

## **Social Assessment**

**Implementer:** Forest of Hope Association

**Project:** 64733- Strengthening the Conservation of the Gishwati Forest Reserve, Rwanda

### **1. People in the Project Area**

This project will be implemented around and in the Gishwati Forest Reserve located in western part of Rwanda, in Kigeyo, Ruhango, Mushonyi and Nyabirasi Sectors of Rutsiro District. The project will involve people and officials of Rukaragata and Nyagahinika Cells of Kigeyo Sector; Rurara of Mushonyi Sector; Mubuga of Nyabirasi Sector; and Bugarura, Gihira, Rundoyi of Ruhango Sector. According to the 2012 Population and Housing Census (Rwanda National Institute of Statistics, 2014), the total population of these Cells is 10,134.

All of the project beneficiaries are local and they will be involved in all steps of the projects. Each household in these Cells has land title of owned plots. The land titles are provided by the Rwanda Natural Resources Authority/ department of Lands and Mapping. The document provided clearly shows the boundaries of the plot, the number and the names of the owners (husband and wife). The same institution keeps the titles of government land including the Gishwati Forest Reserve with its current boundaries. This means that conflicts between local people and the government over land ownership are unlikely to happen in the future because of the existence of these titles and maps that show ownership and boundaries. All of people in the area speak the same language, Kinyarwanda and more than 95% of them are farmers. The land use around the forest is household consumption crops, pastures and tea.

### **2. Expected Positive and Negative Impacts**

The project is expected to have positive impacts on the people living in Cells around the forest. Expected results include improved livelihoods, awareness and ownership. There are no anticipated negative impacts from the project. While implementing the project we will ensure that stakeholders understand well the objectives of the project and expected results and, that social and economic layers of the community including women, men, youth, elders, and historically marginalized people (Batwa) are involved. For instance we will involve all of these community members in discussions to establish Community Forest Protection Initiative Committees, and to gather ideas for the five year management plan.

### **3. Free, Prior, and Informed Consent**

The project will support and build the capacity of the local community to participate in forest protection and local government officials at Cell level to enforce the environmental laws. FHA will respect the decisions of local people and government officials and these will be considered during the project implementation. FHA discussed this project with potential partners including Rwanda Natural Resources Authority/ department of Forestry and Nature Conservation (RNRA/FNC), Rwanda Development Board (RDB), Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), national Police, Rutsiro District; Kigeyo, Ruhango, Mushonyi and Nyabirasi Sectors and; Rukaragata, Rurara, Bugarura, Mubuga, Gihira, Rundoyi and Nyagahinika Cells. Also some of local people were in the meetings in which we discussed this project.

FHA received supporting letters from Rutsiro District and RDB to implement this project and basing on our experience working with the community in the area, local and central government we are confident that the project will be successful.

### **4. Measures to Avoid Adverse Impacts and Provide Culturally Appropriate Benefits**

FHA values local knowledge. We will ensure that all stakeholders including local farmers and government officials understand the project scope and will include constructive ideas from them. During the project implementation, we will consider the adaptive management. Local people will freely choose the three

members of the Community Forest Protection Committee at Cell level. This will be done in a transparent way with respect to gender, age, revenue and different community groups. Also in quarterly meetings we will ensure that local people are explained the components of the five year management plan so that they can give their contribution.

## **5. Monitoring**

FHA will ensure that it works closely with the community, Cells, Sectors and District officials to monitor the work on Community Forest Protection Initiative Agents, Community Committees and Cells Officials. We will ensure that, together with stakeholders, we address any unexpected positive or negative changes that may occur in the community as a result of the project. Progress reports will be prepared to stakeholders and CEPF and will be shared with the local community.

## **6. Grievance Mechanism**

FHA welcomes claims and comments from stakeholders and local community. During the first meetings, FHA will inform local people and other stakeholders that they have right to raise a grievance at any time to FHA, Rutsiro District or CEPF about any issue relating to the project. They will be given telephone numbers and e-mails of contact persons at FHA, Rutsiro District and CEPF. FHA will respond to grievances in writing within 30 working days of receipt. Claims will be filed, considered in the project monitoring, and shared with Rutsiro District and CEPF.