

Role of Civil Society on Wildlife Group Conservancies

Governance in Kenya By

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Abstract

Civil society capacity is a key factor in scaling up responsive solutions to natural resource governance and conservation challenges in Africa. They have played a key role in the African natural resource field yet despite widespread acknowledgement that African CSOs have a critical role to play in improving conservation and natural resource governance, there remains relatively little focus on how civil society is supported, invested in, and sustained over time (or not) in order to improve wildlife group conservancies in Kenya. The group conservancies are formed by combining private land which share a common border to form a larger land area viable for the purpose of wildlife conservation and management. Most group conservancies are found around the *Masai Mara Game Reserve* in Kenya. To guide the analysis a conceptual framework was developed that utilized literatures of conservancies governance, membership associations and that of partnerships. The roles of civil society on setting, advocacy and policy development, meta-governance, ensuring good governance, information sharing, capacity building and leadership conservancies were researched. The relationship of civil society was analyzed in terms of whether civil society is viewed as complementing or challenging the authorities of the government and other conservation organizations. The study was based on 146 representatives of conservation organizations, rangers, management of conservancies and county environmental officers. The study results established that the civil society participation in wildlife conservancies' governance facilitates effective wildlife conservation and management that is community centered attainment of environmental justice and eradication of poverty. The pivotal role that the civil society were identified in ensuring responsiveness of the stakeholders through effective issue-based engagement, increasing community interest and improving community involvement in the decision making process for the protection of the wildlife group conservancies.

Key Words: Civil Society, Wildlife Conservancy, Governance