Local Community Participation and Wildlife Conservation in Uganda: A Case of Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kasese District

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Abstract

This paper seeks to demonstrate how community involvement in Wildlife conservation has both empowering and disempowering effects. The paper addresses two questions: 1) Does community participation in wildlife protection lead to their empowerment? And 2) Does empowerment, in turn, lead to community development? Different methods of data collection were used, including interviews and unstructured questionnaire henceforth the paper purely adopted qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Findings from these sources drive the main argument of the paper that the relationship between community participation in conservation and economic empowerment remains problematic. Findings from this research indicate that; community leaders and the youth play key roles of educating their members on the importance of wildlife conservation and guarding their forests from poachers respectively; they do not derive significant benefits from wildlife conservation efforts by the Government; the implementation of laws prohibiting hunting in the protected area and harvesting of conserved animal species in forests in the buffer zone has negatively affected the livelihood of heads of households and male youths who were great hunters. The study concludes and recommends that local communities in the area should be sensitized and educated on wildlife laws specifically laws relating to illegal hunting and bush meat consumption and trade. Creating local awareness on the benefits of wildlife conservation without tangible benefits from the park might not influence attitude change and deter wildlife utilization in the area. New policies could be formulated for integrated park management where local community, especially the youths can actively participate in wildlife conservation. Developing and promoting alternative forms of tourism in the area could bring benefits to the local community thus leading to attitude change and alternative source of livelihood.

Keywords: Involvement, Participation, Community-based conservation, Conservation and Development, Disempowerment.

Introduction

This study examined how enhancing community participation in wildlife conservation in Queen Elizabeth National Park could enhance sustaining community rights and benefits sharing. Queen Elizabeth National Park is regarded as one of the most economically significant parks in Uganda owing to high tourist visitation and revenue streams to the government of Uganda. The park received 78,234 international visitors in 2017 compared to Murchison Falls National Park which registered the highest number with 97,567 international visitors in 2017(Uganda Tourism Board Report, 2018). Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities Report (2019) indicates that in 2017, revenue from Wildlife and Antiquities in Uganda soared to Shs 5.1 trillion ($1.4bn) when the country attracted over 1.3 million international visitors with 194,000,000 million dollars as revenue from Queen Elizabeth National Park. Despite the economic significance of Queen Elizabeth National Park, the wildlife dispersal areas outside the park boundaries are shrinking at an alarming rate due to changing land use activities and growing human population pressure. All these problems facing the Queen Elizabeth National

Park have aggravated Human-Wildlife conflicts, as well as creating an unviable ecosystem for wildlife (Sama, 2018). The park cannot support the current wildlife populations without the dispersal areas offered by community land. The ecological limitations of the park call for the management of wildlife resources in the ecosystem to be inclusive and to involve the local communities (Mulrennan, Mark and Scott, 2012). This study therefore aims to provide linkages by examining modalities for enhancing community participation in wildlife conservation in Queen Elizabeth National Park.

Contextual Perspective

Uganda in the postcolonial era has continued to implement conservation policies that exclude local communities as an approach to managing protected areas (PAs) in Africa (Twinamatsiko et al., 2014). This is witnessed with the top-down approach that is mostly used in implementing conservation policies in Uganda. Local communities that formerly had access to wildlife resources from national parks in Uganda have been excluded from established PA management (Sama, 2018). (Baker et al., 2013). Local community members, in efforts to secure their means of survival, have been the majority of culprits of this wildlife management arrangement. This has continued to cause much tension and conflicts between PA managers and the local people bordering such PAs (Mugisha, 2002). Since 1996, the government of Uganda has encouraged collaboration between the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), local communities, and local governments, leading to sustainable management of resources in and around PAs. This has been achieved through local governments and local informal groups that work as conduits for collaborative management. The governance arrangements, however, continue to abuse local people's trust rather than placing them at the centre of decision-making processes. For example, Community-Protected Area Institutions (CPIs) evolved in the 1990s (Namara, 2006) with the aim of soliciting community participation in the collaborative management of national parks as a way of representing the interests of people bordering PAs (Namara, 2006). Conflict between nature conservation officials and pastoral and agricultural communities are almost inevitable in East Africa, because most important PAs such as Queen Elizabeth National Park are found adjacent to pastoral land areas and land use systems. Extensive forms of land use are to a greater degree compatible with wildlife management where wildlife, livestock, and local resource users are part of a complex social and natural resource management system (Blomley et al., 2010). In Uganda, however, most of the national parks and reserves are heavily dependent on surrounding community and privately owned land for their ecological survival and integrity (Twinamatsiko et al., 2014). Others rely on such land for corridors and dispersal areas. These national parks and reserves and the larger ecosystems are already under threat with significant loss of biodiversity and have attracted a wide range of competing and conflicting land uses due to the lack of systematic land use planning and unplanned development activities such as cultivation, human settlements, and tourism facilities development (Namara, 2006).

The threats against wildlife in Queen Elizabeth National Park ecosystem continue to escalate due to an increase in habitat fragmentation, changes in land use, and human population pressure on areas outside the park (Twinamatsiko et al., 2014). Loss of wildlife habitat outside PAs should be halted to ensure the viability and large abundance and diversity of species, to maintain existing areas and provide new additional areas for the growing tourism industry

to operate, and sufficient space to provide resilience to critical ecosystems and species as climate change and climate variability pose new threats (Butynski, 1984). Queen Elizabeth National Park is a perfect example of the problems of conserving the spectacular large mammal communities found in a PA. There is an increasing realisation that the management of wildlife resources must be inclusive and must involve local communities (Mugisha, 2002). Conservation authorities are increasingly becoming aware of the need to involve local communities in managing natural resources to safeguard and secure more space for wildlife conservation. Similarly, local communities are seeking ways of gaining benefits from the wildlife resources on their land, particularly through wildlife-based eco-tourism ventures that have the potential to provide direct benefits (Mulrennan et al., 2012).

While the government of Uganda has accepted community participation approaches in the management of natural resources that provide rural communities with secure tenure of natural resources, the commitment to develop appropriate supporting legislation and technical capacity has been lacking. In fact, even where legislation is in place, rights of access to and use of natural resources from PAs such as Queen Elizabeth National Park and its surroundings have not been clearly defined to the communities (Mugisha, 2002). In addition, communities have not received the necessary assistance to develop capacity to independently carry out conservation activities around national parks (Butynski, 1984). The result is that communities are unable to realise optimal benefits from the wealth of resources on their land. In Queen Elizabeth National Park, wildlife constitutes an important natural resource that must be conserved and managed by people surrounding the areas in partnership with the government and private sector. It is therefore imperative that the management of the wildlife resources in the ecosystem must be inclusive and involve local communities.

Theoretical Perspective

This study adopted the Policy Arrangements Approach (PAA) to guide the linkage between community conservation and its practice to improve people's livelihoods. The PAA has been accepted as one of the policy and institutional approaches that can explain contemporary policy processes in the field of environmental and nature-related studies. The approach was advanced by Noe (2013) as providing analytical overviews of the study of policy processes (Ahebwa, Duim and Sandbrook, 2012). This research applied the PAA to explain the implementation process of community involvement in wildlife conservation in the context of community livelihoods and their support for conservation. This study adopted certain elements of the PAA that are relevant to this research but that also point out limitations that justify the development of a theory of change based on the shortfalls and parameters that this approach has not addressed. The PAA also assumes that there should be rules in the game of policy implementation (Nelson, Rugemeleza and Rodgers, 2007). It is important to note here that in implementing policies, new ideas and rules emerge that affect the set rules and principles that guide the implementation process. That is why Wittrock and DeLeon (1986) compare policy implementation to "shooting a moving target". Changing the rules of the game therefore determines opportunities and barriers for the actors during a policy process (Uwizeyimana, 2012). The last assumption of the PAA framework is policy discourses. Arts and Van Tatenhove (2000) refer to policy discourses as key interpretative schemes that range from formal policy

concepts to popular story lines. This provides meaning to a given policy domain. Actors at Queen Elizabeth National Park have continued to formulate actions and discourses that further guide the implementation process of community involvement in nature conservation (Namara, 2006). This has been undertaken through meetings to make communities aware of programmes but also to review elements of the policy that could hamper its successful implementation. Many studies have been conducted and debates are still ongoing regarding the integration of local livelihood interventions into the conservation of PAs (Blomley et al., 2010). These studies, however, do not link policy to practice due to their limited evaluation of community involvement in livelihood security and both authorised and unauthorised resource use.

Community Participation and Livelihood

Globally, the phenomenon of community and individual livelihood security in the face of natural environmental conservation revenue and benefits is attracting international and local debates. The future of wildlife in Africa and Uganda depends on our ability to ensure that wildlife is an economic benefit not a burden to those who live side by side with it. The main focus of the ongoing debate revolves around whether conservation policy interventions address people's livelihoods (Craig, 2002). The contestation between local communities and conservationists is often premised on the inadequacy of benefits from PAs in terms of addressing their livelihood needs, yet such communities bear conservation costs (Stringer and Paavola, 2013). This situation is common in sub-Saharan Africa, where areas of high conservation value are under threat due to the increasing populations whose livelihoods depend on the natural resource base (Kabiri, 2010). When local communities do not see the direct benefits of conservation, they tend to downplay its importance. When this happens, government efforts to conserve are in vain. That is why in some developed countries, the strictly protectionist approach has given way to a radical change in policy that encompasses the role of local communities in conservation (Noe, 2013). In addition, the fundamental basis of PAs has been questioned, and the adoption of Community Based Conservation (CBC), has arisen from a greater understanding of linkages between PAs and rural development (Balint and Mashinya, 2008).

Noe (2013) notes that consultation and partnership building between conservationists and local communities can occur at various levels and may be formalised in memorandums of understanding (MoUs) or committees (Muzaale and Uwizeyimana, 2016). Community participation can also be *ad hoc* and informal, based on changing needs and developments (Craig, 2002). In some jurisdictions, interdepartmental committees have been set up to coordinate, control and enforce measures across government sectors. Elsewhere, regular meetings between government and conservation industry representatives and specialists take place to consider commercial and other economic interests that emanate from enhancing law enforcement. Some communities in the PAs in Uganda also organise local events that bring together concerned individuals, community groups, local administrators, and representatives of central authorities to consult with law enforcement agencies about the best ways to prevent and suppress local wildlife and forest offences. The findings revealed, however, that the phenomenon of partnerships between law enforcement and local communities in terms of reducing wildlife crime is still in its initial stages in Uganda and therefore calls for further research.

Namara (2006) notes that the Ugandan Wildlife Act (2019) makes express provision for revenue sharing where the UWA Board is obliged to pay entry fees collected from a wildlife PA to the adjacent local governments (Namara, 2006). UWA has developed guidelines on the revenue sharing programme around PAs. Mugisha (2002) notes that UWA, local communities, and local governments for sustainable management of resources in and around PAs focus much on this Act. However, the Wildlife Act does not provide for how the derivation funds are to be allocated between local governments and the communities surrounding the PAs.

Kremen, Raymond and Lace (1998) found that among the weaknesses in the management structures are investigation and the way evidence is handled. Investigation of wildlife and forest offences is a challenge for the whole community and is not limited to law enforcement agencies. It usually involves a variety of government departments and private industry and civil society organisations; each of which helps to bring an additional dimension to the response (Mulrennan et al., 2012). In bridging the gap, dealing with wildlife and forest offences in isolation, especially without the buy-in of enforcement agencies such as the police and customs, affects the ability to efficiently address the causes and consequences of this phenomenon. It is crucial that key stakeholders consult one another and build partnership to effectively combat wildlife and forest offences. An environment should be created where seizures and arrests for wildlife and forest offences are not an end in themselves but are linked to the wider fight against serious criminality. Different from the dimension deduction approach that Noe (2013) emphasises, reducing offences will require close collaboration between wildlife and forestry officials and the wider law enforcement community that deals with both criminal intelligence and the criminal justice system as a whole.

Scholars such as Sandbrook (2006) and Blomley et al. (2010) present an argument that views the Integrated Conservation and Development (ICD) approach as a strategy that the slow and complex process of changing the way people manage resources and earn their livelihood indicates that ICD develops and improves gradually, leading to a need to assess ICDs on a long-term basis (Larson et al. 1997; Abbot 2001). The debate as to the conservation effectiveness of ICD is limited by the lack of socio-economic monitoring of the drivers of resource use and the state of governance of ICD projects (Mugisha, 2002). The fact that community-based approaches aim to increase community support for conservation means that their model of implementation is important in addressing community livelihoods that would result in increased support for conservation. The challenges highlighted in this section, such as limited socio-economic monitoring, are important for exploration to understand why monitoring of projects is not effective and to identify the gaps that exist in the governance of such projects.

In response to criticisms of failed linkages between conservation and development, a second generation of benefit sharing programmes was advanced. It was based on the principle that local populations will only abide by conservation measures after realising that their socio-economic wellbeing was addressed (Kremen et al, 1998). The second generation of benefit sharing also aimed at empowering communities with sustainable economic alternatives to destructive harvesting and land use practices (Wells and Brandon, 1993). Furthermore, benefit sharing activists place specific emphasis on resolving conflict between PAs and communities by designing strategies to mitigate conservation costs and to ensure local benefits. This

arrangement was good, although attention was not paid to the nature of the benefits. This study further analysed the kind of benefits that local people prioritised to meet their livelihood needs.

In many instances, the creation of these PAs deprived local people of a resource that they had been accessing for a long time, for both their cultural and economic purposes (Barrow and Murphree, 2001). It is important that local communities neighbouring PAs be integrated into efforts of conservation (Twinamatsiko and Muchunguzi, 2012). The successful management of PAs depends on the cooperation and support of local communities (Baker, Milner-Gulland and Leader-Williams, 2011). Conflict over the use of natural resources can arise when local communities are excluded from management decisions or receive insufficient compensation for the costs they incur from the establishment of PAs (Baker et al. 2011; Twinamatsiko et al. 2014). The agenda of getting communities involved in conservation is to make nature and natural resource conservation beneficial and meaningful to rural communities. It is argued that only when conservation directly benefits those who incur costs of conservation, will rural communities take on resource management responsibility

Conservation areas should translate its benefits into livelihood improvement (Turner et al., 2012) and poverty alleviation (Namara, 2006). For effective poverty and conservation links, ensuring that the finance and economic planning ministries are well aware of the values of PAs and goods and services they provide for good conservation practices (Mugisha, 2002). This study agrees with previous studies and recommends a more meaningful analysis of the benefits that people realise from conservation initiatives. This has worked in Rwanda, where there are increased community incentives from conservation areas (Sandbrook, 2006), and Cameroon, where there has been an increase in the revenue base from conservation(Blomley et al, 2010) and therefore has the potential to work at Queen Elizabeth National Park. This shows deliberate attempts by most central governments to have people remain in poverty despite the fact that they are surrounded by rich biodiversity. The lack of local control over tourism is not always due to the actions of policy makers and implementers. There are also limitations in terms of operations, existing structures, and societal and cultural constructions to the ability of local communities to participate in tourism, which makes it difficult to transfer control (Tosun, 2000). These cases are similar to Queen Elizabeth National Park's case where local people have limited control over determining the benefits that accrue from forest resources. As much as policies exclude local people, policy makers and governments should know that financial flows to local communities reduce their sense of grievance over the creation of national parks, although they are not compensated for the costs of park creation (Adams and Infield, 2002). Such incentives, however, if realised by the community, would increase their support for conservation. Different uses of livelihood analysis have been placed in the limelight. It is important to note that rural livelihoods affect and are affected by natural resource management initiatives (Twinamatsiko et al., 2014). There must be trade-offs between environmental sustainability and livelihood improvement because the two affect each other. Linking conservation with livelihood improvement is more than effective national park management, which requires that the issues of governance, human rights, equity, and power are addressed at all levels (Baker et al., 2013).

Participation as one key form of governance is fundamental for revenue sharing and other ICDs, yet it has been documented that most projects fail to devolve natural resource

management to local people in the early days of ICD interventions (Barrow and Murphree, 2001). In bridging the gap, participation of a community in the planning and operational aspects of an initiative or within ownership structures is not an aspect to overlook if benefits are to be distributed. This study agrees with the assumption that governance is paramount to national park management. While the participation of local communities in national park management has increased over time, the type of participation that is practised by park managers is rarely defined (Noe, 2013). This affects understanding of whether meaningful participation has been achieved, where communities felt engaged in the decision-making process, and how effective this was in securing both livelihood improvement and conservation goals. Local communities have been viewed as passive participants rather than active participants. This affects decision-making outcomes and the level of ownership of decisions that accrue.

Methodology

The methodological approach to this study was qualitative in nature, where interview guides were adopted. The study not only investigated the "what", "where", and "when", but also the "why" and "how" of decision making. Following the decision on the appropriate methodology to use in this study, the next step was to decide on the research design. The choice of research design was influenced largely by the approach (quantitative or qualitative), as well as the philosophical assumptions that guided the research process and consideration that the study intended to permit in-depth study of fundamental themes. In line with the research purpose and the unit of analysis, the study population comprised conservation managers, rangers and wardens in Queen Elizabeth National Park, UWA officials at the head office in Kampala, and community leaders and residents staying near Queen Elizabeth National Park. A total of 188 respondents were selected for the study, of which 111 were female and 77 were male. This study was multidimensional, hence multiple sampling techniques were used for specific groups of informants. Simple random sampling and purposive and convenience sampling were adopted. Initially, a pre-survey included visits to Queen Elizabeth National Park and the surrounding communities. The data collection instruments were designed with the participation of local authorities and community leaders. Content thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the data..

Findings and Analysis

The findings of this research are presented in terms of the three main themes of this research, namely community engagement, community activities and impact on conservation, and conservation costs.

Community Engagement

The findings revealed that engaging with indigenous and local communities to gain their participation in biodiversity conservation by providing sustainable and alternative livelihood options through financial support, technical guidance, and other measures is key in fighting poaching. Supporting alternative (non-wildlife) livelihoods as a pathway involves creating livelihood and economic opportunities not directly related to wildlife. Wildlife conservation

still has a long way to go. There have been many cases of unreported communities that view poaching as a means of livelihood. To limit this, there is a need to increase the participation of indigenous people and local communities in the planning, management, and use of wildlife through sustainable use and alternative livelihoods and to strengthen their ability to combat wildlife crime.

At Queen Elizabeth National Park, MoUs were signed with neighbouring communities for access to different types of resources; for example fishing, beekeeping with bee hives within the park boundaries, grass, and firewood. Over 17 MoUs have been signed in this regard. Examples include MoUs signed for fishing in the following Crater Lake areas:

Table 1: Name of community and year when MoU was signed with UWA

Name of community	Year
Nyamusingiri	2015
Mubabyo	2014
Kakyuba	2015
Karolelo	2015
Kyasanduka	2015

Source: Primary data (2018)

The MoUs have been signed and more communities are pushing UWA to sign MoUs since they want to freely carry out fishing and other activities in the lakes around the national parks. However, this has called for sensitisation. Training workshops are organised with the communities on enterprises such as tree planting, beekeeping, and fish farming, which are all geared towards creating harmony between the park and communities, as well as a love for wildlife among the communities.

The findings revealed that communities that live around Queen Elizabeth National Park are poor, and their major sources of income include agriculture, trading, and fishing. Communities have limited resources such as land, pasture, and water. Most of the youths in the area have low education levels, which leads to their unemployment and some of them have ended up in fishing villages, hence increasing the human population. Land shortage coupled with increasing population around the PAs has increased pressure on park resources. Communities have been involved in poaching, timber cutting for charcoal as alternative means of household livelihood. Water sources have been a challenge around the PAs Queen Elizabeth National Park has experienced pressure from the local communities to provide them with water for domestic use as well as for their livestock. The Deputy Director Planning; noted that the UWA adequately involves the public in conservation and in return the community around the parks are given benefits through their local governments for purposes of development.

The Conservation Manager: Queen Elizabeth National Park noted that:

> *UWA adequately deals with community compensation with regard to supporting matters of wildlife conservation. For every visitor entering the park, 20% of the fee paid is declared and given to Kasese District Local Government.*

According to the World Wildlife Fund (2015), since 2000, 20% of the park entrance fees paid by tourists to Uganda have been shared with communities in parishes (administration areas within districts) that border PAs (known as frontline communities) (UWA, 2012). According to UWA (2012), revenue sharing will lead to sustainable management of natural resources through people obtaining financial support that contributes directly to their welfare. The revenue encourages the communities to partner with UWA to conserve Uganda's fauna and flora .The findings revealed that UWA has consistently remitted the 20% to the communities through local leadership of the district. For example, on 6 July 2017, UWA shared revenue with communities around Queen Elizabeth National Park to the tune of UGX 929 269 487 collected over a period of one financial year (2015/2016) (UWA 2017).

However, the major concern is that these funds disappear the moment the local government administrators receive them, with very little or nothing reaching the intended beneficiaries (the real communities that are affected by the wildlife). This therefore exacerbates the problem of human-wildlife conflicts in most national parks in Uganda; for example, Queen Elizabeth National Park. The role of UWA is more active and visible in the declaration and remittance of funds to the district accounts. Little is known of the percentage that reaches local people and the sustainability of the projects that were funded. This implies that there is still limited capacity by local people (both beneficiaries and leaders) to monitor revenue-sharing projects. This necessitates the intervention of UWA and other key stakeholders in monitoring these funds and projects.

Community Activities and impact on Wildlife Conservation

As to whether a bush meat crisis exists that encourages communities around parks to engage in illegal wildlife trade in Uganda, the majority (67.5%) of the participants agreed. Relatedly, the District Internal Security Officer at the Mpondwe Border entry/exit point noted that

> *The best meal/most favourite meal for the local population staying near Queen Elizabeth National Park is wild meat. Wild meat is mixed with domestic meat and we lack capacity to identify game meat. The DNA could be proof to identify wild meat.*

Twinamatsiko et al. (2014) links illegal bush meat hunting to subsistence needs. The popular contemporary belief is, however, that hunting for food rather than habitat loss is the leading driver of these losses.

The Commissioner of Wildlife Conservation at the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities noted that

> *I am aware that at some point in Kafu and Kasese they sell bush meat, although many people claim that it is not bush meat. We have, however, not yet taken any significant step to address this concern.*

Twinamatsiko et al. (2014) indicate that this trade is on a small scale and not on a commercial scale. Compared to the prices of local butcheries (1 kg of beef costs UGX 8000-9000), bush meat costs UGX 5000-6 000. This is attributed to the need for a quick sale because of illegality. The participants also mentioned that bush meat is trusted to have medicinal properties and hunting is used by the Bakonjo to pass on traditional knowledge to the subsequent generation. The report titled *Wildlife Crime: A Review of the Evidence on the Drivers and Impacts in*

Uganda (Harrison et al., 2015) notes that the lack of alternative sources of food and income and in a broader sense the lack of rural and economic development force vulnerable groups to rely on wildlife resources for their existence. Bush hunting is on the increase. A research report by UWA (2017) notes that 15% of households in Uganda hunt for meat for home consumption but this is often a by-product of hunting for money as poor households are less likely to hunt but are more likely to be affected by law enforcement. Therefore, the study established that 42% of households hunt to sell and more affluent households are less likely to hunt. Many people in Uganda struggle or fail to meet their basic household needs. The latest poverty status report (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development [MoFPED] 2018) shows that although poverty levels are declining in Uganda, 36.9% live below the poverty line (consumption aggregate based on equivalent to US$1.9 per person per day), and 44.6% are at risk of falling back into poverty in the event of a shock. In rural areas surrounding PAs, poverty levels are often higher than the national average. For example, in Karamoja Region surrounding Kidepo Valley National Park, almost 80% of the people live below the poverty line (MoFPED, 2014).

A research report by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED 2016) further notes that households who suffer livestock predation by wild animals are more likely to hunt. Households who feel they have not benefitted from revenue sharing are more likely to hunt, and avenging crop raiding by wild animals was cited as a common reason why people hunt. Bush meat and timber are occasionally sold by people who need to make money to meet their basic needs, such as paying school fees or for medical treatment, or at times such as Christmas and Easter when money is needed for gifts and meat is required for celebration (Twinamatsiko et al., 2014).

A conservation area manager, in line with the above, noted, "the communities staying around national parks so much believe in bush meat and many have branded this kind of meat tasty".

The above statement regarding the communities staying around national parks may seem contradictory to the policy of UWA, whose objective is to conserve wildlife in Uganda.

1. The findings revealed that consultation and partnership building will deter viewing game meat as a means of livelihood. Mugisha (2002) similarly notes that consultation and partnership building can occur at various levels and may be formalised in MoUs or committees. They may also be *ad hoc* and informal based on changing needs and developments (Namara, 2006). In some jurisdictions, interdepartmental committees have been set up to coordinate control and enforcement measures across government sectors. Elsewhere, regular meetings between government and industry representatives take place to consider commercial and other economic interests in enhancing law enforcement. Some communities organise local events that bring together concerned individuals, community groups, local administrators, and representatives of central authorities to consult with law enforcement agencies about the best ways to prevent and suppress local wildlife and forest offences. The findings revealed, however, that community partnerships in reducing wildlife crime are a phenomenon in its initial stages that calls for further research. Communities do not know the economic value of wildlife.

2. Similarly, Craig (2002) notes that it is crucial that key stakeholders consult one another and build partnerships to effectively combat wildlife and forest offences.

Conservation Costs

Unauthorised resource use is another area that should draw the attention of Queen Elizabeth National Park's management. The equity framework emphasises the need to target people who do harm to resources in order to change their behaviour. Revenue sharing and benefit distribution do not currently consider this. This explains the negative relationship that exists between conservation and conservation cost. Since there is good will from poachers to reform and form associations, increased targeting of these people while distributing revenue-sharing benefits would further change behaviour. The key findings also reveal that most of the frontline local residents suffer from crop raiding. It was not easy to conclude whether crop raiding was responsible for game meat hunting and limited livelihoods or other factors relating to being located far from social amenities.

It is, however, important to note that people who live closer to Wildlife Protected Area (PA) boundaries and those who have land near PA boundaries suffer most of the conservation costs compared to residents who live far away from the PA. The conservation costs carried by such residents contribute greatly to their livelihood status. Crop raiding, as found by this study, creates much damage to potential harvests that would have addressed the problem of livelihood insecurity.

Secondly, young children of school-going age miss out on education as a result of staying behind to chase away vermin and problem animals. Crop raiding by elephants and buffaloes continues to affect Bakonjo's and some Basongora's livelihood avenues in the Kasese District. Buffaloes, porcupines, and elephants have continued to affect people's livelihood (Baker et al. 2013). The Rwenzori Mountain National Park, also in Kasese District, is also not an exception where blue monkeys, vervet monkeys, chimpanzees, and bush pigs greatly affect people's gardens and have reduced support for conservation. This shows how the problem is the same as in other communities that border PAs in Uganda and therefore requires a national policy solution. This is also similar to what a study by Kabiri (2010) found. The study also lacked peer review, which limits confidence in the data collected. The report, however, showed that crop raiding was a challenge to livelihood improvement and the socio-economic wellbeing of people bordering Queen Elizabeth National Park. In neighbouring Rwanda, the wildlife conservation policy provides for compensation of such losses, where 5% of the total revenue collected from the parks compensates community losses (Noe 2013). Although valuation of losses incurred is still a challenge, hope is built among local people neighbouring such PAs. As such, their support for conservation is high. This could be further explored to understand the implementation modalities to improve the practice at Queen Elizabeth National Park. According to this understanding, it would mean that conservation benefits should go directly to such categories of people in the frontline villages.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that human activities within the Queen Elizabeth National Park ecosystem have led to widespread habitat fragmentation, reduction in wildlife distribution range, shrinking of dry season dispersal areas, blockage of migratory routes and corridors, and increased human-wildlife conflicts due to competition for resources such as water, forage and space. Consequently, the ecological limitations of the ecosystem call for the management of wildlife resources in an inclusive manner that involves local communities.

Additionally, monitoring and evaluation remains in balance. This study revealed that for the project to be successful, the project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) ought to be functional.

Follow-up monitoring is therefore vested in the hands of local governments, which also have a wider mandate of many development projects.

Recommendations

To protect wildlife outside parks, measures for the establishment of more CBC projects must be explored and alternative livelihoods supported using tourist revenues so that communities perceive wildlife as a source of livelihood and empowerment, and not a burden to them.

The communities and conservation agencies should have a reciprocal relationship by which the communities receive reasonable returns from the tourist revenues for leasing their land to wildlife use while the conservation agencies ensure that payment to communities is sustained.

Community wildlife sanctuaries, community wildlife areas and other ecotourism ventures that provide direct benefits in the areas adjacent to parks need to be developed and buffer zones established by formation of conservancies and sanctuaries to reduce undesirable human activities (poaching, livestock grazing, settlements, and agriculture).

Revenue-sharing projects may be fashioned to positively impact on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries with minimal bureaucracy.

Community Project Procurement Committees (PPCs) should be formed through election at the general assembly.

A monitoring and evaluation system should be established and jointly supervised by UWA Community Conservation Department, Local Government Community Development Offices and funds increased for the Community Conservation Department to facilitate regular and wider outreach.

Ecological and social impact assessments should be conducted to inform all stakeholders whether community support for conservation contributes positively to overall biodiversity conservation

UWA should strengthen its operations with community park institutions to gain trust of the local community members and the mainstream local governments, especially the sub-county, which is a key player in project implementation. It is therefore recommended that the UWA considers empowering the stretcher groups that seem to be trusted by the community members.

The government should declare park open days for communities living around protected areas to enter the park for free as long as they can produce their National Identity Cards. Deliberate thematic activities like Conservation runs, Annual music, dance, and drama competitions for communities around PAs should be organised as a fora of sensitising the community about the importance of community participation in wild life conservation. Public Private Partnerships are encouraged for these activities.

Periodic interaction between wildlife authorities and communities should be set up through wildlife fora as a way of bringing all stakeholders in the wildlife sector on board and share information regarding wildlife conservation and management. This should be institutionalised and anchored in the Office of the Commissioner for Wildlife Conservation in Uganda.

UWA should involve and engage the community more to conserve wildlife through building long-term partnerships, as well as resolve human-wildlife conflicts to obtain buy-in from the community. A community conservation policy involving communities should be put in place to guide involvement of communities in wildlife conservation.

Wildlife Conservation Education and Awareness should be integral to the community livelihood empowerment efforts. A National Conservation Education and Awareness strategy is critically needed to act as a blue print in sensitizing communities around PAs as well as other areas.

There is need to establish a livelihood improvement fund for PA frontline communities under the Operation Wealth creation fund to empower the PA frontline communities. Capacity building and awareness about the various projects and formation of SACCOS should be done. This will help in sustaining the various projects set up by these communities.

Indigenous knowledge and culture should be integrated within the Wildlife management framework at Protected Area level since culture and indigenous knowledge differ across communities. This will no doubt empower the communities and actively involve them in wildlife conservation.

It is also recommended that UWA puts in place a policy to guide and promote establishment of wildlife conservancies for communities to benefit from the wildlife outside Protected Areas on private lands. Once the communities are able to benefit directly from the wildlife on their private land, then there is no doubt the communities will conserve the wildlife.

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