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EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EXISTING STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING GENDER RESPONSIVE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION IN NAROK COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Gender equity and women's empowerment are prerequisites to effective biodiversity conservation, climate action and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. In view of its ecological, social and economic value, wildlife is an important renewable natural resource. Its significance is felt in areas such as rural development, land-use planning, food supply, tourism, scientific research and cultural heritage. A better understanding of the different roles, knowledge, needs and aspirations of women and men with regard to wildlife management and conservation can help us achieve the twin goals of better conservation outcomes and increased gender equity. This study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the existing strategies in enhancing gender responsive wildlife management and conservation in Narok County, Kenya. The study was carried out in four Maasai Mara wildlife conservancies. Descriptive survey and sequential explanatory mixed method approach were adopted for the study. A sample size of 167 respondents comprising of wildlife managers, conservancy landowners and conservancy rangers participated in the study. Data collection was done using questionnaires, Focused Group discussion and interviews. The data collected quantitatively was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the findings were presented using percentages, graphs and tables. The findings showed that the measures put in place to enhance gender responsive wildlife management and conservation in Maasai Mara conservancies by the wildlife stakeholders were inadequate. The strategies have failed to penetrate the cultural glass ceiling that has greatly impeded these strategies from taking root. The wildlife stakeholders have also failed to embrace and implement the existing strategies in order bring out the required change. The study recommends that the wildlife conservancies, institutions and managers should find ways of incorporating more women into wildlife management and conservation as well as employ gender advocacy and empowerment programmes to facilitate gender equity and sustainable wildlife ecosystems.

Key words: Gender responsive, Wildlife management, Wildlife Conservation

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's empowerment is a prerequisite to effective conservation, climate action and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International agreements on biodiversity (CBD), sustainable development (Agenda 2030) and most recently climate change (the Paris Agreement) present new opportunities for engaging both men and women and accelerating equitable action. From Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) processes to biodiversity strategies and climate change gender action plans (ccGAPs). Governments, businesses and civil society are now embracing gender-responsive solutions to address the world's most pressing development challenges, (IUCN, 2018).

In view of its ecological, social and economic value, wildlife is an important renewable natural resource. Its significance is felt in areas such as rural development, land-use planning, food supply, tourism, scientific research and cultural heritage, (FAO, 2017). A better understanding of the different roles, knowledge, needs and aspirations of women and men with regard to natural resources can help us achieve the twin goals of better conservation outcomes and increased gender equity. Since the development of wildlife management and conservation initiatives one wonders to what extent both men and women are involved in the management and conservation of wildlife as a natural resource. Therefore, the need to investigate the gender representations in wildlife management and conservation in Maasai Mara ecosystem, Narok County.

Historically, higher participation rates of men in various wildlife activities, as well as traditional employment patterns, may account for the substantially greater numbers of men working in wildlife and other natural resource professions. However, a study by Torres-Cruz and McElwee (2012), explained how treating illegal wildlife poaching and trade in a gender-blind way and failure to incorporate women in wildlife related crimes at decision making and investigations may prevent understanding the issues fully and finding more effective solutions because wildlife crimes are highly gendered activities.

There is a long history of community based conservation (CBC) throughout Africa, but in Kenya a new and important group of initiatives known as conservancies has emerged over recent years. Despite their growing importance there

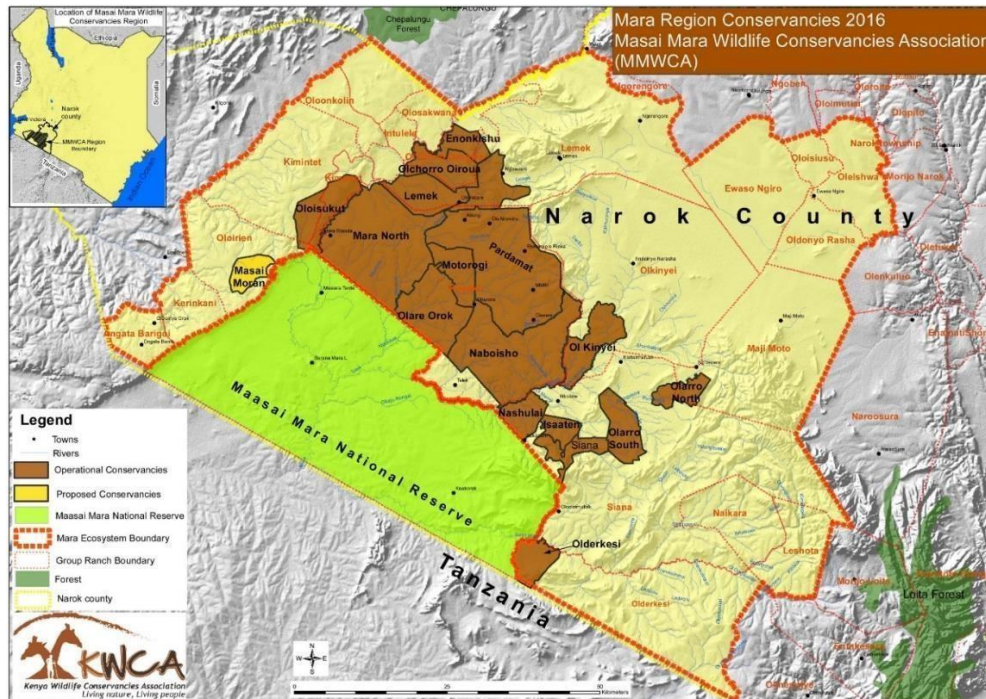
have been few attempts to evaluate the outcomes of conservancy establishment, (Keane, Kaelo, Gurd, Said, Rowcliffe and Homewood (2016). Thus a critical need to come up with gender disaggregated data on wildlife management and conservation for sustainable wildlife conservation interventions. It is thus essential to keep the changing patterns of gender relations in wildlife management and conservation under continual examination, to monitor the extent to which progress is being made towards gender emancipation and to interrogate the adequacy of prevailing strategies towards this goal (IUCN,2018), hence the current study.

Statement of the Problem

Establishment of wildlife conservancies creates potential local level partnerships for improving wildlife management and addressing gender inequalities in wildlife management and conservation for sustainable wildlife ecosystems. Despite their growing importance the attempts that have tried to evaluate the outcomes of conservancy establishment, are limited in their ability to unveil the gender disparities in wildlife management and conservation. This therefore makes it difficult for any intervention focusing on gender equity in wildlife management and conservation to know which direction to reinforce. There is therefore a critical need to come up with gender disaggregated data and gender analytical information on wildlife management and conservation for sustainable wildlife conservation interventions hence this study.

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected conservancies in Maasai Mara ecosystem, Narok County, Kenya. The Maasai Mara National Reserve ecosystem covers 1,510 km² in south-western Kenya. It is bordered by the Serengeti Park to the south, the Siria escarpment to the west, and Maasai pastoral ranches to the north, east and west. The Talek and Mara rivers are the major rivers draining the reserve. Shrubs and trees fringe most drainage lines and cover hill slopes and hilltops. The terrain of the reserve is primarily open grassland with seasonal riverlets. The long rains occur from March-June, followed by the dry season from July-October while the short rains fall during November- December, and a short dry season finishes off the year. The Altitude of Maasai Mara is: 1500-2180m; Rainfall: 83mm/month; Temperature range: 12-30°



Map of Maasai a conservancy

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategies to Enhance Gender Responsive and Sustainable Wildlife Ecosystem

Policies governing biodiversity conservation have historically not prioritized gender equity, and as a result, women are often excluded from participation in the planning, implementation, decision making and benefits of conservation policies. This not only halts the progress of women's empowerment; it devalues their contributions toward conservation efforts (Nellemann, 2011). Greater detail in reporting and establishment of mechanisms that measure cumulative progress toward equal participation of women could help improve the understanding of gender equity in protected areas conservation and management. Gender-responsive conservation can only occur when policies and programs that seek to achieve biodiversity conservation success explicitly take both men's and women's opinions, needs, and interests into account (IUCN, 2016). Some of the strategies that have been put into place globally and nationally to address gender inequalities in wildlife management and conservation include:

Legal and Policy Frameworks

Global commitments have increased political attention to sustainable wildlife management (SWM) and species conservation. For example, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and Aichi Biodiversity Targets, adopted at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), have been accepted by other conventions and sectors as a useful global framework to conserve, restore, and sustainably use biodiversity and enhance its benefits for people (IUCN, 2018). The Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable use of Biodiversity (CBD, 2016) provide an additional framework to assist resource managers in ensuring that their use of biodiversity will not lead to a long-term decline. Other global contributions to SWM include the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (IUCN 2016). At a regional level, several agreements exist among species range states, e.g. the North American Migratory Birds Convention. It is not clear to what extent the governments have taken advantage of these agreements to support their own national programs in enhancing gender responsive wildlife management and conservation hence the current study.

Multilateral environmental agreements play a critical role in the overall framework of environmental laws and conventions. Complementing national legislation and bilateral or regional agreements, multilateral environmental agreements form the overarching international legal basis for global efforts to address particular environmental issues. The role of multilateral environmental agreements in achieving sustainable development has long been recognized. Multilateral environmental agreements guide global, regional and national action on environmental issues and are a result of multilateral processes, which makes them key elements of environmental, legal and governance regimes (Balakrishna, 2012). However, Pisupati, (2015), reports that the types of indicators considered by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable wildlife management and conservation appear to be inadequate for measuring progress towards achieving the gender equity and for leveraging the contribution of the multilateral environmental agreements in measuring progress in sustainable biodiversity ecosystems.

Pisupati, (2015) further argues that unless the gap between Goal indicators and other indicators under the multilateral environmental agreements is closed there may be a disjointed interpretation of what national-level actions are needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The role and relevance of biodiversity and ecosystems in securing the well-being of current and future generations, both urban and rural, cannot be overstated. The loss of biodiversity and ecosystems warrants a series of actions by countries and stakeholders to protect biodiversity through legal, policy and regulatory mechanisms. The evaluation of existing strategies in enhancing gender responsive wildlife management and conservation is critical for sustainable wildlife ecosystems.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is another strategy that was developed to work with partners at the local, national and regional level to secure a healthy environment and sustainable wildlife conservation. This has been achieved by: helping communities sustainably manage natural resources for their own benefit; strengthening national legislation and management systems for sustainable fisheries and logging operations; improving habitat and species conservation; and developing effective marine protected areas. Gender equity and social inclusion issues, twinned with good governance principles have been integrated in the WWF strategic plan, as overarching goals of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. The strategic plan further internalized weak resource governance, inequality, discrimination on the basis of gender and ethnicity, and ambiguous policies as major challenges to achieving broader conservation and sustainable development goals (WWF report,2016). WWF has emphasized benefits to households in order to improve their overall capability. Women's role in the household economy and management are critical and WWF conservation efforts aim to enhance household and community capability and economic empowerment, ensuring benefits accrue to all family members and are equitably shared in the community. This contributes to diversification of work, shared responsibility of domestic chores, and reduced pressure on biodiversity through diversification of use, and reduced dependence. Scaling up benefits from particular interventions from a gender point of view often became challenging. It is difficult to disaggregate the benefits from such interventions by gender, and requires a more in-depth analysis. Unless the attitudes of the family's head and other men change, and women's role in domestic care is well-understood, such role transformation will remain ineffective in reducing work pressure on women.

Kenya has signed many global and regional Multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) such as National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plans (NBSAPs) and National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs). Secondly, Kenya's policy and legal frameworks such as The Kenyan constitution of 2010, the affirmative action 2010 and the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013, explicitly gave women and men the same legal rights to participate in development programmes and benefit equally from them. The devolution of government power to the counties, and devolution of national reserves to local community management creates potential local level partnerships for achieving gender equality in wildlife management and conservation and empowerment. However, despite all these efforts progress towards gender equity in wildlife management and conservation is still very slow. Given the scope and speed of contemporary change it is thus essential to keep the changing patterns of gender relations under continual examination, to monitor the extent to which progress is being made towards women's emancipation and to interrogate the adequacy of prevailing strategies towards this goal, hence this study.

Alternative Livelihoods

According to UNESCO (2016), one method of addressing gender inequalities in sustainable wildlife management and conservation is by supporting alternative livelihood activities for both women and men. In some cases, gender-differentiated livelihood opportunities may be the most suitable and viable options to respond to both women's and men's needs. In other cases, expanding beyond gender-differentiated livelihoods may help both sustainable wildlife management and gender equity goals. The employment of female rangers in the Virunga National Park highlights the potential for facilitating women's access to traditionally male-dominated activities. This strategy yields positive conservation results, and helps recast women from victims of human rights violations to full actors in the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

CBD, (2011) however reports that, it is not enough simply to introduce an alternative livelihood activity without ensuring its social and economic viability and considering gender issues at every level of implementation. For instance, wildlife farming is a food and income-generating activity that is compatible with women's involvement. However, a study by Ogunjimni (2012), found that women were often excluded from training, which led to a low adoption of the practice by women. This reinforces the need for gender considerations to be taken into account in educational programmes and training, as well as provision of services and supportive technologies, to ensure that alternative livelihood opportunities are accessible to and can benefit both women and men.

Hunting in certain contexts, the legalization and regulation of selective bush meat hunting may be considered, particularly in cases where bush meat is central to food security (Groff and Axelrod, 2013). In addition to being often disproportionately affected by food insecurity, women's workload tends to increase substantially when hunting is

banned in the land they use around protected areas (McElwee,2012). Hunters may disregard regulations when the subsistence needs of their families are not met, rendering outright bans ineffective (Groff, 2013). Conversely, allowing the hunting and trade of selected resilient species could avoid negative impacts on women and men while increasing the willingness of hunters to respect bans on more vulnerable species. 2.5.3 Environmental Education Pinho, Grilo, Boone and Galvin (2014) argue that environmental education is an important tool to improve attitudes related to wildlife. For instance, education through direct experiences, such as visits to protected areas by local residents, can be a valuable learning tool. Particularly in the case of women, such visits can help reduce the participants' fear of wildlife and increase their support for the conservation of species that they rarely see or may view negatively due to HWCs. Education and training for women and men regarding the impacts of overharvesting and the loss of threatened and endangered species are also important measures to support SWM. Advances in science, technology, and social sciences also present significant opportunities for the development of alternative solutions and the dissemination of information.

However, Ogunjimni and Osunsina (2010) studies have shown that environmental education and technology development personnel frequently target men, wrongly expecting them to transfer information to women. This reinforces the importance of developing alternative solutions with women's and men's needs in mind, and to ensure that information on and access to technology are provided to both women and men. Evidence from different regions shows that men tend to dominate access to new technology, information and training related to natural resource management. Furthermore, male relatives often mediate women's access to information, markets and credit. In Vietnam, for example, women made up only 25 percent and 10 percent of participants in training programs on animal husbandry and on crop cultivation, respectively. In Cambodia, women were only 10 percent of extension beneficiaries (Howard,2003). For these and other regions, common reasons include that research and extension services tend to focus on the tasks that men specialize in; problems with mobility and time to travel to district centers in order to access services; and difficulties for women in communicating face-to-face with mostly male staff. The choice of methods and materials that address these gender inequalities become important elements in mainstreaming plans.

The inclusion of gender considerations in training for policy makers and practitioners, as well as within academic curricula, can increase the capacity of researchers, policy makers and Programme managers to address gender issues. Fostering an understanding of gender relations and their impacts on SWM among wildlife management practitioners and researchers can help bridge the gap between social scientists and natural scientists (Ogra,2012) as well as promote interventions that address wildlife conservation and gender equality objectives. WWF Nepal (2015), outlines the drivers that impede gender responsive wildlife management and conservation such as weak resource governance, inequality and discrimination based on gender, class, caste, ethnicity, remoteness and exclusion. Presence of these drivers in service delivery limits resource dependent communities, women and marginalized farmers' access, use, control and decision over improved services in areas such as health, drinking water, natural resources, and land use. Lack of these services eventually generates threats to biodiversity, particularly habitat, species and forest due to unsustainable harvesting, use, and consumption. Lack of control and ownership of resources, combined with high ambitions of asset accumulation to cope with future uncertainty generates stress, shocks and vulnerability that further weakened these groups' survival resilience.

According to McElwee, (2012), reducing the pressures on wildlife from illegal trade in exotic products requires consideration of the intended consumers of these products, who are typically defined in respect to gender stereotypes and cultural norms. Awareness-raising campaigns to counter consumption of exotic wildlife products could be made more effective by an enhanced understanding of the drivers, and by addressing the ideas and values tied to masculinity and femininity which drive gender-specific demands of consumers. Some of the main limitations to effective wildlife management are lack of organizational capacity, un-clear or weak land tenure, poverty and poor governance. This study therefore aimed at suggesting the best strategies for a gender responsive wildlife management and conservation.

Empowerment and Decision-Making for Sustainable Wildlife Management

SWM can reconcile the goals of promoting sustainable use and gender equality by strengthening women's leadership and decision-making power in relation to the use of resources. For instance, a project to diminish illegal wildlife trade in the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve in Ecuador has been led by a local women's group, which is engaging communities to reduce illegal over-harvesting and to improve food security. Strengthening women's leadership while allowing for the participation of both women and men has generated broad community support for adopting alternative income-generating activities, limiting bush meat hunting to subsistence needs, and conserving some highly threatened species. In addition, as women are often responsible for managing livestock and crops, their views on how to improve wildlife management should inform and guide decision-making for HWC projects and programmes, in which they should be actively engaged.

In contexts of highly unequal gender and class relations, achieving gender equality in participation in community-based decision-making can remain complex and difficult. Community-level participation can often fail to fully acknowledge the voices and concerns of women and marginal groups. Even when attending meetings, such groups may not feel free

to voice their opinions, or feel that they are not taken seriously. Community participation can often be dominated by local elites, usually men, but sometimes elite women's concerns directly conflict and override poor women's access to resources. Decision-making at national and international levels on natural resources management and related issues generally continues to be dominated by men, despite efforts to mainstream gender at these levels of debate and policy-making. From community to national and international scales, it is clear that mainstreaming plans need to ensure more meaningful participation and decision-making by less powerful and under-represented groups, especially women.

According to Pinho, Grilo, Boone and Galvin, (2014), addressing the gendered impacts of HWCs requires gender-responsive solutions. Compensation schemes are one way of mitigating the negative impacts of HWCs. However, it is important to seek inputs from both women and men to ensure the inclusion of costs borne by all members of a household or community. Consultations that focus on obtaining feedback from the head of the household may be dominated by views and priorities of men, who are typically the household head. Including women's perspectives can lead to solutions, such as in-kind compensation through the provision of firewood, which can be more effective in compensating women's labour costs than simple monetary payments.

Summary of Literature Review and Gaps to be Filled

The literature reviewed indicate that although natural resource management researchers and policymakers are aware of the importance of gender issues, research is most often gender 'blind' (Currie and Vernooy, 2010). Community based conservation (CBC) also has failed to take account of the preferences and aspirations of the people whose behaviour they seek to alter. Instead, they treat communities as if they are a single coherent entity, rather than a collection of heterogeneous individuals with differing motivations and preferences. Pullin (2013) also noted that despite their growing importance there have been few attempts to evaluate the outcomes of conservancy establishment. Despite the existing myth that men are the major actors in wildlife ecosystem destruction, women are also actively involved. McElwee (2001) observed that certain wildlife products are culturally valued for their purported medicinal properties for enhancing virility, masculinity, or fertility and are thereby marketed in ways that reinforce these norms and stereotypes. Understanding the cultural and gendered nuances influencing consumption can help create culturally appropriate and effective campaigns against illegal wildlife products. Among other things, this study was interested in getting gender disaggregated data and gender analytical information on the current trends in gender and wildlife management and conservation so as to monitor the extent to which progress is being made towards gender equity in wildlife management and conservation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was grounded upon feminist political ecology theory. Feminist political ecology (FPE) emerged in the 1990s as a subfield of political ecology, building on previous Work by feminist scholars, and feminist theorists. Feminist political-ecology was developed by (Rocheleau, 1995.) The approach has extended "the multiple scale analysis of environment and power in political ecology to gendered relations both within and beyond the house-hold, from individual to national scales".

The theory demonstrates that gender is an important element in influencing access to resources, knowledge, and control over natural resources. This study thus adopted this gender-based political-ecology approach in analyzing biodiversity conservation and management issues. Access to, control over, and ownership of natural resources such as biodiversity resources and land are negotiated within and between households, and therefore gender and household relations are a focal point through which the relations of production are studied.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was descriptive research. Orodho (2009) states that a descriptive research design is suitable where the study seeks to describe and portray characteristics of an event, situation, and a group of people, community or population as it is. Since descriptive research allows for a multifaceted approach to data collection and analysis, sequential explanatory mixed method approach was used to guide the data collection and analysis process of the study. This approach is characterized by collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and

analysis of qualitative data. The fundamental principle of mixed method approach is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of the problem than either approach can achieve alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Best Strategies for Sustainable Wildlife Ecosystem from a Gender Perspective

The section below discusses existing strategies for a gender responsive and sustainable wildlife ecosystem. It also explores why these strategies are not effective and discusses respondents, participants and informants' views on gender

responsive measures that could be put in place to enhance sustainable wildlife ecosystem in Maasai Mara conservancies, Narok County.

Government's Effort

The study asked the respondents, informants and participants what the stakeholders were doing to enhance sustainable wildlife ecosystem in Maasai Mara. The respondents highlighted that in 2014, Kenya signed the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act which emphasized community participation and equitable sharing of benefits from wildlife. Establishment of wildlife endowment fund (WEF) was another mile by Kenyan government which was meant to develop wildlife conservation initiatives, manage and restore protected areas and conservancies; protect endangered species, habitats and ecosystems and support wildlife security operations. The rationale behind these initiatives was to facilitate community based wildlife initiatives and enhance sustainable wildlife ecosystems. Despite this rationale, the findings in section 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 have revealed that men and women in Maasai Mara ecosystem are both actors in wildlife and wildlife habitat destruction.

The wildlife managers also stated that the Kenyan constitution of 2010 and the affirmative action (G.O.K. 2010), also explicitly gave women the same legal rights as men to participate and benefit equitably from all community projects and programmes. These legal frameworks also emphasis on the right to acquire land by women. Even with all these however, the emerging themes in section 4.5 portrayed women as underrepresented in the payment for ecosystem income in the conservancies due to the fact that very few women owned land in the conservancies.

The informants and participants also revealed that the Devolution of government power to the counties of Kenya also was another strategy by the government which would create potential county level partnerships for improving wildlife conservation and management. Devolution could also be used as a tool to enhance equitable empowerment of both men and women in community based conservancies. However, it is evident from the findings of this study that the gender disparities in wildlife management and conservation in Maasai Mara conservancies, are still very wide.

Critically analyzing the above mentioned strategies, it was clear that the legal and policy frameworks had been formulated, ratified and enacted. However, policy and legal frameworks cannot bring out gender equity unless they are properly communicated, implemented, enforced and institutionalized. There is a need hence to re-evaluate the policies and legal frameworks aforementioned taking into consideration the uniqueness of communities. There was need to improve the existing strategies by including gender specific responsive programmes.

Community's Effort

Aware of the influence of community based conservation to economic empowerment, the local communities surrounding the Maasai Mara game reserve leased out their lands to the wildlife conservancies. The registered conservancies formed an umbrella group called Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association MMWCA) which oversees the functioning of all the conservancies in Mara with the help of land owners' committees (LOCs) and conservancy managers. This shows a positive progress towards community's effort in wildlife management and conservation.

The land owners for example revealed that a lot of schools, health centers, cattle dips and water pans have been constructed in the conservancies by donors and camp owners. These can act as alternative employment and livelihood opportunities for men and women living in protected areas. Women participants however argued that the only alternative livelihood that benefited them was sale of milk, small scale cultivation, curio shops, beading business and sale of charcoal in the conservancies as discussed in section 4.5 previously. This can be interpreted to mean that the conservancies have failed to provide equitable alternative livelihoods through equitable empowerment of both men and women in the conservancies. Other Wildlife Partners Efforts

The wildlife managers additionally reported that there were other wildlife stake holders who have greatly supported Mara in terms of funding and empowerment programmes towards sustaining wildlife ecosystem. They agreed that organizations such as USAID, Nature conservancy, Band Foundation, Kenya Wildlife Trust, Base camp explorer foundation and many others have supported projects like reforestation, waste management, empowering women and youth, and securing land for wildlife to flourish. The Nature Conservancy has worked to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends.

Some of these organizations have availed funds to sponsor the education needs of orphans and vulnerable children in the conservancies. Others have helped in building schools and dispensaries for the people living in conservation areas such as Siana springs dental clinic. The rangers discussed that there were very many opportunities for empowering people in Maasai Mara but even with all these men still dominated in the decision making levels of such initiatives. Critically analyzing the above mentioned strategies, it was clear that the wildlife partners had not taken a gender dimension to empower the local residents living in conservancies. The wildlife partners had, therefore, not fabricated wildlife initiatives to suit the uniqueness of the community. But there was need to improve the existing strategies by

including gender specific responsive programmes.

Why the Above Efforts are not Effective in Enhancing Gender Responsive and Sustainable Wildlife Ecosystems.

Table 1. Wildlife managers’ response as to why strategies to enhance gender responsive and sustainable wildlife ecosystem are ineffective

Question	Responses	Percentage
Why do you think the strategies fail to involve all community members especially women in gender wildlife conservation planning?	Failure to involve all community members especially women	26%
	Resistance by the community members	35%
	Poor implementation of conservation policies	30%
	Lack of knowledge on conservation policies	9%

From the table above, 26% of the wildlife managers reported failure to involve all the community members equitably while 35% reported resistance by the community. Other 30% reported poor implementation of the conservation policies and finally, 9% reported lack of knowledge on conservation policies. The landowners and rangers also explained that cultural restrictions played a great role in hindering gender responsive wildlife management and conservation. They explained that however much the government may emphasize on land acquisition and inheritance, it was very hard for this community to uphold that.

These findings are hence adamant to IUCN (2016) report that Policies governing biodiversity conservation have historically not prioritized gender equity, and as a result, women are often excluded from participation in the planning, implementation, decision making and benefits of conservation policies. This not only halts the progress of women’s empowerment; it devalues their contributions toward conservation efforts. Greater detail in reporting and establishment of mechanisms that measure cumulative progress toward equal participation of women could help improve the understanding of gender equity in protected areas conservation and management. Gender-responsive conservation can only occur when policies and programs that seek to achieve biodiversity conservation success explicitly take both men’s and women’s opinions, needs, and interests into account.

Respondents Perception on Strategies to Enhance Gender Responsive and Sustainable Wildlife Ecosystem

A critical analysis of the afore-mentioned shows that measures put in place to enhance gender responsive and sustainable wildlife ecosystem within the region by the wildlife stakeholders were inadequate. The strategies have failed to penetrate the cultural glass ceiling that has greatly impeded these strategies from taking root. The wildlife stakeholders have also failed to embrace and implement the existing strategies in order bring out the required change. The respondents, participants and informants were asked to give their opinions on the best strategies for a gender responsive and sustainable wildlife ecosystem. These opinions are analyzed below:



Figure 1: Best Strategies for Gender Responsive and Sustainable Wildlife Ecosystem

The results from **figure 1** above shows that majority of the respondents (43.5%) recommended for educating the community on the importance of gender equity in wildlife conservation. Another 17.4% added that the laws on gender equity should be enforced in conservancies. Additionally, 13% suggested on employment of more women in conservancies. Other 8.7% suggested addressing the issue of land inheritance whereas 13% recorded evaluation of existing policies in wildlife management and conservation. Lastly, 4.3% of the respondents additionally suggested campaigns against gender biasness in wildlife management and conservation institutions.

The landowners suggested that educating the girl child is another strategy that can be employed to narrow the gap of disparities in wildlife management and conservation. They argued that proper understanding and implementation of conservation policies requires literate people. The conservancy rangers on the other hand added that women need to form women alliances and awaken from the homesteads to participate in wildlife management and conservation.

One-man ranger insisted this by saying:

Women should be aware that opportunities will not look for them. They need to come out of the chains of domestic work and seek jobs regardless of what the society dictates. They should also participate in empowerment programmes and avoid sending their sons to represent them. Let them carry children to the workshops, the panelists will understand.

Empowerment Programmes

As earlier noted in the study in section 4.6 on socio-cultural factors influencing sustainable wildlife ecosystem, cultural norms, gender roles and land acquisition were among the key factors that impacted on the wildlife ecosystem. According to the study, 4.3% of the respondents suggested that campaigns against gender biased wildlife management and conservation can help awaken and empower the community. Another 43.5% also suggested that educating the community on importance of gender responsive and sustainable wildlife ecosystem was critical. 13% of the respondents also affirmed that employing more women in the conservancies will help bridge the disparities in wildlife management and conservation institutions.

The study agrees with Galvin, (2014) study which argued that in contexts of highly unequal gender and class relations, achieving gender equity in participation in community-based decision-making can remain complex and difficult. Community-level participation hence needs to fully acknowledge the voices and concerns of women and marginal groups and mainstreaming plans need to ensure more meaningful participation and decision-making by less powerful and under-represented groups, especially women.

Environmental Education

The study also found that environmental education was supported by 43.5% of the respondents who argued that community members needed to be educated on the importance of gender responsive and sustainable wildlife

ecosystems. The study hence agrees with the findings by Ogunjimni and Osunsina (2010) studies which reported that environmental education and technology development personnel frequently target men, wrongly expecting them to transfer information to women. In Maasai Mara conservation area therefore, environmental education needs to consider the unique role of women in conservation and focus on empowering them so as to achieve sustainable wildlife ecosystems.

Alternative Livelihoods in Conservancies

The study also found that creation of alternative livelihoods in conservancies would help reduce the margin of disparities between men and women. 13% of the respondents agreed that mobilizing women to apply for jobs and creating job opportunities for women would help improve their attitudes towards wildlife conservation. The participants also noted that a lot of opportunities exist in Mara but men dominate in all of them. Women argued that the only alternative livelihood that benefit women is curio shops, sale of milk, firewood and charcoal, crop cultivation and beading business in Manyatta. This can be interpreted to mean that the conservancies have failed to provide alternative livelihoods that are not detrimental to wildlife ecosystem in the conservancies. CBD, (2011) reported that, it is not enough simply to introduce an alternative livelihood activity without ensuring its social and economic viability and considering gender issues at every level of implementation. The participants for example revealed that a lot of schools, health centers, cattle dips and water pans have been constructed in the conservancies by donors and camp owners. These can act as alternative employment and livelihood opportunities for men and women living in protected areas if managed equitably.

Policies and Legal Frameworks

The study revealed that the legal and policy frameworks needs to be evaluated and implemented fully. 13% of the respondents suggested that existing policies on wildlife conservation and land acquisition needs to be evaluated and revised. Another 17% also supported that legal frameworks that govern gender equity need to be fully implemented in wildlife conservation institutions in Maasai Mara. The study is hence adamant to IUCN (2016) report that Policies governing biodiversity conservation have historically not prioritized gender equity, and as a result, women are often

excluded from participation in the planning, implementation, decision making and benefits of conservation policies. This not only halts the progress of women's empowerment; it devalues their contributions toward conservation efforts. Greater detail in reporting and establishment of mechanisms that measure cumulative progress toward equal participation of women could help improve the understanding of gender equity in protected areas. Gender-responsive conservation can only occur when policies and programs that seek to achieve biodiversity conservation success explicitly take both men's and women's opinions, needs, and interests into account.

CONCLUSION OF THE FINDINGS

Specifically, it was found that some strategies employed by the women living in the conservancies had significant influence on the process and achievement of economic empowerment. The study found out that the women had put in place some strategies to enhance alternative livelihood in the conservancies by taking advantage of the tourist camps in the conservancies. Most women had grouped themselves to do cultural dances and beading activities in the manyattas near tourist lodges and camps which earned them substantial income. Other women who were financially stable had established curio shops to sell Maasai artefacts to the tourists visiting the conservancies.

On the contrary, it was established that some community members were engaging in activities that can pose major threats to wildlife conservation such as charcoal selling, illegal grazing and crop cultivation. This shows a disconnection between some community members and wildlife conservation initiatives and this may be as a result of failure to benefit equitably from the conservation initiatives. This implies that more needs to be done to ensure both men and women benefit equitably from the conservancies so that they all embrace wildlife conservation initiatives.

It was also noted that other wildlife partners and organizations have funded various projects in the community such as health dispensaries, schools and water pans to improve the livelihoods and general well-being of men and women living in conservancies. The funding organizations need to be aware that sustainability of these projects requires participation of both men and women at all stages.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

While the government gender policy, SDGs, Kenya constitution 2010 and the Kenya wildlife act 2013 have been formulated, ratified and enacted, gender disparities continue to persist in natural resource management. This is because

policy and legal frameworks cannot bring out gender equity unless they are properly communicated, implemented, enforced and institutionalized. This study therefore recommends that the governmental and non-governmental organizations to revisit the policies and legal frameworks aforementioned so as to ensure they are effectively put into practice in wildlife management and conservation institutions. This calls for an evaluation Programme to address all the conformities and non-conformities with a purpose of implementing sustainable changes.

The study also recommends availability of gender disaggregated data in all wildlife management and conservation institutions so that it becomes easier to track the non-conformities and rectify. This is because without this data, wildlife management and conservation institutions cannot know where to reinforce and the course of action to be taken. Hiring and recruitment personnel will not know the group that has a deficit and the one that is overrepresented.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that wildlife management and conservation institutions give a fresh look on addressing the issue of gender equity in wildlife management and conservation. This is because women have been depicted to have fewer opportunities than men in wildlife management and conservation. This overall puts the sustainability of wildlife conservation initiatives at stake as both men and women are actors in both wildlife conservation and wildlife destruction. The study for example revealed some forms of wildlife conservation threats in the conservancies such as charcoal burning, overgrazing and crop cultivation. This depicts a shift in focus by the groups that benefit less or those that do not benefit at all from the conservation initiatives. It is against this that gender considerations in wildlife management need to be given a fresh look vis some vis the current situation.

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