Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Alleviation in Namtumbo District, Tanzania.

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Abstract

The emergence of community-based conservation across the world has been associated with ecological, political and socio-economic benefits. However, lack of active involvement in planning and limited access to conservation areas makes the economic prospects of initiatives like the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) rather questionable. This study was undertaken in the Mbarang'andu WMA in Namtumbo District, Tanzania to assess the contribution of community-based conservation approaches such as WMAs in enhancing conservation of wildlife resources and poverty alleviation around protected areas. The study methods used included participatory rural appraisal, key informant interviews, direct field observations and household survey. A sample of 10% of the village households was selected for interview. LandSat images from 1995 were used in mapping the physical resource base and land use/cover types of the district. Household data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Findings from the study indicate that much of the village land has been allocated for biodiversity conservation in form of forests and/or WMAs. However, there is little evidence to show the results of such interventions in terms of poverty alleviation, which constrains other local livelihoods while benefiting distant resource users such as private investors. The article argues that to enhance local involvement in conservation of biodiversity while addressing poverty issues, mechanisms for accessing wildlife and forest resources would need to be reconsidered. In particular, this study establishes that the hunting quotas to the villages surrounding the WMA need to be increased to enhance community access to animal protein.

Keywords

Biodiversity conservation;
Community livelihoods;
Poverty alleviation;
Wildlife management areas;
Namtumbo District;
Tanzania