



UCL Collaborative Social Science Domain: Social Science Plus Pilot Project Outcome Report

Project Title:

The role of gender equity in the conservation outcomes of natural resource management

Amount £10,800
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UK

Fauna & Flora International (FFI)

Kenya

Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA), Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), an umbrella organisation of 33 community conservancies.

Project Outline

This project asks: how does enhanced gender equity affect conservation outcomes in natural resource management (NRM) projects? We aimed to advance understandings of: 1) the relationship between societal gender equality and environmental conservation and the trade-offs involved; 2) the mechanisms through which aspects of gender equity and inequity may influence conservation effectiveness; 3) the factors enabling: the meaningful participation of women in NRM, recognition of women's knowledge, and equitable distribution of costs and benefits; and 4) the role of men's and wider societal perceptions and behaviour in influencing equity. For research aim 1 we explored large-scale social and ecological data across sub-Saharan Africa. A case study in northern Kenya allowed us to explore aims 2,3, and 4. In the pastoral rangelands of Kenya there are efforts to involve women in NRM, high levels of biodiversity but complex pressures on the social-ecological system. For this pilot project, we focused on Sera conservancy which is a conservation area of ~500 sqkm encompassing 12 villages including a rhino sanctuary. The communities are largely Samburu pastoralists but with a minority of Rendile and Turkana. There has historically been conflict over livestock and natural resources. The conservancy aims to balance wildlife conservation, natural resource management and development with an increasing role of women in its management.

Main findings

- There is evidence that increasing gender equity in conservation interventions could positively affect NRM through enhanced governance as women i) use and value natural resources differently to men and are involved in practices which impact biodiversity such as charcoal burning; ii) may be focused on longer time horizons due to their role within the family; iii) have different development priorities e.g. community health and education and be more likely to invest money earned; iv) are perceived as more transparent, fair and compassionate than men and less likely to be rule breakers
- Women have taken a role in natural resource conflict resolution involving moran (warrior age-group), but formal participation in decision-making is limited to a small minority of female board members and rangers. Women are less likely to speak in AGM meetings which are often politically charged, and many felt that their concerns were not acted upon even if they spoke
- Women have been given official recognition in land law and the conservancy constitution but there is a lack of awareness of these rights and resistance to changing gender roles
- Women are receiving benefits from the conservancy but this varies across social strata. Some associated development projects have unintended negative consequences, namely the bead making enterprise was reported to have increased women's workloads and intra-household conflict, affecting their legitimacy in the community
- Gender is interwoven with other intersecting aspects of social identity; women who are wealthier, more educated, in more urban settings, and who have family members in positions of power are relatively privileged in terms of their participation and benefits received from conservancies

Key achievements and impacts

- Held a two-day workshop at the International Institute of Environment & Development (IIED), London in February 2019 with ten stakeholders from UCL, FFI, IIED, KWCA, The Nature Conservancy, University of Manchester representing social and natural scientists, conservation policy-makers and practitioners. During this meeting we i) reviewed and developed theories of change for the relationship between gender equity, governance and conservation effectiveness; ii) identified policy relevant gaps in research where the project (and larger grant) could contribute; iii) developed a research plan for the Kenyan pilot case study

- Carried out fieldwork in Kenya in June 2019. This involved focus group discussions and individual interviews with a total of more than 100 people including: conservancy board members of two group ranches including women members, women's groups, individual women including non-beneficiaries of the conservancies, different wealth groups and rural/peri-urban locations, and youth groups. Key informant interviews were carried out with the NRT gender officer, Sera conservancy manager, Sera rangeland coordinator, Sera conservancy warden, NRT M&E officer
- Developing a preliminary report of findings and a 'theory of change' framework which will be disseminated to the partners and stakeholders involved in the project for feedback and as a basis for further development of i) a working paper providing practitioners guidance on approaching gender equity ii) a further research grant proposal
- Investigated large scale datasets in Africa related to gender equality. This aspect of the research was less developed than originally intended due a lack of relevant data. However, we will use available data to choose and contextualise the case studies in future research. The project also facilitated links to the SENTINEL project (<https://www.sentinel-gcrf.org/>) which is investigating links between conservation and social equity in sub-Saharan Africa and we will continue to share knowledge and data with them

Plans for external funding

We are in the process of putting together a ESRC grant proposal which will build upon the discussions we held in the workshop, the findings of the case study and the partnerships built through the course of this project.

Next steps

- Develop the working paper and revive exciting discussions between stakeholders about the development of a bigger project
- Draft an ESRC proposal