

The Role of Institutions in Community Wildlife Conservation in Zimbabwe

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Abstract : This study used a sample of 336 households and community level data from 30 communities around the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe to analyse the association between ability to self-organize or cooperation and institutions on one hand and the relationship between success of biodiversity outcomes and cooperation on the other hand. Using both the ordinary least squares and instrumental variables estimation with heteroskedasticity-based instruments, our results confirmed that sound institutions are indeed an important ingredient for cooperation in the respective communities and cooperation positively and significantly affects biodiversity outcomes. Group size, community level trust, the number of stakeholders and punishment were found to be important variables explaining cooperation. From a policy perspective, our results show that external enforcement of rules and regulations does not necessarily translate into sound ecological outcomes but better outcomes are attainable when punishment is rather endogenized by local communities. This seems to suggest that communities should rather be supported in such a way that robust institutions that are tailor made to suit the needs of local condition will emerge that will in turn facilitate good environmental husbandry. Cooperation, training, benefits, distance from the nearest urban center, distance from the fence, social capital average age of household head, fence and information sharing were found to be very important variables explaining the success of biodiversity outcomes ceteris paribus. Government programmes should target capacity building in terms of institutional capacity and skills development in order to have a positive impact on biodiversity. Hence, the role of stakeholders (e.g., NGOs) in capacity building and government effort should complement each other to ensure that the necessary resources are mobilized and all communities receive the necessary training and resources.

Keywords : institutions, self-organize, common pool resources, wildlife, conservation, Zimbabwe

Conference Title : ICWERC 2015 : International Conference on Wildlife Ecology, Rehabilitation and Conservation

Conference Location : Istanbul, Türkiye

Conference Dates : February 16-17, 2015