

Devolved Governance Systems Enhancing Youth Participation in Wildlife Conservation in a Post- Covid 19 Pandemic in Kenya

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Abstract

Coronavirus travel restrictions mean that humans have suddenly vanished, and along with them a billion-dollar tourism industry that employs millions and underpins a symbiotic human-wildlife ecosystem, that is essential to wildlife conservation in many developed and African countries. Now, with tourism revenue nearly zeroed out, most workers at Kenya's community-owned wildlife conservancies are furloughed, and payouts have been reduced or suspended entirely. Youths in many communities are considering a return to grazing, jeopardizing decades of wildlife conservation efforts across the country's vast grasslands. Devolved governance now remains a key pillar for the youths in the communities to embrace wildlife conservation. This paper focuses the role of devolved governance systems in enhancing youth participation in wildlife conservation in Kenya. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The sampled population of the study was 300 youths from different communities involved in the wildlife management around Amboseli National Park and Maasai Mara National Reserve. The study reports low levels of youth participatory in governance and conservation of wildlife in Amboseli National Park and Maasai Mara National Reserve. In addition, nearly 12 years down the line since devolution in Kenya, youth participatory in governance and conservation of wildlife is yet to be felt. It was recommended that county governments should institutionalize youth participation by building the capacity of youths in the communities to facilitate participatory wildlife conservation at local level. There is need to have awareness campaigns on the value of wildlife and conservation, risks and adoptive mechanisms, utilize youth-friendly wildlife conservation activities to act as entry points for conservation; activities and other advocacy events to be passed through community- youth friendly channels to encourage ownership and participation in wildlife management in a Post-Covid 19 pandemic era.

Key Words: *Devolved Governance Systems; Youth Participation, Post-Covid (19) Pandemic*