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Extent of Karimojong Community Livelihood Outcomes Attributed to Wildlife Conservation at Kidepo Valley National Park, Northeastern Uganda

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the livelihood outcomes attributed to wildlife conservation among the Karimojong communities living around Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP) in Northeastern Uganda. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) explored how wildlife conservation affects community activities, assets, and capabilities in the context of pastoralist livelihood outcomes.

Materials and Methods: A convergent mixed-methods design was employed to assess conservation-linked livelihood outcomes among the Karimojong community. The quantitative component included surveys with 243 residents from indigenous Karimojong households near Kidepo Valley National Park. The qualitative component involved five focus group discussions with Local Council Committee members from five villages. Additionally, five key informant interviews were conducted with the Parish Priest, Agriculture and Production Officer, Senior Warden Officer, Senior Environmental Officer, and the District Local Council Vice Chairperson. This mixed-methods approach enabled triangulation of community perceptions and lived experiences related to wildlife conservation.

Findings: Quantitative results showed that capabilities scored highest, indicating growing awareness and latent agency among the Karimojong, despite systemic exclusion from decision-making. Assets followed, reflecting partial recognition of cultural and ecological values, while activities scored lowest, revealing widespread dissatisfaction with conservation-linked livelihood initiatives. Qualitative narratives revealed land pressure, loss of artistic practices, and exclusion from benefits, suggesting that rising awareness has not yet translated into genuine empowerment.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study highlights a critical gap in conservation policy: The under recognition of intangible assets and the failure to co-develop culturally and ecologically appropriate activities. It contributes to the literature by integrating cultural identity and spiritual loss into the SLF analysis and offering concrete policy insights for more inclusive, community-led conservation.

Key Words: *Livelihood Outcomes, Wildlife Conservation, National Park*

JEL Codes of Classification: *Q56, Q57, O13, R58, Z13*

INTRODUCTION

Wildlife conservation efforts, particularly the establishment of protected areas, often conflict with local communities that depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. In Uganda, creating national parks like Mount Elgon has led to land tenure insecurity, poverty, and environmental degradation due to exclusionary protectionist policies (Himmelfarb, 2007). Similar issues are observed in Kenya, where pastoralist communities face displacement and resource restrictions (Okech, 2011). Although collaborative approaches have been introduced to improve people-park relations, such as resource access agreements and revenue-sharing schemes, these initiatives provide only marginal economic benefits to local households (Vedeld et al., 2016). The costs incurred by communities due to evictions, crop raiding, and resource restrictions far outweigh the benefits, making it challenging to reconcile conservation with poverty alleviation and development (Vedeld et al., 2016). To address these conflicts, there is a need for more effective community participation in conservation and a shift towards compensating local communities for the costs they bear (Chhetri et al., 2003; Vedeld et al., 2016).

Integrating pastoralist livelihoods with wildlife conservation in East Africa presents significant additional challenges. While conservation areas generate substantial tourism revenues, pastoralists often receive minimal benefits and face livelihood constraints due to land alienation, grazing restrictions, and reduced access to seasonal resources (Homewood et al., 2012; Lesorogol & Lesorogol, 2024; Nampindo et al., 2022). Establishing conservation zones has disrupted traditional pastoral practices, contributing to land fragmentation and forcing herders to seek alternative grazing areas (Galvin, 2009; Lesorogol & Lesorogol, 2024). This disruption has intensified conflicts between communities and wildlife, with retaliatory killings frequently reported in protected areas (Okech, 2011; Dickman, 2010).

Although community-based conservation approaches have been promoted to address these tensions, they have often failed to meet conservation and community goals (Büscher & Dressler, 2012; Lesorogol & Lesorogol, 2024). Critics argue that many such initiatives fail to address underlying power asymmetries, tokenise local participation, and provide only limited economic returns to local communities (Roe et al., 2009; Barrow & Murphree, 2001). Community-based tourism has been suggested as a potential pathway toward more sustainable outcomes by simultaneously supporting pastoralist livelihoods and conservation goals (Goodman, 2002; Manyara & Jones, 2007). However, realising genuine inclusion, cultural sensitivity, and equitable benefit-sharing remains a significant challenge in reconciling pastoralism with wildlife conservation.

Community-based conservation initiatives near protected areas in Africa have shown mixed results in supporting local livelihoods. Studies from Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda reveal that perceptions of conservation impacts vary based on geographical location and governance structures (Abukari & Mwalyosi, 2020). Successful initiatives, such as the Buhoma-Mukono project in Uganda, have stimulated local employment, generated income, and funded development projects by integrating tourism with other conservation and development interventions (Ahebwa & Duim, 2013). Nonetheless, persistent challenges include ensuring pastoralists' access to seasonal grazing and water and mitigating negative wildlife impacts (Boyd et al., 1999). The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) has been employed to evaluate these initiatives, emphasising the need to consider households' access to assets and the compatibility of conservation activities with existing livelihood strategies (Coupe et al., 2002; Boyd et al., 1999).

Building on the SLF perspective, studies show that tourism revenue sharing (TRS) strategies, while popular, have limited conservation impact where food insecurity and structural constraints persist (Munanura et al., 2016). Furthermore, allocating natural resources, such as water rights, to support sustainable livelihoods must balance spiritual and conservation values with economic needs (Nikolakis & Grafton, 2015). Community-based wildlife conservation faces land subdivisions, inequitable benefit distribution, and governance challenges (Coupe et al., 2002). Overall, effective conservation strategies must integrate local perceptions, strengthen livelihood capabilities, and address institutional dynamics to ensure wildlife and the adjacent community benefit.

Problem Statement

Despite substantial reforms and initiatives promoting inclusive conservation and education, academic competencies in conflict-ridden conservation zones remain underexplored, particularly in the context of the Karimojong communities and Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP). Existing interventions frequently overlook the socio-political and historical factors contributing to mistrust and friction between local communities and park authorities (UNEB, 2023; MOES, 2022). The Karimojong, whose livelihoods depend on pastoralism and access to natural resources, have often been excluded from policy processes, leading to persistent tensions over land rights, forced evictions, and the militarisation of conservation spaces (CEO Report, 2022; Florah, Gershom, & Merab, 2022).

Although prior studies recognise the role of ineffective teaching and governance methods in shaping community engagement, they often fail to delve into the local experiences and perspectives of the Karimojong concerning KVNP (Jjingo, 2018; Jjingo & Iddi, 2022). Furthermore, little empirical research exists on how exclusionary conservation practices shape indigenous resistance strategies and attitudes. This gap contributes to top-down policies, failing to incorporate indigenous ecological knowledge and lived experiences critical to fostering cooperation and sustainability (Rahimovna & Mujadidi, 2023).

This study addresses these gaps by analysing the conflict dynamics between the Karimojong communities and KVNP. It focuses on historical marginalisation, contested land use, and the failures of participatory conservation efforts to provide context-specific, evidence-based strategies for inclusive conservation. By centering the voices of the Karimojong, this research will contribute to more culturally responsive and socially just conservation policy.

Theoretical Review

This study adopts the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) to explore the Karimojong community's livelihood outcomes in the context of wildlife conservation in Kidepo Valley National Park. The SLF is a people- centered analytical tool focusing on the interconnections between human capabilities, assets, and activities necessary for sustainable living conditions (Pretty & Smith, 2004). It is especially relevant for pastoralist communities such as the Karimojong, whose livelihoods depend on access to natural capital (e.g., land, water, and grazing resources) and are governed by traditional knowledge and social structures (Knighton, 2005; Eilu & Okia, 2022). In such settings, SLF helps illuminate how conservation interventions alter the flow and accessibility of critical livelihood assets and how communities adapt based on their cultural and institutional context (Gbedomon et al., 2021).

However, the application of SLF in conservation settings is not without limitations. It assumes relatively stable asset conditions and does not always account for the power dynamics or cultural disruptions that conservation policies introduce (West et al., 2006). For instance, protected areas may restrict access to land and resources central to pastoralist survival, while benefit-sharing mechanisms often exclude the most culturally rooted and economically

marginalized groups (Bush et al., 2004; Ahebwa & Van der Duim, 2012). These limitations suggest that while SLF is helpful in mapping livelihood pathways, it must be applied critically, especially in culturally sensitive environments like Karimojong, where traditional institutions and values fundamentally shape community responses to conservation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

This study adopted a convergent mixed methods design to explore wildlife conservation activities, assets and capabilities within the Karimojong community in the Kidepo Valley National Park, Northeastern Uganda. The mixed methods approach allowed for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively understand the community's wildlife conservation perspectives (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative aspect involved the use of surveys, while the qualitative aspect included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This design is particularly suitable as it enables the integration of different types of data to provide a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

Research Approach

The study employed quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the interplay of indigenous activities, assets and capabilities in wildlife conservation. The quantitative component aimed to assess the attributes of wildlife conservation to certain livelihood outcome aspects within the Karimojong community, while the qualitative component sought to understand the underlying cultural meanings, beliefs, and practices related to wildlife conservation. This integrated approach facilitated a deeper exploration of how traditional values and practices align with contemporary conservation efforts (Fetters et al., 2013).

Study Population

The study targeted a total of 243 respondents, consisting of indigenous Karimojong community members living in the vicinity of Kidepo Valley National Park. Also, the study targeted Key Informants (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions, all of whom were selected based on their extensive knowledge and involvement in local wildlife conservation efforts. The KIIs included key community leaders, such as the Parish Priest, the Agriculture and Production Officer, the Senior Warden Officer, the Senior Environmental Officer, and the LC V District Counselor in charge of education and health.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to select 243 respondents from the indigenous Karimojong community. The sample size calculation followed the Krejcie (1970) method, with an additional 10% added for potential non-responses (Fink, 2024). Based on this, a final sample of 269 respondents was determined (i.e., 243/0.9 = 269), representing the diverse socio-demographic profile of the community. This sample size was sufficient to ensure the study population's representativeness and allow for the generalisation of the findings within the context of Kidepo Valley National Park. The inclusion of both KIIs and FGDs further enriched the data collection process, providing valuable insights into community perspectives on wildlife conservation as guided by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006).

Study Instruments

In this study, activities, assets, and capabilities were key variables assessed to understand Karimojong's livelihoods in wildlife conservation within Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP). This study utilised quantitative and qualitative instruments to assess cultural activities, assets, and capabilities related to wildlife conservation in the Karimojong area. A

structured questionnaire explored attributes of activities, assets and capabilities. Focus Group Discussions (FGDS) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIS) were conducted with local leaders and stakeholders to complement and validate the survey data. These qualitative tools offered profound insights into community perspectives and contextual factors influencing conservation. All instruments were pretested for clarity and cultural appropriateness.

Data Collection Procedure

After relevant approvals, the study was conducted. Initially, a pre-test was administered to all participants to assess their baseline knowledge and attitudes toward Karimojong activities, assets, and capabilities for wildlife conservation. The participants were then interviewed using a pretested questionnaire, which included closed-ended questions. Following this, five Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted, each consisting of 6 participants, local council committee members from 6 villages. The FGDs were designed to achieve saturation on the three key variables. Additionally, five Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with key community leaders, including the Parish Priest, the Agriculture and Production Officer, the Senior Warden Officer, the Senior Environmental Officer, and the LC V District.

Data Management and Analysis

The quantitative data were managed using Stata version 17. After data entry, the data were cleaned to identify and address inconsistencies and missing values. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise the key study variables.

Data from FGDs and KIIs were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis using NVivo version 14 to assist in organising and coding the data to identify common themes and patterns. Key subthemes and best quotes were examined to understand community perspectives. The findings from the qualitative analysis were triangulated with the quantitative results, providing a comprehensive understanding of the community's engagement with wildlife conservation.

Ethical Considerations

As the study involved human participants, strict ethical standards were followed to protect their rights and privacy. Before the study began, ethical approval was obtained from the Mbarara University of Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee (MUST REC) and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). Permission was sought from the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Karenga District to access the study sites.

Written informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring they understood the research's purpose, risks, and benefits. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities, and the confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the study. The research process was conducted with cultural sensitivity, considering the local customs and values. These ethical measures ensured the study adhered to national and international research standards while prioritising the participants' well-being.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Findings on Livelihood Outcomes among the Karimojong Attributed to Wildlife Conservation in KNP

Table 1: Livelihood Outcomes among the Karimojong Attributed to Wildlife Conservation in KNP

Variable	Mean	SD
The Karimojong Indigenous land and wildlife experience pressure from external activities such as mining and tourism	2.1	1.5
Wildlife conservation efforts have led to tangible economic benefits for my community	2.0	1.5
Activities	**2.0**	**1.2**
There are Community-led conservation projects and initiatives based on community needs and priorities	2.0	1.5
There are effective compensation schemes for livestock loss or damage caused by wildlife	2.0	1.6
Racism and biases within conservation organisations create the exclusion of the Karimojong perspectives in conservation	2.8	1.8
Conservation efforts have been aligned with traditional values to support and ensure sustainable livelihoods	2.1	1.6
Assets	**2.4**	**1.4**
Land and Resource rights have been reinforced through advocacy to strengthen claims to traditional land from external threats.	2.0	1.5
KVNP is a source of Karimojong Indigenous and Traditional Medicine, rituals, and cultural identity	2.2	1.6
KVNP-related conservation efforts have improved household incomes in my community.	2.0	1.5
KVNP is important for the Karimojong Communities' religious practices	2.1	1.6
Capabilities	**2.8**	**2.0**

Results in Table 1 showed the community perceptions of livelihood outcomes attributed to wildlife conservation among the Karimojong in Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP). Capabilities scored the highest (Mean = 2.8), suggesting a moderate sense of agency and awareness of rights despite structural limitations. Assets followed (Mean = 2.4), indicating some recognition of the park's cultural and spiritual value, although concerns remained over limited access and minimal economic benefits. Activities ranked the lowest (Mean = 2.0), reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with community-led initiatives, ineffective compensation schemes, and lack of tangible livelihood gains. Notably, Activities received the lowest overall rating among all livelihood attributes, suggesting that current conservation practices offer little practical benefit to local communities.

Opinions of the Livelihood Outcomes among the Karimojong Attributed to Wildlife Conservation in KNP

Table 2: Themes, Subthemes, Quotes and Sources of Opinions of the Livelihood Outcomes among the Karimojong Attributed to Wildlife Conservation in KNP

Theme	Subtheme (Variable)	Best Quotes	Source
Activities	Land under external pressure	"The Park has now taken our best land… we have nowhere to grow food."	FGD E
	Limited economic benefits	"…they say money is given for schools and health centres. However, where are they?"	KII5 - LC V Counsellor
	Ineffective compensation schemes	"There is a compensation policy, but implementation is poor… nothing has been done."	KII3 - Senior Warden UWA
Assets	Threatened land rights	"The Park expanded into our gardens… They told us to leave."	FGD D
	Loss of cultural medicine	"Twins kept ostrich eggs… the monkey's fur healed mental illness… now we have lost all that."	FGD C
	Blocked religious practices	"Cultural sites that used to be sacred are now fenced off… people are bitter."	KII4 - Senior Environmental Officer
Capabilities	Excluded from opportunities	"We want to be trained… Let us be guides. But the good jobs go to others."	FGD D
	Discrimination in conservation	"Wildlife is good, but UWA is bad… They work for themselves. Offices are filled with non-natives."	FGD B

Qualitative findings in Table 2 further illustrate the varying community perceptions of livelihood outcomes from conservation. Activities were the most criticised, with participants citing land pressure, limited economic benefits, and poor compensation. Assets reflected concerns over threatened land rights and lost cultural practices, with one elder lamenting. Capabilities revealed deep frustrations around exclusion and discrimination, particularly in employment and representation.

Overall, integrating quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a consistent narrative of marginalisation and unmet expectations among the Karimojong regarding livelihood outcomes linked to wildlife conservation in KVNP. Quantitative results showed that capabilities ranked highest, reflecting a modest sense of awareness and agency, while assets followed, indicating partial recognition of cultural value with persistent access challenges. Activities, however, scored lowest, underscoring limited community benefit from current conservation efforts. These trends were strongly echoed in qualitative narratives, which highlighted land dispossession, economic exclusion, eroded cultural practices, and systemic discrimination. Together, the findings suggest that while some potential exists for community engagement, the current conservation model remains misaligned with local priorities and fails to deliver meaningful livelihood improvements. Therefore, sustainable conservation in KVNP must be reoriented to ensure genuine inclusion, cultural respect, and equitable benefit-sharing.

Discussion

Using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) as an analytical lens, the study explored the perceived livelihood outcomes of conservation initiatives in the Karimojong community surrounding Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP) using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) as an analytical lens. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings revealed a consistent pattern of dissatisfaction, unmet expectations, and a perception of marginalisation by conservation authorities. While the survey results showed that "capabilities" scored highest, followed by "assets," and lastly "activities," the qualitative narratives highlighted that this hierarchy does not necessarily translate into tangible benefits or improved well-being. Instead, the results suggest a complex situation where community members are increasingly aware of conservation practices and aspire to participate more meaningfully, yet feel systematically excluded from its benefits and decision-making processes.

One of the most critical findings was the poor ranking and perception of conservation-related activities. Respondents noted that income-generating projects associated with conservation, such as revenue-sharing and tourism, were either inaccessible or irrelevant to their traditional pastoralist livelihoods. These ventures were perceived as misaligned with local knowledge systems and seasonal practices. Similarly, material and intangible assets were seen as insufficiently addressed or neglected. Communities lamented the loss of access to critical grazing lands, water sources, and culturally significant sites, including sacred places and sources of traditional medicinal plants. Despite this, capabilities scored higher, reflecting a growing awareness of conservation mechanisms and a desire for participation, rather than actual empowerment. This suggests that community members are not inherently opposed to conservation but are disillusioned by models that do not reflect their priorities or lived realities.

These findings are consistent with previous literature critiquing community-based conservation in Africa. Büscher and Dressler (2012) argue that such initiatives often serve as symbolic gestures with little actual transfer of power or resources to local communities. Similarly, Lesorogol and Lesorogol (2024) demonstrate that conservation efforts risk becoming sources of conflict and marginalisation without culturally aligned practices. The concerns expressed by participants in this study, particularly regarding lost access to land and poor integration of local knowledge, mirror those reported by Vedeld et al. (2016) and Okech (2011), who found that conservation often restricts livelihoods rather than enhancing them. Galvin (2009) and Lesorogol's more recent work stress the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural assets, such as spiritual traditions and ecological knowledge, which are often overlooked in mainstream conservation models. This neglect was a salient concern among participants in KVNP, who described the loss of sacred spaces and rituals as deeply traumatic and alienating. While Roe et al. (2009) and Barrow and Murphree (2001) advocate for capacity-building and inclusion in conservation planning, the current study illustrates that although capabilities are developing, real opportunities for influence and benefit remain out of reach for most Karimojong.

Methodologically, using a convergent parallel mixed methods design proved critical in capturing the multidimensional impacts of conservation. Quantitative data allowed for a structured comparison of perceived outcomes across activities, assets, and capabilities, while qualitative data provided depth and context. Through focus group discussions and key informant interviews, participants could voice nuanced concerns, ranging from cultural alienation to broken trust with conservation agencies that would have remained hidden in purely quantitative analyses. However, the methodology was not without limitations. Focus groups may have reinforced dominant perspectives and underrepresented dissenting voices,

particularly among women or youth. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional nature limits our ability to assess changes over time, and the exclusion of perspectives from Uganda Wildlife Authority or other conservation stakeholders limits the completeness of institutional analysis.

While focus group discussions (FGDs) provided rich qualitative insights into community perceptions of conservation and livelihoods, this method carries an important limitation: it can reinforce dominant perspectives, particularly in patriarchal and hierarchical societies like the Karimojong. In this context, elder males often hold greater authority and are more vocal in communal settings, which may have influenced the discussion dynamics. These risks marginalising the voices of women, youth, or dissenting participants, whose experiences and views may differ significantly from those of dominant Local Council I Committee members. Although facilitators encouraged equal participation and used probing questions to elicit input from quieter members, no structured gender or age-based disaggregation was applied during the FGDs. Consequently, some nuances particularly around gendered experiences of displacement, resource access, or conservation employment may be underrepresented. Future studies should consider conducting separate FGDs for women, youth, and other underrepresented groups to ensure a more inclusive and balanced account of community perspectives.

One unexpected finding was the relatively high score attributed to capabilities. This was surprising given the widespread frustration expressed in narratives about exclusion and alienation. This contradiction suggests a latent potential: community members are becoming more informed and express a willingness to engage with conservation, provided that their involvement is genuine and their rights are respected. This gap between rising awareness and limited action underscores a missed opportunity for conservation authorities to co-develop more inclusive and locally relevant initiatives. Another striking result was the emphasis placed on intangible cultural assets. While most conservation literature focuses on land, water, and income, this study revealed the depth of community concern about losing traditional knowledge systems, medicinal plants, and ancestral worship sites. Though not easily monetised, these assets form the foundation of identity and resilience in pastoralist societies.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Its findings are geographically specific to the Karimojong living around KVNP and may not be generalisable to other pastoralist or forest-dwelling communities. The study also did not investigate in detail the legal and institutional frameworks governing benefit-sharing, land use, or conservation finance, which are crucial to understanding the root causes of the reported dissatisfaction. Finally, the study did not capture the views of conservation authorities, policymakers, or local government actors, which would have helped to contextualise the reported disconnect between conservation design and community expectations.

This study confirms the growing body of evidence that critiques top-down conservation models, particularly in settings where local communities have historically depended on natural resources for their livelihoods and cultural practices. Conservation in KVNP, while potentially beneficial, is currently seen as extractive, exclusionary, and misaligned with local needs. Community members desire more inclusive, respectful, and equitable conservation practices that protect biodiversity and cultural integrity. The findings call for urgent rethinking of conservation approaches, one that fosters co-management, compensates for intangible losses, aligns with pastoralist rhythms, and enables genuine community empowerment. Without such shifts, conservation in pastoral regions like Karamoja risks deepening inequalities and undermining the social fabrics that could sustain it in the long run.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Conservation-linked livelihood activities in KVNP are widely perceived as incompatible with the traditional pastoralist way of life. These initiatives have delivered minimal and unpredictable economic benefits despite introducing community-based tourism and revenue-sharing projects. The lack of cultural alignment and inadequate community involvement in designing such activities has led to disillusionment and a sense of exclusion among the Karimojong. To ensure relevance and sustainability, there is an urgent need to co-create conservation activities that reflect seasonal mobility, local knowledge, and diverse livelihood strategies.

The establishment and expansion of conservation zones have resulted in a significant loss of both tangible and intangible assets for the Karimojong. Grazing lands, water sources, and sacred sites have been restricted or lost without sufficient compensation or recognition. This has negatively affected food security, cultural continuity, and social cohesion. Conservation frameworks must move beyond financial compensation to include negotiated access rights, ecosystem service payments, and the protection of cultural heritage to mitigate asset-related disenfranchisement.

While the community shows a growing awareness of conservation policies and a willingness to engage, their capabilities remain underutilised due to systemic exclusion and tokenistic participation. Discrimination in employment, limited skills training, and exclusion from decision-making processes have hindered their ability to influence conservation outcomes meaningfully. Effective conservation must prioritise genuine empowerment by investing in education, leadership development, and institutional inclusion to strengthen local agency and resilience over the long term.

Recommendations

To enhance the relevance and success of conservation-linked livelihood activities, conservation authorities and partners should co-design initiatives with active community participation, ensuring that activities align with traditional pastoralist practices and seasonal livelihood patterns. Programs must prioritise flexible, diversified livelihood options such as mobile eco-tourism, sustainable livestock grazing agreements, and craft markets linked to cultural heritage to make conservation economically and culturally meaningful to local people. Conservation management should adopt a rights-based approach to asset protection, recognising the ecological and cultural and spiritual significance of land and natural resources. Authorities should establish mechanisms for negotiated access to traditional lands, restore use rights where possible, and explore alternative compensation models like ecosystem service payments or community-managed conservation zones that respect and reintegrate lost assets into local livelihood outcomes.

A systematic investment in building community capabilities must be made by creating inclusive governance structures, offering preferential employment and training opportunities to local people, and supporting leadership development initiatives. Conservation agencies should commit to long-term capacity-building programs that empower local communities to participate meaningfully in conservation decision-making, manage local enterprises, and advocate for their rights, shifting from tokenistic involvement to proper community-led conservation.

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