

Influence of Household Conservation Benefits on the Sustainability of Burunge Wildlife Management Areas in Tanzania

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Abstract : Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are established to promote and act as a remedy to the protection of wildlife resources outside the core protected area. WMAs aim to address issues of poverty, ensure sustainable use of wildlife resources, and share benefits from wildlife with the member villages. Successfully managed WMA in Tanzania improves local livelihood and conserves local biodiversity through tourism revenues and the protection of wildlife, respectively. Benefits accrued at household levels as a result of conservation activities in WMA can positively influence attitudes towards wildlife conservation. This research intends to assess the positive socio-economic impacts of WMA benefits on households in Burunge WMA in Tanzania. A questionnaire survey was conducted among four randomly selected villages in the ten villages forming the Burunge WMA to explore the household-level benefits of conservation activities. An example of a question item was whether household heads feel that they are benefiting from WMA and if they could remember some of the benefits. Interviews with leaders from WMA and member villages combined the survey to capture aspects of benefit distribution to households. A total of 80 households were used as samples of the recruited study sites. Moreover, the four WMA leaders and the eight village leaders of the respective study villages were interviewed. The study findings revealed that the shared benefit has mostly reached the community level and is less likely to reach the household level. Economic activities such as agriculture and livestock keeping were found to be more important for households than conservation-related economic activities. Conservation-related economic activities generate marginal direct benefits from WMA benefits to households, with ecotourism accounting for only 19.5%. The study also indicates that a direct share of financial benefits from WMA to households is lacking. Wildlife conservation benefits are less likely to reach household levels in WMAs, with the implication of reducing people's conservation attitudes and impeding community conservation success. WMA can utilize the finances from tourism fees and concessions to establish a Community Considerations Bank, which can lend money to some individuals at no or low interest rates. Considering the importance of education and health to households, WMA stands in a good position to provide health insurance premiums and student scholarships to motivate household participation in conservation activities. Community-based organizations and governments responsible for wildlife conservation should create mechanisms to channel conservation benefits to households in order to ensure the achievement of wildlife conservation objectives through WMA. These findings are expected to contribute to forming more WMAs with enhanced mechanisms for sharing conservation benefits to benefit the conservation of natural resources outside of the core protected areas. Motivated households are expected to respect wildlife and are less likely to engage in illegal activities such as poaching and harvesting conserved natural resources while coexisting with wildlife.

Keywords : social economic benefits, individuals, wildlife management areas, biodiversity, community

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