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Human-wildlife Conflict and Household Livelihoods in Communal Conservancies, Kunene Region, Namibia

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Abstract

Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) incidents threaten the livelihoods of households whose income is largely dependent on livestock farming. This study aimed at determining the impact of HWC on the livelihoods of households in communal conservancies with a particular focus on livestock predation. Household surveys were used to assess the impact of livestock predation on the livelihoods of nomadic pastoralists in four conservancies in Kunene Region, namely, Marienfluss, Orupembe, Okanguati, and Epupa. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, Chi-square test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse the data. Livestock selling is important for food security in the four conservancies. Livestock selling is the paramount source of income in the study areas, with few households having members employed by the conservancy as game guards or in joint venture lodges and campsites. The dependence of households on livestock threatens food security because of livestock predation, which takes away livestock that would be sold for food and sustenance of the family. Thus, making livestock predation a problem, especially for poor households with few livestock numbers. The study found that households experience livestock predation caused by different predators. There is a lack of offset payments for livestock losses to farmers even though the HWCSRS was established in the conservancies. Additionally, even though conservancies generated income, little or no benefits reached the household level. An evaluation of the cost of HWC incidents of livestock predation found that HWC is costly to household wellbeing affecting food security, particularly of poor households. Households in conservancies, therefore, need assistance to mitigate the effects of drought and HWC incidents.

Keywords: Benefits, conservancies, households, HWC, HWCSRS, livelihoods, livestock predation, pastoralists