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Payments for Ecosystem Service Schemes: The Case of Gender Inclusiveness

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Abstract

Reconciling local livelihood development with national and global conservation needs is among the key challenges facing biodiversity conservation in Africa. Payments for ecosystem services (PES) have emerged as a promising approach to address this challenge, yet there are important knowledge gaps regarding effectiveness, and equity aspects, including gender equity, in such schemes. The study addresses this knowledge gap by conducting an empirical study of biodiversity PES schemes in Kenya. This paper analyses the extent to which different actors, including men and women influence the design and implementation of PES schemes. A conceptual framework is developed that follows evidence which shows that understanding institutional arrangements of conservation programs provides a useful entry point for the analysis of the extent of equity, and for the identification of feasible PES arrangements. One such institutional arrangement in Kenya is analyzed empirically using a participatory mapping tool, called process-influence mapping and semi-structured key informant interviews. The results show that simple institutional arrangements amongst actors with diverse needs can enable the effective achievement of conservation without undermining the livelihoods of local communities. The voluntary nature of PES enrollment as well as the simplicity of contract design offers communities substantial influence over important aspects of program implementation, together with a significant incentive to retain ownership over land and sustainably maintain their livestock-based livelihoods. While the majority of PES contract holders are men, mechanisms to integrate gendered needs contribute considerably towards the attainment of household welfare outcomes and create the opportunity to systematically improve gender equity.

Keywords: Gender, Institutional arrangements, intra household decision-making, payments for ecosystem services