

## **Empowering Local Communities through Community-Based Conservation: A Case Study of Randilen Wildlife Management Area in Tanzania**

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### **Abstract**

*Utilizing the Social-Ecological Systems (SES) theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), this research probes into the impacts of both community-based conservation and the lives of indigenous/local communities residing in the Randilen Wildlife Management Area. It presents a comprehensive analysis of the intricate interplay between wildlife conservation, community engagement, and the livelihoods of local inhabitants within the Randilen Wildlife Management Area. The data collection involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods via household surveys. The results indicate a significant and inclusive level of community involvement in activities associated with Randilen Wildlife Management area as a community-based conservation. Individuals residing in villages encompassed by the WMA generally have limited access to education, resulting in their inability to fully exploit the tourism opportunities. Consequently, many livelihood initiatives in the area tend to be dominated by individuals from outside the local communities. The study uncovers various perspectives concerning the satisfaction of community members with the income generated from Randilen WMA. While some express contentment, others are dissatisfied, underscoring the importance of ensuring that the distribution of revenue substantially enhances the well-being of the local residents.*

**Keywords:** *Community -Based conservation, Local communities, Randilen Wildlife Management, Wildlife management area*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The global wildlife conservation management sector has witnessed significant growth over the years, becoming a major source of income, employment, and prosperity for many countries (Novelli & Hellwig, 2011). Wildlife conservation is a multifaceted endeavour aimed at protecting the Earth's diverse species and their habitats, with the ultimate goal of ensuring their survival for current and future generations (WWF, 2014). This concept has deep historical roots, dating back to practices like the Arabian Himas

conservation area, which has existed for over 1,500 years (Mkumbukwa, 2008).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, colonial rulers in Africa introduced new wildlife management and conservation ideas, often leading to the displacement of indigenous people from wildlife utilization. However, the exclusion of indigenous communities eroded communal and customary land rights, and independent African regimes later adopted top-down colonial conservation models, resulting in growing disillusionment among local communities and a surge in wildlife poaching in the 1970s and 1980s, notably in Tanzania (MNRT, 2007).

The 1990s marked a shift in conservation approaches, particularly in Southern Africa. The emphasis shifted to the importance of involving local and indigenous communities in natural resource conservation. This change paved the way for community-based conservation programs, such as; the CAMPFIRE initiative in Zimbabwe, the Selous Conservation Project in Tanzania, and Community Wildlife Management Areas (CWMA). Legislative changes were also necessary to align with this paradigm shift, with Tanzania enacting the Wildlife Conservation Act in 2009 to accommodate community-based conservation.

In Tanzania, the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) responded to ecological isolation in the parks by approving National Policies for National Parks in 1994. This policy recognized the need to establish a mechanism to address increased threats from land use adjacent to national parks. This mechanism, known as "community conservation" and currently referred to as the Outreach Programme, is aimed at ensuring that community livelihoods are supported, conservation awareness is raised, and pressure from local people eased (TANAPA, 2009).

The main role of the Outreach Programme is to explain the purpose of the parks to local communities, solicit local participation in park management, and protect the integrity of parks by promoting good relationships with surrounding communities (Ndomba and Chibunu, 2022). Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) have been established to grant communities rights to participate in and economically benefit from natural resources, including wildlife. These areas aim to engage local people in wildlife conservation, fostering tourism activities, supporting local development, and enhancing livelihoods.

Randilen Community's Wildlife Management Area was established as a collaborative conservation initiative in 2012 and officially gazetted on February 1, 2013. Local communities initially resisted Randilen WMA during its inception, but a 2022 survey found a substantial shift in community sentiment, with 74.9% of respondents expressing their support for Randilen WMA and 93.5% recognizing it as a successful community-based conservation area. These two studies have revealed a dynamic spectrum of rejection and acceptance regarding Randilen WMA among local communities. However, they have not extensively explored the underlying reasons or the transformative processes that have led to this shift. Consequently, this study aims to comprehensively investigate the 'what, why, and how' of Randilen WMA's contributions to wildlife conservation and the livelihoods of local communities.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study adopts a comprehensive research approach, incorporating Social-Ecological Systems (SES) theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to investigate the 'what, why, and how' of Randilen WMA's contributions to wildlife conservation and the livelihoods of local communities. It addresses issues related to local communities' socio-economic activities, revenue distribution, community participation, and projects financed by Randilen WMA.

### **SES Theory**

SES theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate relationships between human communities and their natural environments, with a particular emphasis on the complex dynamics within such systems (Ostrom, 2009). This theory is instrumental in deciphering the interplay of ecological and social factors in a resilient and sustainable manner, spanning various hierarchically linked scales and characterized by continuous dynamism (Berkes *et al.*, 2003). In the context of wildlife conservation and community involvement, SES theory is a powerful tool for unravelling the multifaceted interactions between local communities, the natural world, and wildlife resources.

SES theory's inception can be traced back to the early 2000s when scholars such as Redman *et al.* (2004) pioneered its development. They define SES as a coherent system of biophysical and social factors that interact regularly in a resilient and sustained manner. These systems encompass ecological and social mechanisms, enabling the regulation of critical resources. SES theory explores a wide range of domains, including economic, recreational, and ecological interactions. It delves deep into the highly interdependent

relationship between society and ecosystems, making it an apt framework to study the multifaceted interdependencies at play within Randilen Wildlife Management Area, encompassing its historical evolution and contemporary dynamics (Redman *et al.*, 2004).

### **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)**

In the context of this study, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is applied to analyze the various livelihood assets or capitals surrounding local communities in relation to the Randilen Wildlife Management Area (Carr, 2015; Taylor, 2014). These assets encompass natural/environmental, physical, human, social, and financial capital. The SLF offers a holistic approach that captures and provides an understanding of the fundamental causes and dimensions of poverty and rural livelihoods without oversimplifying the focus on just a few factors.

The SLF aims to assist rural communities in achieving sustainable livelihoods by considering the various assets they have at their disposal. These assets include; Natural/Environmental Capital, which involves natural resources such as land, water, wildlife, biodiversity, and environmental resources. Another asset is Physical Capital, which encompasses housing, means of production, and basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, energy, transport, and communications. Furthermore, Human Capital assets include health, knowledge, skills, information, and the ability to labour. Social Capital assets involve social resources such as relationships of trust, membership in groups, networks, and access to wider institutions as well as Financial Capital, comprising financial resources available, such as regular remittances or pensions, savings, and access to credit.

in the context of wildlife conservation and community involvement, the SLF assists in understanding which livelihood assets enable specific livelihood strategies and contribute to sustainable outcomes within local communities (Carr, 2015; Taylor, 2014). It provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of local livelihoods, making it a valuable tool for evaluating the impact of wildlife conservation efforts on the well-being of communities living in proximity to wildlife habitats.

By employing these two theoretical frameworks, this study gains a robust foundation for comprehensively examining the intricate relationships between wildlife conservation, community involvement, and the livelihoods of local populations within the Randilen Wildlife Management Area. These

frameworks help shed light on the dynamic interactions and factors at play in this complex and critical context.

WMAs are a good example of a day-to-day relationship between nature and society. WMAs can be classified as Social-Ecological Systems (SES), as they are complex, integrated, and interlinked systems of social and ecological processes consisting of various natural and social factors that change over time and space (Walker and Salt, 2006). As Social-Ecological Systems (SES), WMAs can be used to sustain the livelihood of communities endowed with plenty of natural resources. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) can, therefore, be used to analyze which livelihood assets (capital) can enable which livelihood strategies and cause sustainable outcomes within local communities (Carr, 2015; Taylor, 2014).

## **STUDY METHOD**

### **The Study Area**

The study presents analysis of data collected from a purposeful field visit at Randilen Wildlife Management Area that it is within three villages among eight villages namely Lolkisale, Naitolia and Mswakini Juu this is due to the fact that the selected villages are closer to Randilen WMAs- compared to the others. The choice is driven by its contemporary community-based conservation model, geographic relevance near Tarangire National Park, its substantial size, limited previous research, and the dynamic context of being one of Tanzania's newest and fastest-growing WMAs. This combination presents a compelling opportunity to explore the impact of community engagement in conservation and its implications for local livelihoods.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data collection and analysis information on local empowerment was obtained using a variety of methods, depending on the monitoring system, which allowed for analysis of different scales and dimensions. The coordinators, staff members, and associated researchers of each monitoring system, including the authors of this paper, conducted opportunistic surveys with monitors, community leaders, and representatives of grassroots organizations using various tools such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focal groups and debates on workshops and meetings held with representatives of the communities.

In the data analysis process, both qualitative and quantitative data were carefully examined. Qualitative data, obtained through discussions with key informants and focus group discussions, underwent content analysis. Content analysis comprises a set of methods aimed at dissecting the symbolic content

within communication, to categorize the information into groups that represent specific research interests (Mustapha & Ebomoyi, 2019). The verbal discussions with key informants and insights from focus group discussions were meticulously broken down into the smallest, most meaningful units of information.

On the other hand, quantitative data collected through household surveys was processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis predominantly revolved around the realm of "descriptive statistics." Descriptive statistics were applied to reveal frequencies and percentages within the dataset. Additionally, the Chi-square test was employed to determine whether there were significant differences or comparisons in responses related to the contributions of Randilen Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to wildlife conservation and the livelihoods of local communities. This comprehensive approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study, yielding valuable insights into the complex dynamics of wildlife conservation and community involvement within Randilen WMA.

## **RESULTS**

### **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The Results indicate that at Loikisale village about 92% of the respondents were males and 8% were females while in Mswakini Juu 90% were males and 10% were females and in Naitolia village 90% were males and 10% were females. This indicated that most of respondents were male because many were heads of households as per the study focused to interview them/heads. For the next study both father and mother of household should be interviewed during questionnaire survey in order to capture equal gender views pertaining conservation matters. Education level of the majority of the respondents had primary education (73%), secondary education was 17%, University education was 7% and only 3% had informal education. In the study area education was still low which might reduce the ability of understanding on wildlife conservation and its benefits to their livelihoods. This could prevent local community to access more opportunity about wildlife conservation and keep depending on farming as means of living. Therefore, there is need for the Randilem authority to organize scholarship to higher learning students from the local community as well as emphasize on taking children to colleges. Regarding employment of the respondent's majority were farmers (74%), while 18% were entrepreneurs and 8% were government employees. This indicated that local people depend mostly on farming for living which is not realible due to climate change impacts as well as dangerous wild animals



like Elephant. The local communities need to access more opportunities in wildlife management areas rather than depending on season farming which is vulnerable to climate change as well as dangerous wild animals. In general, the demographic characteristics suggest that there is a predominantly young, less formally educated, male population engaged in agriculture within the surveyed villages. These demographics may influence the level of involvement, knowledge, and perspectives on wildlife conservation in the region. Researchers and conservation practitioners should consider these demographics when designing and implementing conservation programs and tailor their approaches to the specific needs and characteristics of the local community

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Village	Sex %		Employment %						
	M	F	Pr	Sc	Use	If	Go	Fa	Ent
Village Iolkislae	92	8	65	19	10	6	10	71	19
Mswakini Juu	90	10	82	15	3	0	6	78	16
<b>Average</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>18</b>

Source: Researcher, 2023

**Key:**

M = Male

F = Female

Pr = Primary

Sc = Secondary

Ue = University

If = Informal

Go = government

Fa = Farmer

Ent = Entrepreneur

### **Local communities' Participation in Randilen WMA-linked Activities**

The findings revealed that 103 (97.17%) out of 106 within the female group responded YES, they participated in Randilen-linked activities and 3 (2.6%) out of 106 responded No. Nevertheless, 259 (97.4%) of males responded YES out of 266 they participated in Randilen WMA-linked activities and 7 (2.6%) out of 266 responded NO; see Table 2(a). The result confirmed that within female and male groups they were equally well engaged in Randilen WMA-linked activities and this could be possibly due to the created awareness among the gender groups by the Ujamaa Community Resource Team.

However, the research finds out that within the age group 18-30 years, 106 (97.2%) out of 109 responded YES that they engaged in Randilen linked activities, 3 (2.75%) out of 109 noted that they were not engaged, age group 31-50 years 190 (98%) out of 194 responded YES they were engaged, 4 (2%) out of 194 responded that they were Not engaged, age group 51-60 years 40 (98%) out of 41 responded YES they were engaged in Randilen WMA linked activities and 1(2%) out of 41 responded Not they were not engaged; age

group above 60 years 26 (93.3%) out of 28 responded YES they were engaged in Randilen linked activities and 2(6.7%) out of 28 responded that they were Not engaged; see Table 2(b). The result confirmed that there were closer similarities of age groups engaged in Randilen-linked activities. The major reason could be equal involvement of all age groups in Randilen WMA-linked activities.

**Table 2(a): Responses of Local Communities' Participation in Randilen WMA Linked Activities According to their Sex Group**

Sex group		No.	Yes	Total
Female	Count	3	103	106
	Percent within the group %	2.6%	97.17%	100%
Male	Count	7	259	266
	Percent within the group %	2.6%	97.4%	100%
<b>Total count</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>372</b>

Source: Field Data, (2023)

**Table 2(b): Responses of Local Communities' Participation in Randilen WMA Linked Activities According to their Age Group**

Activities According to their Age Group			Responses		Total
Category			No	Yes	
Age	18 – 30	Count	3	106	109
		% Within Age	2.7%	97.2%	100.0%
	31 – 50	Count	4	190	194
		% Within Age	2.0%	98.0%	100.0%
	51 – 60	Count	1	40	41
		% Within Age	2.0%	98.0%	100.0%
	Above 60	Count	2	26	28
		% Within age	6.7%	93.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	10	362	372	

Source: Field Data, (2023)

The findings implied that there was high and inclusive participation in Randilen WMA-linked activities among both genders and across various age groups. This suggests that efforts to raise awareness and involve the local community in wildlife conservation have been successful in promoting broad-based engagement (Taylor, 2014). The high overall participation rate underscores the community's support for the conservation endeavours, which is crucial for the long-term success of such initiatives.

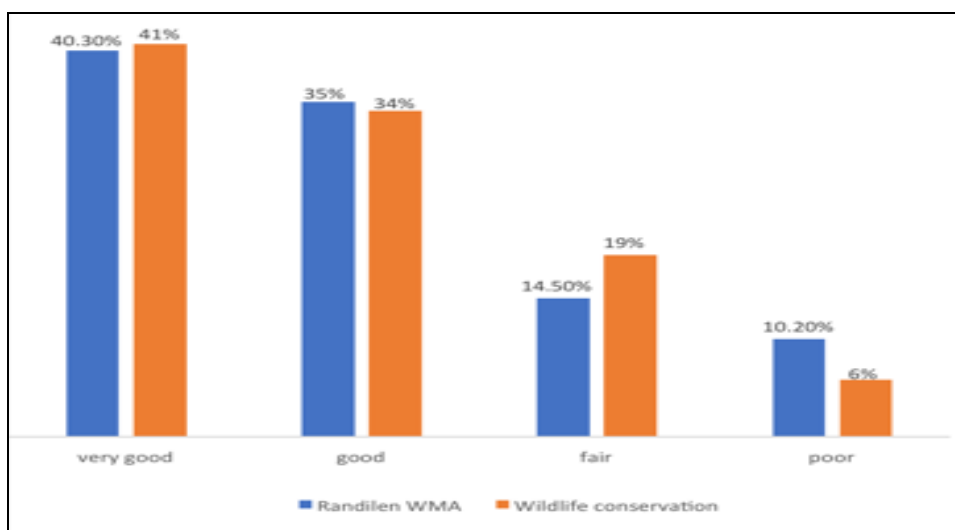
### **Local Community's Understanding of Randilen WMA and Wildlife Conservation**

The result showed that the respondents understood Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation. The result indicated that 39.5% of the respondents responded that they understood very well about Randilen WMA and 38.2%



responded that they had a good understanding, 12.6% fair and 9.7% had poor understanding as seen in Figure 1. In addition, the study findings showed that 41% of the respondents had a very good understanding of wildlife conservation, good (34%) and poor (6%); as shown in Figure 1. Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation are synonymous. Randilen WMA is for wildlife conservation.

In this regard, the responses showed that both Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation were very well understood by the respondents (see Figure 1), and the reason for being well understood could be active involvement and engagement of the local communities in Randilen WMA. Other reasons include wildlife conservation activities that were undertaken through conservation awareness, workshops, trainings supported by NGOs such as African Wildlife Foundation, the Nature Conservancy and Honeyguide Foundation, Tanzania People and Wildlife and Oikos Tanzania to mention a few. Another reason outlined by the key informants was the democratic election of obtaining the representative of authorized association/CBO from each village, an exercise held after five years where all local people in every village participate in the election process. Therefore, this is an indication of active involvement and participation for local people in decision-making and activities linked to Randilen WMA.



**Figure 1: Response to Understanding of Randilen WMA and Wildlife Conservation**  
 Source: Field Data, (2023)

This strong understanding is a positive outcome and suggests that community engagement strategies have been effective in promoting conservation awareness and knowledge among the local population.

### **Response on the Satisfaction of Revenues from Randilen WMA**

The results indicated that 38.97% of respondents agreed to be satisfied with the revenues from Randilen WMA and 32.53% of respondents disagreed to be satisfied as shown in Table 3. However, the results indicated that the difference between the respondents was a bit small. The interviews for key informants have indicated that revenues from Randilen WMA were not enough.

Additionally, the financial data from the Randilen WMA office has indicated that from 2018/2019 up to 2022/2023 the three selected villages received a net share of their revenues amounting to 286,109,262 TZs which was an average of 95,369,754 TZs per village and equal to an average of 19,073,950 TZs per village/annually; see Appendix 7. This was 32.5% out of 65% of tourism revenues distributed to Randilen WMA from the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority. The implication of this could be 17.7 TZs/person/day, which is below a new extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per person per day, as updated by the World Bank, in 2022.

The research conducted at Enduitmet by (WWF, 2014), supported that Enduitmet WMA received \$129,000 in 2012/2013 as its share of revenues after government taxation and distributed one-quarter to the 9 member villages equivalent to 0.6\$/capital/year, which was a smaller amount to the community development. Therefore, it may be true that revenues from Randilen WMA are not satisfactory to local communities.

**Table 3: Response on Satisfaction of Revenues from Randilen WMA**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	145	38.97
Disagree	121	32.53
No idea	60	16.13
Strongly agreed	46	12.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data,(2023)

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Gender-Based Participation**

The study revealed a high level of participation by both male and female respondents in Randilen WMA-linked activities. Specifically, 97.17% of female respondents and 97.4% of male respondents reported active engagement in these activities. This gender balance in participation is a significant outcome, highlighting that community-based conservation efforts in Randilen WMA have successfully involved both genders. This outcome is

consistent with the principles of inclusivity and gender equity that community-based conservation initiatives aim to achieve.

The gender-balanced participation could be attributed to the active awareness campaigns and initiatives implemented by the Ujamaa Community Resource Team and the involvement of both genders in decision-making processes within authorized associations or community-based organizations. These findings demonstrate that community-based conservation in Randilen WMA is contributing to gender equality and inclusivity, ultimately empowering local communities irrespective of gender.

### **Age-Based Participation**

The study also explored the participation of local communities based on age groups. Notably, respondents from all age groups, including those aged 18-30, 31-50, 51-60, and above 60, reported high levels of engagement in Randilen WMA-linked activities. Participation rates ranged from 93.3% to 98%, indicating that community-based conservation activities in Randilen WMA are successful in engaging individuals across various age brackets.

This cross-generational involvement demonstrates that community-based conservation efforts are not limited to specific age groups. It suggests that people of all ages are actively participating in these activities, which is crucial for the sustainability of conservation initiatives. Furthermore, the study found that there were closer similarities in participation rates across age groups. This suggests that the conservation programs have effectively engaged the entire community, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for wildlife and habitat conservation.

### **Empowerment of Local Communities**

The high levels of participation among both genders and across age groups have significant implications for the empowerment of local communities in Randilen WMA. Community-based conservation has succeeded in creating a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among residents. Through their active engagement, community members are empowered to take a proactive role in protecting wildlife and their natural environment.

The empowerment of local communities is further reinforced by their deep understanding of Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation. The fact that the majority of respondents demonstrated a strong understanding of these topics indicates that awareness and education programs conducted by organizations like the African Wildlife Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Honeyguide Foundation, Tanzania People and Wildlife, and Oikos Tanzania have been effective.

## **Discussion on Local Communities' Understanding of Randilen WMA and Wildlife Conservation**

The study provides valuable insights into the level of understanding among local communities regarding Randilen Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and wildlife conservation. Understanding the community's knowledge and perception is pivotal for effective community-based conservation. This discussion will analyze the findings in the context of the study's central theme, "Empowering Local Communities through Community-Based Conservation: A Case Study of Randilen Wildlife Management Area in Tanzania."

### ***Comprehensive Understanding***

The results of the study revealed that a significant proportion of respondents demonstrated a high level of understanding of both Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation. Specifically, 39.5% of respondents indicated that they understood Randilen WMA very well, and an additional 38.2% reported a good level of understanding. Similarly, 41% of the respondents expressed that they had a very good understanding of wildlife conservation, with an additional 34% reporting a good understanding. These statistics suggest that a considerable segment of the local communities possessed a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and objectives associated with Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation.

### ***Synonymous Nature of Randilen WMA and Wildlife Conservation***

The study highlights that Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation are regarded as synonymous by the local communities. This alignment is a significant achievement for community-based conservation efforts, indicating that the community recognizes the crucial role of Randilen WMA in wildlife protection and habitat conservation. The fact that Randilen WMA is perceived as a symbol of wildlife conservation is an affirmation of its success as a conservation initiative. Such recognition is vital for promoting local support and active participation in conservation activities.

### ***Factors Contributing to Understanding of Randilen Conservation Activities***

The study attributes the high level of understanding among local communities to several factors. One of the key contributing factors is the active involvement and engagement of the communities in Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation activities. These activities include conservation awareness campaigns, workshops, and training programs conducted by various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the African Wildlife Foundation, the Nature Conservancy, Honeyguide Foundation, Tanzania People and Wildlife, and Oikos Tanzania. These initiatives have

played a pivotal role in enhancing community awareness and knowledge regarding wildlife conservation and the significance of Randilen WMA.

Another noteworthy contributor to the communities' understanding is the democratic election of representatives from each village, undertaken every five years. This election process enables the participation of all residents, reinforcing their active involvement in decision-making processes and activities related to Randilen WMA. As a result, it strengthens the sense of ownership and responsibility among local communities regarding the management and protection of their natural resources.

### ***Implications for Empowering Local Communities***

The findings suggest that fostering a deep understanding of Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation within local communities is an effective strategy for empowering these communities. Informed and engaged communities are more likely to take proactive roles in conservation efforts. As residents perceive themselves as integral to the conservation process, their empowerment is naturally nurtured. Ultimately, the empowerment of local communities through such comprehensive understanding contributes to the success of community-based conservation, as outlined in the study's overarching theme.

### ***Mixed Perceptions on Revenue Satisfaction***

The study reveals that local communities exhibit mixed perceptions of their satisfaction with the revenues obtained from Randilen WMA. Approximately 38.97% of respondents agreed with their level of satisfaction, while 32.53% of respondents disagreed. An additional 12.37% strongly agreed with their satisfaction, and 16.13% claimed to have no idea. These figures underscore the complexity of local sentiments regarding revenue distribution, indicating that the communities are not universally satisfied.

### ***Key Informants' Perspective***

Interviews with key informants have highlighted the local communities' sense that the revenues generated from Randilen WMA are insufficient. This perspective is crucial for understanding the realities faced by the communities. Key informants often possess intimate knowledge of community dynamics and can provide valuable context to complement quantitative data.

### ***Quantitative Data on Revenue Distribution***

The financial data from the Randilen WMA office indicates that from the fiscal year 2018/2019 to 2022/2023, the three selected villages received a net

share of revenues totalling 286,109,262 Tanzanian Shillings (TZS). This figure translates to an average of 95,369,754 TZS per village, equivalent to an average of 19,073,950 TZS per village annually. The study notes that this amount constitutes 32.5% of the tourism revenues allocated to Randilen WMA by the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA). An important implication of this financial data is that the revenue distribution amounts to approximately 17.7 TZS per person per day. This figure falls below the new extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per person per day, as updated by the World Bank in 2022. To contextualize this finding, it is necessary to acknowledge that the revenues generated are intended to benefit the local communities by supporting livelihoods and development projects. The comparison with the poverty line underscores the concern that the revenues may not be adequate to address the economic well-being of the community members effectively.

### ***Support from Previous Research***

The study also cites research conducted in Enduitmet by the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in 2014, which found that Enduitmet WMA received \$129,000 in 2012/2013, equivalent to a distribution of 0.6\$/capital/year to the nine-member villages. This amount was deemed insufficient to support community development effectively. The findings of this research align with the local communities' perceptions of dissatisfaction with the revenues generated by WMAs.

### **Implications for Empowering Local Communities:**

The satisfaction, or lack thereof, with the revenues from Randilen WMA, has direct implications for the empowerment of local communities. Empowerment is not solely about conservation awareness and participation but also about improving the quality of life for community members. While community-based conservation aims to strike a balance between conservation efforts and the well-being of local populations, the study's findings suggest that there may be room for improvement in this regard.

Ensuring that the revenues from conservation activities adequately address the socio-economic needs of local communities is essential. This includes investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other sectors that can help elevate the standard of living and enhance economic opportunities for the communities.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study has illuminated the success of community-based conservation efforts in empowering local communities across genders and age groups.

This empowerment is a pivotal step toward achieving sustainable wildlife management and environmental conservation, aligning seamlessly with the overarching theme of the study. Moreover, the research findings underscore the local communities' profound understanding of Randilen WMA and wildlife conservation, emphasizing the synonymous recognition of both. This heightened awareness is a testament to the effectiveness of community-based conservation in fostering local understanding and support. Nevertheless, the study reveals diverse perspectives on community members' satisfaction with the revenues derived from Randilen WMA. While some express contentment, others are dissatisfied, highlighting the necessity of ensuring that revenue distribution significantly improves the well-being of local residents. These findings bear broad implications for community-based conservation initiatives, showcasing the potential for engaging various demographic groups and enhancing community understanding and support. Moving forward, it is crucial to address revenue-related concerns while sustaining and reinforcing the successes outlined in this study to further empower local communities and achieve conservation goals.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The majority of the residents living in villages surrounded by WMA have very low levels of education, thus, lack the means to take full advantage of tourism opportunities, leading to many livelihood programs being dominated by people outside their areas. Thus, the government and other conservation stakeholders should improve the learning environment in WMAs including provisions of study sponsorship for young people to attend tertiary education inside and outside the country so that in turn they can take full advantage of the opportunities provided by WMA. The study also recommends WMA authorities integrate local communities in all wildlife tourism activities within WMA to enhance the contribution of WMAs and wildlife tourism to rural livelihoods.

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