significant species composition, structural complexity, and habitat heterogeneity comparable to those of old-growth forests. (Ssekuubwa et al., 2019), (Toots, 2025).

During this transition stage, vegetation structures and wildlife densities may remain uneven, which can limit immediate tourism appeal, most especially for the visitors whose expectations are influenced by experiences in mature forest ecosystems and large wildlife populations. Therefore,

managing visitor expectations through interpretation, education, and appropriate product design becomes imperative. Institutional and governance challenges also negatively affect the feasibility of tourism development in restored forests. Sustainability assessments of forest management highlight persistent issues such as the spread of invasive species, inconsistent funding, and poor coordination between different players, including local governments, communities, park authorities, and private tourism operators (Byamukama et al., 2025). These challenges limit both restoration outcomes and tourism planning if addressed in isolation. Effective tourism development thus requires adaptive and integrated planning frameworks that align ecological restoration objectives with tourism management capacities and development strategies.

More so, the sustainability of tourism initiatives in restored forests is strongly dependent on the existence of equitable and transparent benefit-sharing strategies. Without clearly defined systems for distributing tourism benefits, including employment opportunities, revenues, and community development support, local residents can become disengaged to conservation initiatives such outcomes risk undermining both tourism performance and long term conservation goals (Kigenyi et al., 2024) Therefore inclusive governance and fair benefit sharing arrangements are essential for maintaining community support and ensuring that restored forest positively contribute to conservation initiatives and livelihoods.

## **CHAPTER THREE: STUDY AREA AND METHODS**

### **3.1 Study area**

Kibale National Park (KNP) is located in western Uganda, about 20 km southeast of the town of Fort Portal. It lies within the districts of Kabalere, Kamwenge, Kasese, and Kyejojo, covering approximately 795 km<sup>2</sup>. The study area chosen is in the southern part of Kibale National Park where Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), in partnership with Face the Future Foundation (FACE) has been carrying out forest restoration of the degraded parts of Kibale Forest since 1993 through planting indigenous trees and allowing natural regeneration of the forest. The study focused on this restored part of Kibale National Park and on the communities adjacent to it where a few parishes of Kihoima, Kyabakwerere ward, Kahondo Parish, Rugonjo ward, and Bujongobe ward were selected to make up the study area, and data were collected from 10 villages namely; Kyabakwerere, Ngeza 1, Rugonjo, Nkingo, Kihoima, Kitwe, Mabono, Bujongobe, Kyakagunga and Bigodi across these five parishes.

#### **3.2.1 Climate of the study area**

The park experiences a tropical climate with bimodal rainfall ranging from about 1,100 to 1,700 mm per year, with peak rainy seasons from March to May and from September to November. Rainfall is received throughout the year. It has mean temperatures ranging between 14°C and 27°C. Temperatures keep changing throughout the day (M. Byemboijana, 2024)

#### **3.2.2 Vegetation of the Study Area**

Vegetation in KNP is predominantly medium-altitude moist evergreen and semi-deciduous tropical forest. The park has biodiversity, including over 350 tree species, and it has grasslands and open woods in the south (Chapman et al., 2018). Kibale National Park has a drainage network made up of the Mpanga and Dura rivers, as well as swamps such as Magombe. These areas are dominantly covered with papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*) and other tree species that can grow in waterlogged soils

#### **3.2.3 Socio-economic life of people around the study area**

The area has several tribes living around the park, and the southern part of Kibale, which is the study area, is highly surrounded by the Bakiga, who are believed to have migrated from southwestern Uganda in search of fertile soil to carry out farming. The indigenous tribe of Batooro also has a large number, plus other minority groups such as the Banyankore and Bafumbira.

The primary economic activity around the area is subsistence farming, where households grow crops on small plots of land, typically less than 2 hectares, and right up to the park boundaries. Some households carry out small-scale livestock keeping of goats, most of which were received under the

UWA - FACE foundation program, pigs, and poultry (Kigenyi, 2024). Weekly local markets that happen around different villages, where trading of agricultural produce, second-hand and new clothes, and retail household goods takes place.

### **3.3 History of forest restoration within the study area**

Historically, Kibale was gazetted as a Crown Forest in 1930 and managed mainly for timber and charcoal extraction until conservation objectives were revised in the early 1980s. In 1993, it was upgraded to a National Park by the Uganda Wildlife Authority, shifting management priorities toward intensive biodiversity conservation, research, tourism, and ecological restoration. Forest management has since implemented protection, restoration of degraded areas, and community conservation programs. The park is renowned for its high primate diversity, especially chimpanzees, thereby reinforcing its conservation and tourism value. The surrounding communities are densely populated and rely entirely on subsistence agriculture, tea plantations, fishing, apiculture, tourism, and small-scale animal rearing. These livelihoods, combined with revenue-sharing and resource-access arrangements, closely link local socio-economic systems to the sustainable management of Kibale National Park (Chapman et al., 2018).

The restored forest sections targeted in this study include areas that have undergone both passive and active restoration initiatives and are in proximity to the local communities. Kibale National Park was selected as the study area because it is a representative of Uganda's most successful ecosystem restoration initiatives; therefore, it is a suitable context for examining how restored ecosystems can be integrated into sustainable tourism development. The park's nearness to the local communities, as well as its well-established tourism infrastructure, makes it a favorable setting for evaluating tourism potential, community beliefs, and management feasibility in the restored forest landscapes (Omeja et al., 2016).



### 3.7 Sample size

The sample size for the study will be determined using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table (Penyelidikan, 2006). Based on a target population of 150 respondents, a sample size of 108 respondents will be selected for the study.

**Table 1: Sample size determination**

| Category                            | Population | Sample size |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Local community members             | 250        | 100         |
| Uwa staff and conservation officers | 15         | 8           |
| Total                               | 265        | 108         |

### 3.8 Sampling techniques

The study will use both stratified and purposive random sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling will be applied to local community members and tourists to ensure proportional representation of all groups within each stratum. Participants will be randomly selected to minimize bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample.

While purposive sampling will be used to choose key informant respondents, for example, UWA officials, tourism practitioners, and conservation personnel who possess special knowledge on tourism development and forest restoration.

### 3.9 Data collection methods

#### 3.9.1 Questionnaire / Survey Method

Questionnaires will be administered to tourists visiting Kibale National Park as well as the community members to collect quantitative data on perceptions of tourism potential in restored forest areas. This method will collect views on the available attractions, the perceived benefits, possible challenges, and the respondents' willingness to support tourism development. This will be done using closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. This method will allow the comparison of perceptions of the participants across the different categories and support the objective measurement of the trend

#### 3.9.2 Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interviews will be conducted only with purposively selected individuals, such as UWA staff, tourism practitioners, park management personnel, and community leaders, among others. These participants will possess specialized knowledge of forest restoration, park management systems, and tourism planning, among other areas. Semi-structured interview guides will be drafted and used to explore tourism viability and feasibility, policy alignment, institutional

challenges in incorporating forest restoration into tourism development, and management readiness. This method will provide deeper qualitative insights that cannot be captured through surveys alone. Information collected from the key informants will help in the interpretation of the survey findings, hence strengthening strategic recommendations

### **3.9.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDS)**

These will be organized with selected community members residing around the restored forest areas of Kibale National Park. Focus Group Discussions will facilitate interactive discussions on collective expectations, attitudes, perceptions, and concerns regarding tourism development in the restored forests. This method will be appropriate for understanding shared experiences, the community's priorities related to benefit sharing, benefit-sharing/participation, and social dynamics. Focus Group Discussions will also help identify potential conflicts and locally acceptable tourism models.

## **3.10 Data collection tools and instruments**

### **3.10.1 Interview guide**

Semi-structured interviews will be done with only the key informants, including UWA staff, conservation managers, and tourism practitioners. The interview guide will entirely focus on the themes, for example, the tourism potential of the restored or regenerated forests, tourism conservation integration, management frameworks, institutional support, and the perceived challenges, together with the opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

### **3.10.2 Questionnaire**

Structured questionnaires will be distributed to residents and tourists. The questionnaires will include closed-ended and Likert-scale questions designed to capture perceptions of tourism opportunities, people's attitudes towards restored forests, willingness to support tourism initiatives, as well as perceived challenges and benefits. The tool will be pre-tested to ensure its reliability, validity, and clarity before the actual data collection process.

## **3.11 Data analysis**

Upon completion of data collection, all questionnaires and interview responses will be checked for consistency and completeness. Qualitative data will be coded accordingly and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software for data analysis. Variables, for example, the demographic aspects, community support, and the perception of tourism potential, will be labeled and defined in the variable view, whereas the coded responses will be entered in the data view (Ott & Longnecker, 2010).

Descriptive statistics, for example, means, percentages, standard deviation, and frequencies, will be used to summarize quantitative data and identify trends. Inferential statistics, for example, correlation analysis, will be applied to examine the relationships among variables, such as tourism potential, community support, and restoration benefits. The qualitative data from the interviews will be analyzed after transcription. The participants' responses will be systematically reviewed to identify common patterns, themes, and deeper insights related to tourism development within the restored forested areas. These themes will be organized according to the research objectives to support coherent interpretation and the discussion of the study's findings (Ott & Longnecker, 2010).

Data visualization tools such as graphs, pie charts, and photos taken in the field will also be used to enhance the clarity and interpretation of the findings. Bar graphs will be used to visually represent the frequencies, trends of key variables such as physical features as tourism resources, pie charts will be generated to illustrate proportional distributions of variables such as and wild animals present that can attract tourists.

### **3.12 Ethical consideration**

This research will follow recognized ethical standards to ensure honesty, confidentiality, and respect for respondents. Consent will be obtained from all participants after a clear explanation of the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of their involvement. Respondents' identities and responses will remain strictly confidential. The study will make sure that no emotional, social, or cultural harm occurs during data collection. Additionally, the necessary permissions will be obtained from relevant academic bodies and local authorities before starting fieldwork.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### 4.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The largest proportion of respondents were from Bujongobe (23.0%) and Kihoima (18.0%), while Kitwe and Kyakagunga each contributed 1.0% of the sample. Male respondents constituted 56.0% of the sample, compared to 44.0% females. The majority of respondents were aged between 46–55 years (25.0%), followed by those aged 26–35 years (23.0%), indicating that most participants were economically active adults.

**Table 2: Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents**

| Demographic levels         |                    | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Location                   | Kyabakwerere       | 17        | 17.0    |
|                            | Ngeza 1            | 13        | 13.0    |
|                            | Rugonjo            | 4         | 4.0     |
|                            | Nkingo             | 5         | 5.0     |
|                            | Kihoima            | 18        | 18.0    |
|                            | Kitwe              | 1         | 1.0     |
|                            | Mabono             | 14        | 14.0    |
|                            | Bujongobe          | 23        | 23.0    |
|                            | Kyakagunga         | 1         | 1.0     |
|                            | Bigodi             | 4         | 4.0     |
| Gender                     | Male               | 56        | 56.0    |
|                            | Female             | 44        | 44.0    |
| Age                        | 18-25              | 15        | 15.0    |
|                            | 26-35              | 23        | 23.0    |
|                            | 36-45              | 19        | 19.0    |
|                            | 46-55              | 25        | 25.0    |
|                            | 56+                | 18        | 18.0    |
| Education level            | None               | 7         | 7.0     |
|                            | Primary            | 63        | 63.0    |
|                            | Secondary          | 23        | 23.0    |
|                            | Tertiary           | 7         | 7.0     |
| Main Occupation            | Peasant/ farmer    | 70        | 70.0    |
|                            | Tourist guide      | 6         | 6.0     |
|                            | self employment    | 16        | 16.0    |
|                            | Casual laborers    | 3         | 3.0     |
|                            | Formal employment  | 5         | 5.0     |
| Length of stay in the area | less than 1 year   | 4         | 4.0     |
|                            | 4 - 7 years        | 4         | 4.0     |
|                            | 8 - 10 years       | 1         | 1.0     |
|                            | More than 10 years | 91        | 91.0    |
| House hold size            | 5.77±0.33(1, 20)   |           |         |

Regarding education, most respondents had attained primary education (63.0%), while 23.0% had secondary education. Only 7.0% had no formal education, and an equal proportion had attained tertiary education. In terms of occupation, peasant farming was the dominant livelihood activity (70.0%), followed by self-employment (16.0%), tour guiding (6.0%), formal employment (5.0%), and casual labour (3.0%).

Most respondents (91.0%) had lived in the area for more than ten years, suggesting that they possessed adequate knowledge and experience of the restored forest areas and the surrounding communities. The mean household size was  $5.77 \pm 0.33$  persons (range: 1–20), indicating that households were generally moderate to large in size.

## 4.2. Tourism resources and attractions within the restored forest areas

### 4.2.1 Local community awareness of forest restoration

The findings indicate that the vast majority of respondents (97%) were aware of forest restoration activities in the park, while only 3% reported being unaware. Among those who were aware, 54% of the total respondents were male, and 43% were female. Overall, males constituted 56% of the respondents, whereas females accounted for 44%. This suggests that awareness of forest restoration activities was generally high among both male and female respondents (*Table 3*).

**Table 3: Awareness about forest restoration**

| Awareness of forest restoration activities | Male (%) | Female (%) | Total, n (%) |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|------------|--------------|
| Yes                                        | 54       | 43         | 97           |
| No                                         | 2        | 1          | 3            |
| Total                                      | 56       | 44         | 100          |

The results indicate that awareness of forest restoration activities was generally high across all the study locations. Bujongobe recorded the highest proportion of respondents aware of restoration activities (23%), followed by Kihoima (17%) and Kyabakwerere (17%). Mabono and Ngeza also registered relatively high levels of awareness at 14% and 13%, respectively. Only three respondents reported being unaware of restoration activities, with two coming from Nkingo and one from Kihoima. The Chi-square test showed a significant influence of location on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = 26.308$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $P = 0.002$ ).

**Table 4: Influence of location on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Location     | Frequency |    | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----|----------------|
|              | Yes       | No |                |
| Kyabakwerere | 17        | 0  | 17.0           |
| Ngeza 1      | 13        | 0  | 13.0           |
| Rugonjo      | 4         | 0  | 4.0            |
| Nkingo       | 3         | 2  | 5.0            |
| Kihoima      | 17        | 1  | 18.0           |
| Kitwe        | 1         | 0  | 1.0            |
| Mabono       | 14        | 0  | 14.0           |
| Bujongobe    | 23        | 0  | 23.0           |
| Kyakagunga   | 1         | 0  | 1.0            |
| Bigodi       | 4         | 0  | 4.0            |
| Total        | 97        | 3  | 100.0          |

The findings revealed that awareness of forest restoration activities was high among both male and female respondents. Of the 97 respondents who were aware, 54% were male, while 43% were female. Only two males (2%) and one female (1%) reported being unaware of restoration activities. This suggests that awareness of forest restoration activities is widespread regardless of gender (*Table 5*). The Chi-square test showed no significant influence of gender on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = .143$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $P=0.706$ ).

**Table 5: Influence of gender on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Gender | Frequency |    | Percentage (%) |
|--------|-----------|----|----------------|
|        | Yes       | No |                |
| Male   | 54        | 2  | 56.0           |
| Female | 43        | 1  | 44.0           |
| Total  | 97        | 3  | 100.0          |

The findings showed that awareness of forest restoration activities was consistently high across all age groups. All respondents aged between 18 and 55 years reported being aware of the restoration activities. However, among respondents aged 56 years and above, 3% reported being unaware of the restoration initiatives. These findings suggest that awareness is generally high irrespective of age, although slightly lower among the oldest age group (*Table 6*). The Chi-square test showed significant influence of age group on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = 14.089$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $P=0.007$ ).

**Table 6: Influence of gender on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Age group | Frequency |    | Percentage (%) |
|-----------|-----------|----|----------------|
|           | Yes       | No |                |
| 18-25     | 15        | 0  | 15.0           |
| 26-35     | 23        | 0  | 23.0           |
| 36-45     | 19        | 0  | 19.0           |
| 46-55     | 25        | 0  | 25.0           |
| 56+       | 15        | 3  | 18.0           |
| Total     | 97        | 3  | 100.0          |

The results indicated that both married and single respondents exhibited high awareness of forest restoration activities. All single respondents (16%) reported being aware of restoration activities, while among married respondents, 81% were aware and only 3% were not aware. This implies that marital status has little influence on awareness of restoration activities within the study area (Table 7). The Chi-square test showed no significant influence of marital status on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = .589^a$   $df = 1$ ,  $P = 0.443$ ).

**Table 7: Influence of marital status on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Levels         | Frequency |    | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|-----------|----|----------------|
|                | Yes       | No |                |
| Marital status |           |    |                |
| Single         | 16        | 0  | 16.0           |
| Married        | 81        | 3  | 84.0           |
| Total          | 97        | 3  | 100.0          |

The results indicate that respondents from different household sizes generally possessed high awareness of forest restoration activities. Respondents from households with one to five members constituted the largest proportion of those aware (51%), followed by those from households with six to ten members (39%). Only respondents from households with six to ten members reported a lack of awareness (3%). These findings suggest that household size does not substantially influence awareness of forest restoration activities (Table 8). The Chi-square test showed no significant influence of household size on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = 4.271^a$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $P = 0.234$ ).

**Table 8: Influence of household size on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Levels         | Frequency |     | Percent (%) |
|----------------|-----------|-----|-------------|
|                | Yes       | No  |             |
| Household size |           |     |             |
| 1-5            | 51        | 0   | 51.0        |
| 6-10           | 39        | 3   | 42.0        |
| 11-15          | 6         | 0   | 6.0         |
| 15+            | 1         | 0   | 1.0         |
| Total          | 97.0      | 3.0 | 100.0       |

The findings indicated that awareness of forest restoration activities was high across all education levels. Respondents with primary education accounted for the largest proportion of those aware (61%), followed by those with secondary education (23%). All respondents with secondary and tertiary education reported being aware of restoration activities. Only one respondent without formal education and two respondents with primary education reported being unaware. Overall, the findings suggest that awareness is generally high regardless of educational attainment (Table 9). The Chi-square test showed no significant influence of Educational level on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = 3.998^a$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $P = 0.262$ ).

**Table 9: Influence of Educational Level on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Levels              | Frequency |     | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|-----------|-----|----------------|
|                     | Yes       | No  |                |
| Education level     |           |     |                |
| No formal education | 6         | 1   | 7.0            |
| Primary             | 61        | 2   | 63.0           |
| Secondary           | 23        | 0   | 23.0           |
| Tertiary            | 7         | 0   | 7.0            |
| Total               | 97.0      | 3.0 | 100.0          |

The findings revealed that awareness of forest restoration activities was high across all occupational categories. Peasant farmers constituted the largest proportion of respondents who were aware (67%), reflecting their dominance within the study population. All respondents in the remaining occupational categories, including tourist guides, business people, health workers, teachers, drivers, nurses, and tree planters, reported being aware of restoration activities. Only three peasant farmers reported a lack of awareness. This suggests that occupation has minimal influence on awareness of forest restoration activities (Table 10). The Chi-square test showed no significant influence of main occupation on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = 1.325^a$ ,  $df=11$ ,  $P = 1.000$ ).

**Table 10: Influence of main occupation on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Levels            | Frequency |    | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----|----------------|
|                   | Yes       | No |                |
| Main Occupation   |           |    |                |
| Peasant/ farmer   | 67        | 3  | 70.0           |
| Tourist guide     | 6         | 0  | 6.0            |
| self-employment   | 16        | 0  | 16.0           |
| Casual laborers   | 3         | 0  | 3.0            |
| Formal employment | 5         | 0  | 5.0            |
| Total             | 97        | 3  | 100.0          |

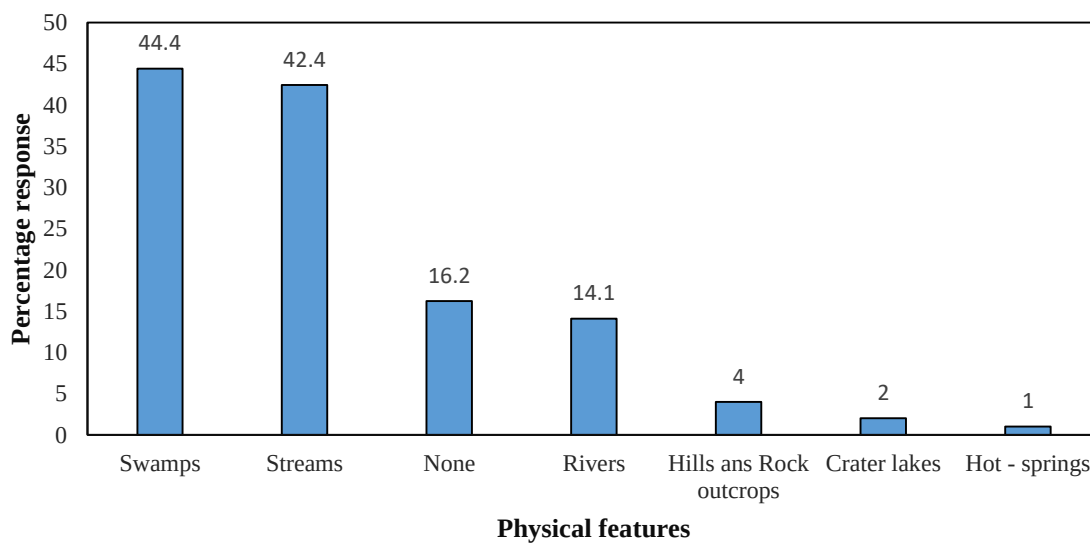
The findings indicated that respondents who had lived in the area for more than 10 years accounted for the largest proportion of those aware of forest restoration activities (88%). All respondents who had stayed in the area for less than ten years reported being aware of restoration activities. Only three respondents who had lived in the area for more than ten years reported being unaware. These findings suggest that awareness of restoration activities is generally high regardless of the length of residence in the community (*Table 11*). The Chi-square test showed no significant influence of length of stay on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park ( $\chi^2 = .306$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $P = 0.959$ ).

**Table 11: Influence of Length of stay on awareness of forest restoration activities in the park**

| Levels                     | Frequency |      | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|----------------|
| Length of stay in the area | Yes       | No   |                |
| less than 1 year           | 4         | 0    | 4.0            |
| 4 - 7 years                | 4         | 0    | 4.0            |
| 8 - 10 years               | 1         | 0    | 1.0            |
| More than 10 years         | 88        | 3    | 91.0           |
| Total                      | 97.0%     | 3.0% | 100.0%         |

#### 4.2.2. Physical features as tourist attractions

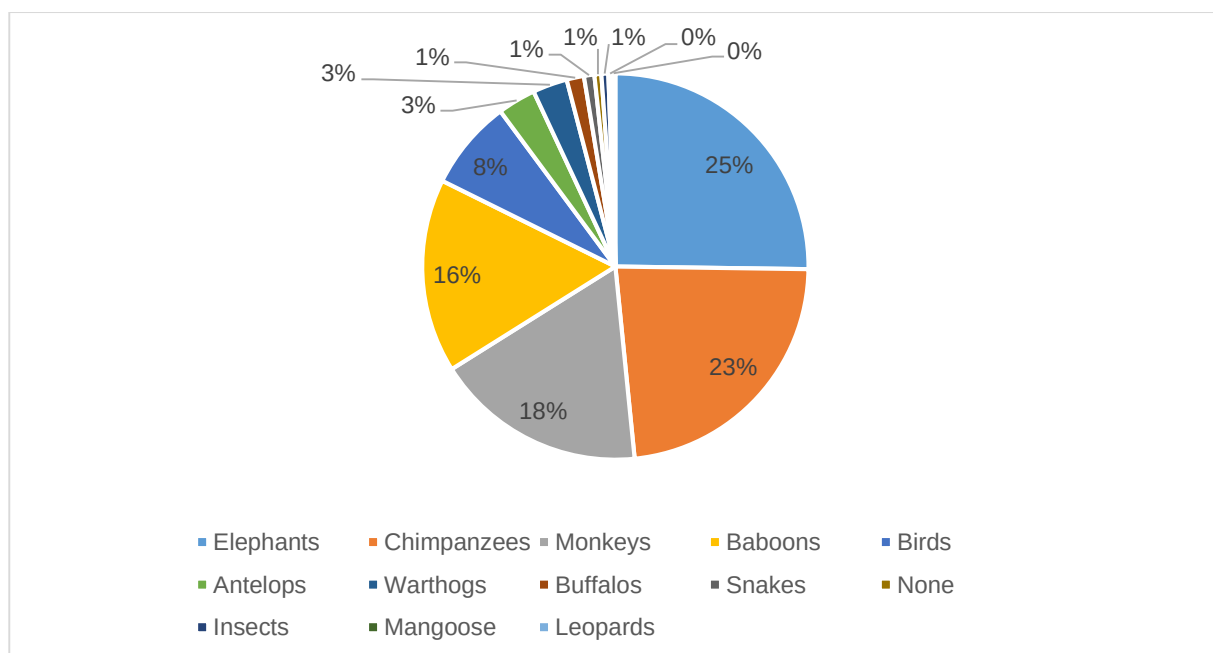
The findings in Figure 2 indicate that swamps (44.4%) and streams (42.4%) were the most commonly identified physical features within the restored forest areas, followed by rivers (14.1%). Hills and rock outcrops (4.0%), crater lakes (2.0%), and hot springs (1.0%) were mentioned less frequently. These findings suggest that the restored forests possess diverse natural features that could support nature-based tourism activities such as birdwatching, nature walks, photography, and environmental education (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2:** Physical features as tourist attractions.

#### 4.2.3. Wildlife attractions as tourist attractions

The findings in Figure 3 indicate that elephants (87%) and chimpanzees (80%) were the most frequently identified wildlife species within the restored forest areas, followed by monkeys (61%) and baboons (56%). Birds (26%), antelopes (11%), warthogs (10%), buffaloes (5%), and snakes (3%) were reported less frequently. These findings suggest that the restored forests support a diverse wildlife population, particularly large mammals and primates, which have considerable potential to enhance wildlife viewing, primate tracking, conservation education, and ecotourism development in Kibale National Park (Fig 3). During a key informant interview, the senior warden restoration mentioned *that several birds, such as Turacos, crested eagles, parrots, Crested cranes, and animal species, have been seen coming back to the restored forest, mentioning the chimpanzees as one of them, thus enabling the chimpanzee habituation activity that has started in the restored forest section of Kibale National park. He mentioned the restored forest having over 20 different butterfly types, thus having potential to attract a niche of butterfly-watching tourism.*



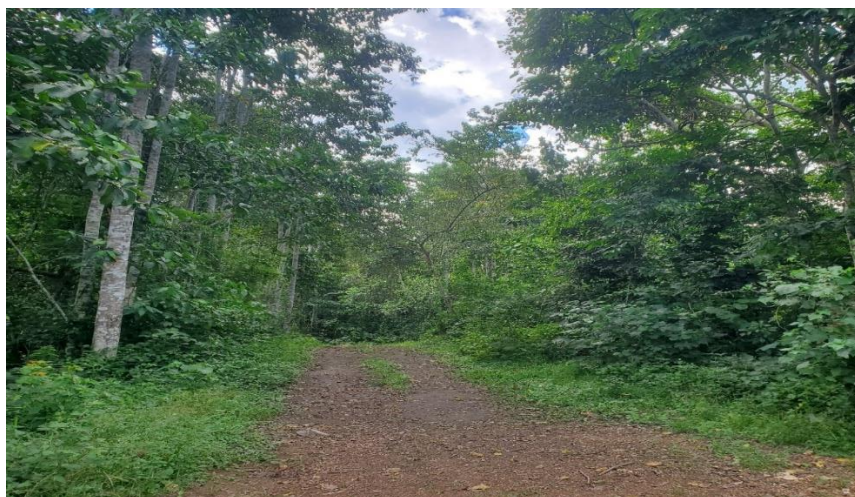
**Figure 3:** Wildlife attractions as tourist attractions

#### 4.2.4. Major tree species in the restored areas

The community members identified a variety of indigenous tree species in the restored forest. *Prunus africana* (39%), *Syzygium cordatum* (30%), *Cordia africana* (21%), *Warburgia ugandensis* (19%), and *Symphonia globulifera* (17%) were among the most frequently mentioned species. The presence of these species demonstrates the ecological value of the restored forest and its potential to support biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. (Table 13).

**Table 12: Major tree species in the restored areas**

| Scientific Names of major tree species n=100                         | Local Name      | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>Prunus africana</i> (Hook.f.) Kalkman                             | Musuba          | 39        | 39.0        |
| <i>Warburgia ugandensis</i> Sprague                                  | Muharami        | 19        | 19.0        |
| <i>Erythrina abyssinica</i> DC                                       | Mukoko          | 4         | 4.0         |
| <i>Cordia africana</i> Lam.                                          | Mujugangoma     | 21        | 21.0        |
| <i>Blighia unijugata</i> Baker                                       | Mwatibale       | 5         | 5.0         |
| <i>Funtumia africana</i> (Benth.) Stapf                              | Munyamagosi     | 3         | 3.0         |
| <i>Spathodea campanulata</i> P.Beauv.                                | Murogorogoro    | 4         | 4.0         |
| <i>Podocarpus latifolius</i> (Thunb.) R.Br. ex Mirb.                 | Ekibirizi       | 4         | 4.0         |
| <i>Syzygium cordatum</i> Hochst. ex Krauss                           | Engote          | 30        | 30.0        |
| <i>Ocotea usambarensis</i> Engl.                                     | Mwiha           | 11        | 11.0        |
| <i>Millettia dura</i> Dunn                                           | Mutete          | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Symphonia globulifera</i> L.f.                                    | Musizi          | 17        | 17.0        |
| <i>Ficus natalensis</i> Hochst.                                      | Kitooma         | 3         | 3.0         |
| <i>Dracaena trifasciata</i> (Prain) Mabb.                            | Omutatembwa     | 3         | 3.0         |
| <i>Persea americana</i> Mill.                                        | omuvakedo       | 2         | 2.0         |
| <i>Mangifera indica</i> L.                                           | Muyembe         | 2         | 2.0         |
| <i>Elaeis guineensis</i> Jacq.                                       | Enyabarashama   | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Phoenix reclinata</i> Jacq.                                       | Mukindu         | 3         | 3.0         |
| <i>Diospyros abyssinica</i> (Hiern) F.White                          | Omuhoko         | 2         | 2.0         |
| <i>Ficus natalensis</i> . Hochst.                                    | Omutumba        | 4         | 4.0         |
| <i>Albizia zygia</i> (DC.) J.F.Macbr.                                | Musebega        | 3         | 3.0         |
| <i>Citropsis articulata</i> (Willd. ex Spreng.) Swingle & M.Kellerm. | Omulangalo      | 5         | 5.0         |
| <i>Vernonia amygdalina</i> Delile                                    | Kibirizi        | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Erythrina indica</i> Fabaceae                                     | Omuhoti         | 3         | 3.0         |
| <i>Pseudospondias microcarpa</i> (A.Rich.) Engl.                     | Bagambanimpyata | 4         | 4.0         |
| <i>Azadirachta indica</i> A.Juss.                                    | Emishadha       | 9         | 9.0         |
| <i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i> Lam.                                 | Omufene         | 2         | 2.0         |
| <i>Albizia grandibracteata</i> Taub.                                 | Mishebeye       | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Uvariopsis congensis</i> Robyns & Ghesq.                          | Ntasesa         | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Acacia hockii</i> De Wild.                                        | Mugando         | 2         | 2.0         |
| <i>Bridelia micrantha</i> (Hochst.) Baill.                           | Mubambantomi    | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Tabernaemontana johnstonii</i> Stapf                              | Ekinyamagosi    | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Milicia excelsa</i> (Welw.) C.C.Berg                              | muntongore      | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Pterocarpus angolensis</i> DC.                                    | emibaragazi     | 4         | 4.0         |
| <i>Lepisanthes senegalensis</i> (Poir.) Leenh.                       | Mwishwe         | 2         | 2.0         |
| <i>Cyperus papyrus</i> L.                                            | Omufunzo        | 1         | 1.0         |
| <i>Canarium schweinfurthii</i> Engl.                                 | Emirama         | 1         | 1.0         |
| Total                                                                |                 | 220       | 220.0       |



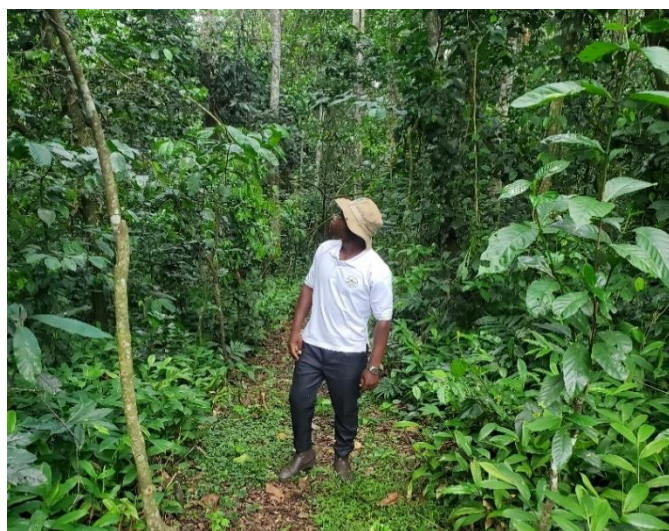
**Figure 4.** Different Tree species in the restored Forest section

#### 4.2.2. Tourism activities suitable for the restored forest areas

Birdwatching was identified by all respondents (100%) as a suitable tourism activity in the restored areas. Other highly preferred activities included nature walks (97.9%), primate tracking (85.6%), and photography (70.1%). Conservation education (24.7%). These findings indicate that restored forests have strong potential to diversify tourism products beyond traditional wildlife viewing.

**Table 13: Tourism activities suitable for the restored forest areas**

| <i>Tourism activities</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage (%)</i> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Nature walks              | 95               | 97.9                  |
| Birdwatching              | 97               | 100.0                 |
| Photography               | 68               | 70.1                  |
| Canopy experiences        | 9                | 9.2                   |
| Conservation education    | 24               | 24.7                  |
| Primate Tracking          | 83               | 85.6                  |
| Total                     | 376              | 387.6                 |



**Figure 5.** Nature walk trail in the restored forest

### 4.3. Local community perception on tourism opportunities in the restored forest areas

#### 4.3.1. Preferred areas of participation by community members

Table 20 presents the areas in which respondents would be willing to participate if tourism were developed in the restored forest areas. Food services were the most preferred area of participation (66.7%), followed by craft making (54.5%), cultural performances (36.4%), and guiding services (24.2%). Relatively few respondents expressed interest in transportation services (14.1%), accommodation services (5.1%), health care services (3.0%), and construction services (1.0%). The findings suggest that the local community is willing to participate in tourism development by providing a variety of tourism-related goods and services, particularly those that capitalize on their existing skills and livelihoods, such as food preparation, handicrafts, and cultural performances.

**Table 14: Preferred areas of participation by community members**

| <i>If yes, in which areas n=99</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent (%)</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Guiding                            | 24               | 24.0               |
| Craft making                       | 54               | 54.0               |
| Accommodation services             | 5                | 5.0                |
| Transportation                     | 14               | 14.0               |
| Cultural performances              | 36               | 36.0               |
| Food services                      | 66               | 66.0               |
| Construction services              | 1                | 1.0                |
| Health care services               | 3                | 3.0                |
| Total                              | 203              | 203.0              |



Figure 6: Beehives at a local household in Kyabakwerere village.

#### 4.3.1.1 Local community perception of tourism opportunities and challenges in the restored forest areas

*One member of the Focus Group Discussion in Bujongobe reported observing significant ecological improvements in the restored forested areas in recent years. He reported increased indigenous tree species, the return of wildlife, and improved vegetation cover, which he believed had enhanced the aesthetic value of the restored forests for tourism. He mentioned primate tracking, bird watching,*

*elephant tracking, botanical experiences, as well as restoration experiences, as some of the prolific tourism activities that would be successfully done in the place.*

The discussants in the FGD also emphasized that tourism development in the restored forests can generate employment opportunities and improve household livelihoods by participating in tourism activities such as tour guiding, cultural performances, and arts and crafts, since they already had their organized group called Mabono Chimpanzee group. Sale of agricultural products, among others; however, one of them stressed that effective community engagement would require capacity building, infrastructure improvements, empowerment, enhanced security, and ongoing awareness programs on the relevance of tourism. *A young lady among the participants expressed concerns about human-wildlife conflicts, cultural erosion, insecurity, and crop raiding if tourism activities are not managed properly.*



**Figure 7.** Focus group discussion held in Bujongobe

#### **4.3.2. Factors that could hinder community members from participating in tourism within the restored forest areas**

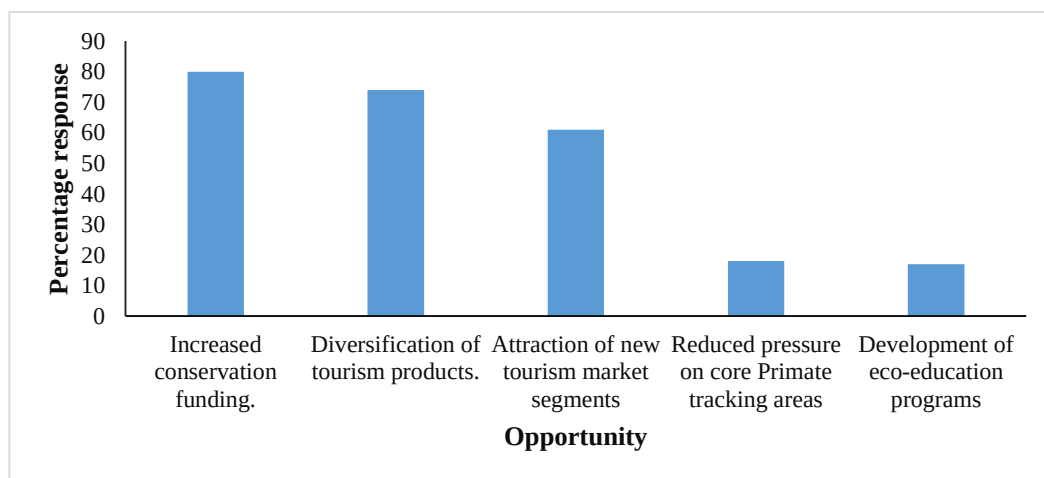
Table 21 presents the challenges perceived by respondents in developing tourism within the restored forest areas. Insufficient community involvement was identified as the most significant challenge (78.0%), followed by security concerns (45.0%), inadequate marketing and promotion (30.0%), risk of environmental degradation (26.0%), inadequate tourism infrastructure such as trails and signage (24.0%), and limited wildlife visibility (17.0%). These findings suggest that addressing community participation, security, infrastructure, and destination promotion is essential for the successful development of tourism in the restored forest areas.

**Table 15: Factors that could hinder community members from participating in tourism within the restored forest areas**

| Factors that could hinder community participation n=100                                                       | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Human-Wildlife Conflicts                                                                                      | 23        | 23.0        |
| Limited awareness about tourism benefits and opportunities                                                    | 21        | 21.0        |
| Language barrier                                                                                              | 20        | 20.0        |
| Limited capital to start up tourism related businesses.                                                       | 16        | 16.0        |
| Low levels of education, hence limited employment opportunities for locals in the tourism sector              | 15        | 15.0        |
| Being busy in their gardens, farming                                                                          | 3         | 3.0         |
| Disease outbreaks, for example, monkey pox                                                                    | 3         | 3.0         |
| Restriction from husbands not to join the tourism empowerment groups                                          | 2         | 2.0         |
| If community members start engaging in illegal activities such as poaching, and UWA puts restrictions on them | 1         | 1.0         |
| Some community members have physical disabilities.                                                            | 1         | 1.0         |
| Security issues and not having insurance                                                                      | 1         | 1.0         |

#### 4.4. The key challenges and opportunities for developing tourism in these restored sections

Respondents identified several opportunities associated with tourism development in restored forest areas. Increased conservation funding (80%), diversification of tourism products (74%), and attraction of new tourism market segments (61%) were the most frequently selected opportunities. The less selected opportunities included reducing pressure on existing tourism sites (Kanyanchu) and promoting environmental education (Fig. 7)



**Figure 8: Opportunities for developing tourism in restored forest areas**

#### 4.4.1. Challenges for developing tourism in the restored forest

Table 17 presents the challenges perceived by respondents in developing tourism within the restored forest areas. Insufficient community involvement was identified as the most significant challenge (78.0%), followed by security concerns (45.0%), inadequate marketing and promotion (30.0%), risk of environmental degradation (26.0%), inadequate tourism infrastructure, such as trails and signage (24.0%), and limited wildlife visibility (17.0%). These findings suggest that addressing community participation, security, infrastructure, and destination promotion is essential for the successful development of tourism in the restored forest areas. In a focus group discussion held in Ngeza 1 village a 46 year old man among the locals who had come to fix an elephant trench mentioned *that a challenge of insufficient community involvement is most likely to occur because most of the locals are peasant farmers who have their gardens right next to the park, and they spend most of their time guarding their gardens from wild animal attacks such as elephants, baboons leaving them with less time to participate in tourism related activities thus leading to insufficient community involvement.*

**Table 16: Challenges for developing tourism in these restored forest sections**

| Challenges n=100                                                           | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Inadequate tourism infrastructure in the restored forest (trails, signage) | 24        | 24.0        |
| Limited wildlife visibility.                                               | 17        | 17.0        |
| Inadequate marketing and promotion.                                        | 30        | 30.0        |
| Risk of environmental degradation                                          | 26        | 26.0        |
| Insufficient community involvement.                                        | 78        | 78.0        |
| Security concerns.                                                         | 45        | 45.0        |



Figure 9. Focused group discussion after locals repairing an elephant trench

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Tourism resources and attractions within the Restored Forest Areas

The findings revealed that the restored forests possess significant tourism potential due to diverse physical features, rich biodiversity, and scenic landscapes. Respondents identified swamps, streams, rivers, regenerating forest, and wildlife such as elephants, chimpanzees, monkeys, baboons, and numerous bird species as major attractions. The findings suggest that ecological restoration has not only improved ecosystem health but also enhanced the tourism value of the restored areas, which aligns with (Byamukama et al., 2025) study.

The results support previous studies by (Robin L . Chazdon, 2017) and (Bernardo et al., 2020), who state that restored forests can simultaneously promote conservation and tourism. The restoration process has improved habitats for wildlife while creating aesthetically pleasing landscapes that support ecotourism.

The study further found that bird watching, nature walks, primate tracking, photography, and environmental education were the most suitable tourism activities in the restored forests. The popularity of bird watching is consistent with (Steven et al., 2015), who reported that bird watching is among the fastest-growing forms of ecotourism because it combines recreation, education, and conservation. Likewise, nature walks provide visitors with opportunities to appreciate forest regeneration and biodiversity, reflecting the growing demand for authentic and educational tourism experiences.

Qualitative findings from the Focus Group Discussions and Key Interviews supported the survey results. Participants noted that restoration had increased indigenous tree species, improved vegetation cover, and created opportunities for primate tracking, bird watching, restoration experience tours through nature walks, botanical tourism, tree identification, and environmental education. They also suggested involving visitors in tree planting activities to enhance conservation awareness while enriching the visitor experience.

The presence of indigenous tree species such as *Prunus Africana*, *Warburgia ugandensis*, and *Vernonia amygdalina* further enhances the tourism potential of the restored forests by supporting botanical tourism, medicinal-plant interpretation, and conservation education. Overall, the findings indicate that restored forests possess diverse natural and ecological resources that can support sustainable tourism. Diversifying tourism products beyond traditional wildlife viewing would enhance visitor experiences, reduce pressure on existing attractions, and contribute to long-term conservation and local economic development.

## **5.2 Perceptions of the communities towards tourism opportunities in the restored forest areas**

The findings revealed that most respondents held positive attitudes towards tourism development, believing it would improve household incomes, create employment, and stimulate local economic growth. These findings indicate strong community support for integrating ecological restoration with tourism development.

The positive perceptions are consistent with the Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that communities are more likely to support tourism when they expect benefits to outweigh its costs. Respondents viewed tourism as an opportunity to diversify livelihoods through guiding, handicraft production, food vending, accommodation services, and cultural performances. Similarly, Focused Group Discussions revealed that tourism could improve household welfare by creating jobs, promoting small businesses, improving infrastructure, and expanding markets for local agricultural products.

The study findings are in line with (Scheyvens, 1999), who asserts that communities are more willing to support ecotourism activities when they receive tangible social and economic benefits. Additionally, the key informants emphasized that tourism could enhance local livelihoods through community-based enterprises and recommended capacity building and the equitable sharing of benefits to strengthen community participation.

The study further revealed that the respondents perceived tourism as an imperative tool for supporting conservation; many believed that tourism revenue would increase funding for forest restoration, wildlife protection, and infrastructure development. Respondents perceived tourism as an important tool for supporting conservation. Many believed that increased tourism revenue would contribute to forest restoration, wildlife protection, and infrastructure development.

Conclusively, the host communities recognize the restored forests as valuable economic resources that can improve livelihoods while supporting both biodiversity and conservation. Their positive perceptions provide a strong foundation for developing sustainable community-based ecotourism initiatives.

## **5.3 Community Participation in Tourism Development.**

Community participation emerged as the primary factor in the successful development of tourism within the restored forests. The research found that most respondents were willing to engage in tourism if they had the right support and opportunities. The preferred areas of participation included handicraft production, food vending, tourist guiding, and environmental conservation. This reflects

how local communities view tourism as an integral alternative livelihood that complements local agricultural activities.

These findings support the principles of Community-Based Tourism(CBT), which emphasize local ownership, empowerment, and equitable benefit-sharing. According to (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009)Tourism is more sustainable when local people actively participate in its planning, management, and implementation. Similarly, the Focus Group Discussions revealed that community members possess valuable indigenous knowledge that could enhance visitor experiences through activities such as tree identification, cultural storytelling, nature guiding, hospitality, business management, and environmental conservation, thereby enabling them to participate effectively in tourism enterprises.

The findings are consistent with (Stone & Nyaupane, 2016), who observed that capacity building significantly enhances community participation in ecotourism by improving skills, confidence, and service quality. Key Informants also recommended strengthening partnerships between Uganda Wildlife Authority and local communities through continuous training, technical support, and community association to enhance local participation and ownership of restoration initiatives.

The findings suggest that effective tourism development in the restored forests should prioritize genuine community empowerment through skills development, inclusive decision-making, and support for entrepreneurs. Such an approach would not only improve local livelihoods but also strengthen community commitment to biodiversity conservation and the long-term sustainability of tourism in Kibaale National Park.

#### **5.4 Opportunities for Tourism Development in the Restored Forest Areas**

The study findings revealed that the restored sections of Kibale National Park provide an integral opportunity for sustainable tourism development. Ecological restoration has increased vegetation cover, enhanced the aesthetic value of previously degraded landscapes, and increased wildlife numbers, thereby creating favorable conditions for nature-based tourism. These improvements provide a strong foundation for diversifying tourism products while supporting conservation and community development.

One of the major opportunities identified by respondents was diversifying tourism products. While tourism in Kibaale National Park is primarily centered on chimpanzee tracking, the restored forests offer additional opportunities for birdwatching, nature walks, botanical tourism, forest-restoration tours, environmental education, photography, and medicinal plant interpretation. Diversifying tourism products would reduce pressure on the existing attractions, increase visitors' length of stay,

and enhance tourism revenue. These findings are consistent with (Eagles, 2014), who argues that diversified tourism products improve destination competitiveness while providing sustainable financing for protected area management.

The Focus Group Discussions further highlighted innovative tourism opportunities, such as restoration experience tours, in which visitors participate in tree planting and ecological restoration activities. Participants also emphasized that tourism could create employment through guiding, hospitality services, handicraft production, accommodation, and the supply of agricultural products, thereby improving household incomes and reducing dependence on forest resources. Key Informants similarly noted that tourism development would encourage investment in infrastructure such as nature trails, visitor interpretation centers, signage, and accommodation facilities while strengthening Kibale National Park's reputation as a destination for restoration-based ecotourism.

Furthermore, the presence of indigenous and medicinal tree species, including *Prunus Africana*, *Warburgia ugandensis* and *Vernonia amygdalina*, presents opportunities for botanical tourism, scientific research, and environmental education. Overall, the findings demonstrate that restored forests are valuable tourism assets that can promote biodiversity conservation, environmental education, sustainable livelihoods, and rural economic development. Strategic investment in tourism infrastructure and product development would therefore enable Kibale National Park to maximize the ecological and socioeconomic benefits generated through forest restoration.

### **5.5 Challenges affecting Tourism development in the restored forest areas**

Despite the considerable tourism opportunities identified, the study also revealed several challenges that, if left unaddressed, are likely to hinder tourism development. Respondents identified inadequate tourism opportunities, human-wildlife conflicts, security concerns, and inadequate funding as the major constraints affecting tourism development within restored forests.

The lack of tourism infrastructure emerged as one of the most critical challenges. Most restored sections currently lack well-developed nature trails, visitor interpretation centers, directional signage, observation platforms, and other visitor facilities needed to support tourism. Without these facilities, visitor satisfaction and safety may be compromised, limiting the competitiveness of restored forests as tourism destinations.

These findings are consistent with (Buckley, 2012), who argues that appropriate tourism infrastructure is essential for delivering quality visitor experiences while minimizing environmental impacts. Poor infrastructure often discourages tourists and reduces destination competitiveness.

Human-wildlife conflict was another major concern raised by respondents and key informants. Communities indicated that increasing wildlife populations occasionally damage crops and threaten household livelihoods. Unless effective conflict mitigation measures are implemented, community support for tourism and conservation could gradually decline.

Key informants equally emphasized the need to review existing benefit-sharing arrangements, strengthen community sensitization, and increase investment in tourism marketing. They recommended employing more ranger guides, expanding tourism trails, and improving promotion of restored forests to attract specialized tourism markets such as birdwatchers, botanists, and conservation volunteers.

Funding limitations were also identified as a major obstacle. Developing tourism infrastructure requires substantial financial investment, which may exceed available conservation budgets. Strategic partnerships between Uganda Wildlife Authority, conservation organizations, local governments, and private investors will therefore be necessary to mobilize resources for tourism development.

Therefore, the findings indicate that although the restored forests possess significant tourism potential, addressing these institutional and socio-economic challenges will be integral for successful tourism development.

## **CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Conclusions**

This study assessed the potential of restored forests in Kibale National Park for tourism development by examining available tourism resources and attractions, evaluating local perceptions, and identifying the opportunities and challenges associated with tourism development. The study findings reflect that ecological restoration has not only improved the ecological integrity of the restored forest landscapes but has also created significant opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

- i. The restored forests possess a diversity of wildlife, wetland streams, indigenous tree species, and scenic forest landscapes that are in a position to support and promote nature-based tourism activities like nature walks, bird watching, botanic tourism, photography, avitourism, as well as environmental education.
- ii. The study revealed that the surrounding communities have entirely positive perceptions of tourism development in the restored forest areas; community members expressed a willingness to participate in tourism through activities such as guiding, handicraft making, cultural performances, tourism-related enterprises, and food services. These findings suggest that community-based tourism approaches could successfully complement conservation efforts while improving local livelihoods.
- iii. Despite the considerable opportunities, several challenges were identified that may constrain tourism development if not effectively addressed: inadequate tourism infrastructure, low levels of community participation, security issues, inadequate promotion and marketing, and limited financial resources for investment. Addressing these constraints will be imperative for realizing the full tourism potential of the restored forests.
- iv. Overall, the study concludes that the restored forests of Kibale National Park hold substantial potential to become sustainable ecotourism destinations. Incorporating tourism development with ecological restoration can contribute to biodiversity conservation, diversify tourism products, generate more tourism and conservation revenue, enhance community livelihoods, and support Uganda's sustainable development agenda.

## 6.2 Recommendations

- i. Based on the findings of this study, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) should integrate the restored forest areas into its tourism development strategy by developing tourism products that complement ecological restoration and ensure the long-term conservation of biodiversity while integrating sustainability so that an increase in visitor numbers does not compromise the ecological management agenda.
- ii. Another recommendation is to invest in basic tourism infrastructure, including nature trails, viewing areas, visitor rest areas, signage, and interpretive materials to improve accessibility, safety, visitor experience, and satisfaction. Such infrastructure will enhance the attractiveness of the restored forests and support the development of a variety of ecotourism products.
- iii. Community participation should be strengthened by empowering the local people to participate in planning, enterprise development, and decision-making. UWA and its responsible partners should provide training, enterprise support, and capacity-building programs to enable communities to engage in guiding, handicraft production, good services, and cultural performances, among others. Equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms should also be employed to ensure that tourism generates reasonable socio-economic benefits for the adjacent communities, hence increasing local support for conservation.
- iv. To maximize the tourism potential of the restored forests, tourism products should be diversified beyond traditional wildlife viewing to include guided nature walks, avitourism, and environmental education, among others. Additionally, UWA should strengthen its promotional and marketing strategies in collaboration with the Uganda Tourism Board, tour operators, and other responsible stakeholders to increase awareness of these unique tourism destinations.
- v. Finally, strengthening partnerships among the 4 responsible government agencies, the private sector, research institutions, and host communities to mobilize financial and technical support for tourism and conservation development. Measures to reduce human-wildlife conflict should also be enhanced through community sensitization, promotion of alternative livelihood opportunities, and employing effective conflict mitigation strategies, as well as continuous environmental monitoring to ensure tourism development remains environmentally sustainable, while the future research should examine the visitors' willingness to pay the economic contribution of the restoration aligned with tourism as well as the long-term socio-economic and ecological impacts of tourism development with in the restored forest landscapes.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: FIELD PHOTOS



## Appendix B: QUESTIONNAIRE

### ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF RESTORED FORESTS IN KIBALE NATIONAL PARK FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.

BY

MOSES MUTESASIRA

23/U/0900

#### Introduction

This questionnaire seeks to assess the tourism potential of restored forest areas in Kibale National Park and their contribution to sustainable tourism development. It also examines the attractions in the restored forest, community perceptions, willingness to participate in tourism as well as opportunities and challenges associated with developing these areas into viable tourism products. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Thank you for your valuable contribution.

#### Instruction:

Please tick (✓) the most appropriate answer, and provide detailed responses where open-ended questions are asked. All responses are confidential and used strictly for academic purposes.

#### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Date; .....
2. Location .....
3. Gender  
☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say
4. Age group  
☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ 46–55 ☐ 56+
5. Marital status;  
☐ Single ☐ Married
6. Household size; .....
7. Education level.  
☐ No formal education ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary
8. Main Occupation; .....
9. Length of stay in the area  
☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 4 – 7 years ☐ 8 – 10 years ☐ More than 10 years

#### SECTION B: Tourism Resources and Attractions in Restored Forests

1. Are you aware of forest restoration activities in the park?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. From your experience, what physical features exist within the restored forest sections?  
.....
3. How is the scenic and aesthetic quality of the restored areas compared to old-growth sections?  
.....

4. What animal species are currently present in the restored forests?

.....

5. As a result of restoration, has the population of animal species increased?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What could be the reason?

.....

6. What major tree species are found in the restored forests that can be marketed for tourism?

.....

7. As a result of restoration, has the number of these tree species increased?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Are the restored areas suitable for activities such as;

☐ Nature walks ☐ Birdwatching ☐ Photography ☐ Primate tracking

☐ Canopy experiences ☐ Conservation education ☐ Other (specify): .....

9. What infrastructure currently exists in these sections?

☐ Trails ☐ Signage ☐ Security patrols ☐ Visitor accessibility paths

☐ Other (specify): .....

10. In your opinion, is the restored forest ready to be marketed as a tourism product?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

.....

### **SECTION C: Community Perceptions and Participation**

1. Are local communities involved in forest restoration activities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how are they involved:

.....

2. What benefits do communities obtain from restored forests?

☐ Employment ☐ Tourism income ☐ Environmental services

☐ Education and awareness ☐ Other (specify): .....

3. Do you think the restored forest can attract Tourists?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what would attract the tourists?

.....

4. Would tourism in a restored forest benefit your household

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. If yes, how could it benefit your household?

.....

6. Would you be willing to participate in tourism-related activities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, in which area?

☐ Guiding ☐ Craft production ☐ Accommodation services

☐ Transportation ☐ Cultural performances ☐ Food services

☐ Other (specify): .....

7. What factors could hinder community participation in tourism within the restored forest?

.....

8. What strategies could strengthen community support for tourism initiatives in restored areas?

☐ Revenue sharing ☐ Participatory planning ☐ Empowerment by capacity building

☐ Offering economic opportunities

9. What skills or support would you need to engage effectively in tourism?

.....

.....

#### **SECTION D: OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

##### **Opportunity**

☐ Diversification of tourism products. ☐ Increased conservation funding.

☐ Development of eco-education programs. ☐ Attraction of new tourism market segments.

☐ Reduced pressure on core (kanyanchu) Primate tracking areas

#### **SECTION E: CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS**

##### **Challenge**

☐ Limited wildlife visibility. ☐ Inadequate marketing and promotion.

☐ Risk of environmental degradation. ☐ Insufficient community involvement.

☐ Security concerns. ☐ Inadequate tourism infrastructure in the restored forest (trails, signage)

#### **SECTION F: OVERALL FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT**

1. In your opinion, what improvements are needed before tourism development begins in the restored areas?

.....

2. Any additional comments:

.....

## **Appendix C: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF RESTORED FORESTS IN KIBALE NATIONAL PARK FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Introduction**

This interview guide seeks to assess the tourism potential of restored forest areas in Kibale National Park and their contribution to sustainable tourism development. It also examines the attractions in the restored forest, community perceptions, willingness to participate in tourism as well as opportunities and challenges associated with developing these areas into viable tourism products. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Thank you for your valuable contribution.

#### **Instruction:**

Please provide detailed responses to these open-ended questions asked. All responses are confidential and used strictly for academic purposes

#### **Section A: Respondent Profile**

2. Institution/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Position/Role: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of experience: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Involvement in restoration/tourism activities (Yes/No): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Section B: Tourism Resources and Attractions**

1. What key tourism resources can be found in the restored areas
2. what tourism activities can potentially be developed in these areas using those resources?
3. Are there any current tourism activities already taking place in the restored sections,
4. what types of tourists would be most interested in these restored areas?

#### **Section C: Community Perceptions**

1. How can UWA involve local communities in tourism development in the restored forest?
2. What challenges would UWA face in involving the community in tourism development in the restored forest?
3. What benefits are communities allowed to get from the restored forest?
4. How would community involvement improve tourism in the restored areas?

#### **Section D: Challenges and Opportunities**

##### **Challenges:**

1. What are the main challenges limiting tourism development in the restored forest?  
**(Infrastructure, wildlife visibility, funding, policy, accessibility, management)**
2. What conflicts exist between restoration and tourism development in the restored areas?

##### **Opportunities:**

1. What partnerships can support tourism development? How can restoration and tourism be integrated sustainably? **Government, NGOs, private sector;**
2. What policy interventions are used to manage tourism in the restored forest?

#### **Section E: Tourism Development and Feasibility**

1. How can UWA enhance visitor experience in the restored areas?
2. What strategies has UWA put in place to support tourism development in the restored areas?
3. How can tourism contribute to restoration?

#### **Section F: Recommendations**

1. Any additional information about blending tourism and restoration?

## **APPENDIX D: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide**

### **(For Local Community Members)**

#### **1. General Awareness**

What changes in trees and plants have you observed in these restored areas?

#### **2. Perceptions of Tourism Potential**

What types of tourism activities would be suitable in these areas?

How would tourism in the restored forest benefit your household?

#### **3. Participation.**

In what ways would you like to participate in tourism activities in the restored areas?

What support would you need to engage effectively?

#### **4. Concerns and Safeguards**

Are there risks associated with tourism development in restored forests?

What measures should be put in place to mitigate these risks?