

BAMBOO GROWING AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN MUSANZE AND BURERA DISTRICTS, RWANDA

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to assess the contribution of bamboo growing towards poverty reduction in two districts of northern Rwanda where the Volcanoes National Park is found. The major objective of the study was to establish whether bamboo growing was helping the communities to reduce poverty among them. This study adopted both qualitative and quantitative designs so that the two approaches complemented each other. To achieve this, a total of 80 cooperative members (who are the community members) were interviewed selected from a total population of 604 bamboo growers was interviewed. To collect the data, questionnaires were administered to the staff of BASOLI project and an interview guide was used on the cooperative members who were interviewed in focused group discussions. The ministry officials were also interviewed. To supplement this data documentary analysis was done at the district level, project offices and the ministry of forestry offices annual reports. After collecting this data, SPSS package was used to analyse the data which was tabulated and in some cases put into graphs. The major finding was that the activity of bamboo growing was taking place and had provided the communities with gainful employment. However, the major challenge was that there was limited land for expansion of the activity. None the less the study concluded that bamboo growing is pertinent in poverty reduction in this part of Rwanda because of reasons that are socio-economic. It is therefore recommended that bamboo growing in Musanze and Burera district should be given priority compared to other tree varieties in the district planning and budgeting processes. This is because bamboo is high yielding compared to the other three varieties. It is then that more land can be allocated to bamboo growing; increase vocational training for the community members so that they acquire the right skills to produce competitive products on the market hence increased income thus reduced poverty around the VNP.