

ABSTRACT

Conflict Resolution between Local Communities and Park Management in Lake Mburo National Park, Uganda: The African Wildlife Foundation's Role

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The protected area system of Uganda, East Africa, is steadily improving its management approaches to wildlife conservation. One example is the Community Conservation for Uganda Wildlife Authority project, which has supported Lake Mburo National Park to address conflicts with local communities over natural resource management. Since 1991 the African Wildlife Foundation, with support from both the Swedish Agency for International Development and the United States Agency for International Development, has implemented projects to aid this work. The goal of the community conservation approach is to involve local communities in park management decisions about access to and control over natural resources in the region. The trends that led up to the African Wildlife Foundation's efforts are reviewed, and the conditions behind these events are described. Historical events that led to conflict include: illegal hunting and the consequent handling/arresting of poachers, problem animals destroying crops in the communities without compensation, pastoralists being arrested inside the park with their cows for trespassing, corruption, violent exchanges between rangers and locals, the seasonal fluctuation of grazing areas and water and its influences on animal movement—all of which results in seemingly intractable conflicts. The African Wildlife Foundation's project to ameliorate these conflicts initiated from outside, without the communities ownership of the endeavor. This is typical of a large-scale development project where the targets, communities in this case, are recipients of the project activities and are unable to participate in the decision-making process owing to a lack of an open, inclusive learning system on the part of the project implementers. Despite the initial participation of some local communities in the project-planning process, the implementation phase is relatively closed because it does not have an adequate feedback process for successfully integrating community ideas into the implementation of its activities. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to resolve conflicts between local communities and park management. It is recommended that community conservation, as an innovation in protected area management, be further refined through experience, and the recently established Local Council III (Sub-county) Environment Committees be supported in their work to solve natural resource management questions for their constituencies with park management. This emphasis on local government promises to resolve conflicts between local communities and park managers.

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