

## Local People's Livelihoods and Coping Strategies in the Wake of a Co-management System in the Campo Ma'an National Park, Cameroon

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**Abstract :** The Campo Ma'an National Park was created as part of an environmental and biodiversity compensation for the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline Project, which was meant to help alleviate poverty and boost the livelihood of rural communities around the area. This paper examines different strategies and coping mechanisms employed by the indigenous people and local communities to deal with the national and internationally driven conservation policies and initiatives in the case of the Campo Ma'an National Park. While most literature on park management/co-management/nature conservation has focused on the negative implications for local peoples' livelihoods, fewer studies have investigated the strategies of local people to respond to these policies and renegotiate their position in a way that enables them to continue their traditional livelihoods using the existing local knowledge systems. This study contributes to the current literature by zooming into not only the impacts of nature conservation policies but also the local individual and collective strategies and responses to such policies and initiatives. We employ a qualitative research approach using ethnomethodology and a convivial lens to analyze data collected from October to November 2018. We find that conservation policies have worsened some existing livelihoods on the one hand and constrained livelihood improvement of indigenous people and local communities (IPLC) on the other hand. Nonetheless, the IPLC has devised individual and collective coping mechanisms to deal with these conservation interventions and the negative effects they have caused. Upon exploring these mechanisms and their effectiveness, this study proposes a management approach to conservation centered on both people and nature, based on indigenous and local people's knowledge and practices, promoting nature for and by humans and strengthening both livelihood and conservation. We take inspiration from the convivial conservation approach and thinking by Bucher and Fletcher.

**Keywords :** conservation policies, national park management, indigenous and local people's experiences, livelihoods, local knowledge, coping strategies, conviviality

**Conference Title :** ICBBMCM 2022 : International Conference on Biodiversity, Biodiversity Models and Conservation Methods

**Conference Location :** New York, United States

**Conference Dates :** April 25-26, 2022