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ABSTRACT

The results of forced displacement are many and in most cases negative and stressful to humanity. If a displacement exercise is not well planned, it may disrupt the social and economic development of human societies. This study assessed the socio-economic impacts of conservation-induced displacement of the people from protected areas with a focus on Gishwati forest reserve in Rwanda. Data were collected from 200 households in two villages that were relocated from Gishwati forest and 3 local council leaders from each of the villages. Interview, focused group discussion and observation were the methods employed in data collection. Findings of this study indicate that the average household size was 6.22 which was higher than the national average. Before relocation households were engaged in different economic activities. All the households(100%) reported that they were harvesting resources from Gishwati forest before they were displaced. Households land-holding was between 4 and 12 hectares. Although all respondents agreed that they got better shelter after relocation, 82% reported that poverty had increased in their households because of land scarcity. The study found that 20% of the people who were employed lost their jobs while 50% of the respondents reported that they were marginalized by the relocation. Despite the displacement, majority of the households still attached importance to the conservation of Gishwati forest reserve, respondents were asked to state with reasons whether they supported the conservation of the forests. Or not. The attitude was regarded as positive if the respondent supported the conservation of the forest and negative if the respondent was opposed to the conservation of the forest. The study also found that 85% of the respondents had a positive attitude towards the conservation of Gishwati forest reserve. Only 15% of the respondents were opposed to the conservation of forest. Of those opposed to the conservation of the forest, 77% cited inability to collect firewood while 57% pointed out lack of grazing land.