

The Role and Challenges of local NGOs in rainforest protection and the promotion of sustainable farming in the Bangem Sub Division of Cameroon

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Abstract

Despite efforts to protect forests and promote sustainable farming in Bangem Sub Division through the involvement NGOs and government agencies, anthropogenic activities have been causing a rise in forest loss and extinction of primate species. The main objective of this paper is to determine the key interventions and challenges of local NGOs in achieving a balance between forest protection and sustainable farming within the Bangem Sub Division of Cameroon. The paper made use of both primary and secondary data gotten through the use of semi structured interviews, focused group discussions and purposive sampling of five local NGOs that have been active in the area for at least ten years. Data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that lapses in monitoring and evaluation capacities of organizations greatly account for imbalances in forest protection and sustainable agricultural promotion. Results presented also revealed that financing contrasts between conservation and livelihood projects have also played a role in widening the gap between conservation needs and livelihood imperatives in the region, though it is hard to draw a definitive conclusion on this because it might be dependent on the extent to which these local organizations display competence and compliances as credible, and flexible institutions that can be trusted.

1. Introduction

Before and after 1990s, especially with the UN world conference on environment and Development, NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) became recognized as key partners in environmental conservation and development (Bamidele-Izu and Gemmill, 2002). Within this new framework of state and non-state collaboration in working towards a sustainable future and planet, NGOs gained wider attention to the extent that most international organizations decided to support NGOs in carrying out mainstream development and conservation projects amongst other engagements (Holmes, 2012). However, though this importance was placed on NGOs and with some degree of success, NGOs have been able to popularize their programs as being integrated in nature (Wahlen, 2014), but it is also difficult at the same time for them to claim that these programs have been too successful (Berry *et al.*, 2016 & Edwards and Hulme, 1996).

It is extremely difficult for anyone to argue against the relevance of protecting the environment (Norris, 2008 & Marchant and Awung, 2016) as much as no reasonable person can argue that people should be denied access to natural resources especially if the resources are the major source of livelihoods for their communities (Mellor, 2002; Carr, 2004 & Norris, 2008). The need for integrated actions which seek to strike a positive balance between environmental conservation and livelihoods enhancement must therefore be encouraged. Achieving this most loved nexus has resulted in the development of different kinds of actions by actors such as participatory conservation practices, payment for ecosystem services just to name a few, but the extent to which people can realistically find evidence to justify the credibility of these practices remains a puzzle and a major challenge to states and non-state actors.

The prevailing logic in nature conservation and local development captures the different complexities including resistances from local farmers (Benjaminsen and Joseph, 2015), and though NGOs could be key stakeholders in enforcing participatory local governance to mediate and promote change (Patterson, 1998), challenges still abound. Linking forest protection and agriculture is key but achieving a balance between the two remains problematic (Berkes, 2006 & Norris, 2008).

Agriculture in general is one of the main dominant economic activity surviving over 70% of Cameroonian households (Lambi *et al.*, 2012) but yet, it is also one of the key causes of environmental degradation, especially through deforestation, which emits over 30-35% of Global Green House gases (GHG), extinction of species, and poisoning/diminishing fresh water storages (Farmer *et al.*, 2015). For both NGOs and governmental structures, designing very comprehensive policies and programs which fully and simultaneously foster forest protection and agricultural expansion is getting more attention, but extremely difficult to realize (Farmer *et al.* 2015 & Czech, 2008). According to a study by Lambi *et al.* (2012), more than 98% of the local Cameroonian population depend on forests directly or indirectly, but the state over the years has not been too intentional in ensuring that forest people are adequately empowered to reduce indiscriminate forest exploitation. While NGOs have taken the lead in promoting conservation objectives and local development imperatives, it has also not been easy to boost of having made any significant progress in both objectives.

Conservation policies in most Cameroonian communities have not fully leveraged on customary conservation systems, thus, the policies seem to have alienated the resource rights of the people in the communities. The forest of Bangem Sub Division

have been under pressure from the farming and grazier populations for several years. In spite of the efforts to protect these forests from 1929 to date, the forest have been depleted by more than 50% of their 1963 size (Mbinkar, 1991).

Agarwal (2008) argues that NGOs have helped a great deal in fostering mainstream development and nature conservation, especially within fragile or failed states. Czech (2008) on the other hand acknowledges the role of NGOs but insists that all CSOs need to be strategically positioned and equipped with professionalism without which conflicts between conservation and development will keep increasing. This further indicates that achieving a nexus or balance between forest protection and the promotion of farming for local communities continues to be challenging to both states and CSOs as a whole, and no single actor has recorded any form of glaring success in this area to a greater extent (Lambi et al. 2012). Czech (2008) also holds that while non-state actors continue to protect the environment, the need to improve and expand agriculture, mining and logging continues to remain a challenge that even combined actions including the inputs of NGOs are yet to find a remedy across the globe.

Wahlén (2014) presents complexities in the positioning of monitoring and evaluation structures within state and non-state actors. Wahlén (2014) further notes that conservation organizations such as the World Conservation Organization (WCO) have different and complex institutional logics which can either enable or block conservation and rural development impact at different scales. From this analysis, the success of NGOs in mainstream local development and the protection of forests could remain challenging or not depending on the extent to which international and local NGOs coordinate and position their monitoring and evaluation framework in practice (Berkes, 2006). In his studies, Holmes (2012) noted that there is an intricate gap

between the need to make money by capitalists and the desire of conservationists to protect the environment which conservation NGOs and ecologists in philanthropy must consider for effective planning. This further illustrates that merging the needs to improve the wellbeing of people can most at times be against the wishes of conservationists to protect the same environment, if finding a middle ground for both objectives continue to remain conflictual (Wilder *et al.*, 2003).

This paper recognises the challenges highlighted by existing literature in merging forest protection and agriculture but seeks to identify and analyse the practical role of local NGOs in combining both the objectives of forest protection and livelihood enhancement. The case study of five NGOs in Bangem Area of Cameroon was chosen partly because different studies have highlighted the environment-development conflicts in this area (Lambi *et al.*, 2012) which however do not capture the particular views of active stakeholders and might just be generic, requiring further context specificities which could help in formulating and implementing policies and strategies.

1.2. Materials and Methods

In this study, both primary and secondary data sources were employed. The study made use of semi structured interviews, focused group discussions among team members of the organizations while a purposive sampling of five NGOs helped in gathering primary data. Through these methods, the NGO leaders presented different opinions and explanations on their integrated activities, self-assessment on the effectiveness and challenges faced by the organizations in planning and implementing interventions which achieve a sustainable nexus between forest resources conservation and the promotion of sustainable farming within forest communities. Secondly, secondary sources were also used. The paper also relied heavily on peer reviewed articles in scientific

journals, textbooks and also activity reports of the five NGOs being studied. Each of the NGO leaders received a list of questions with the options of providing further details. Their internal evaluation reports were also consulted as part of this process while two follow up skype calls were made to each of the 5 NGO leaders for follow up and confirmation of views/opinions. In term of data analysis, simple descriptive analyses were used to capture the perception of the respondents in the field and conclusions drawn after systematic analysis of the results.

1.3. Presentation of the study Area

Bangem Sub Division is found in Kupe Muanenguba Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. It is about 94 km from the town of Kumba and has an altitude of about 400m above sea level, with a surface area of 1500 square km. It is host to several forest reserves, including part of the Bakossi National Park (BNP), Bayang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary, and the proposed Muanenguba Integral Ecological Reserve (BMWS).

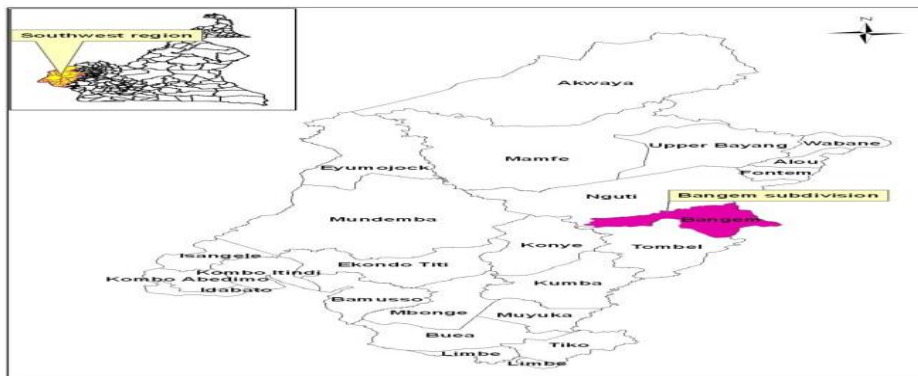


Figure 1. Location of Bangem Sub Division within the South West Region

Source:Adapted from Koge (1986).

According to Koge (1986), the Muanenguba region was the original and the initial dense settlement place of all the Bakossi people and their relatives. Hence, in order to survive, both the forest and the animals were overused. In this light, most of the large forest mammals have disappeared like the Elephants, Lions, Buffaloes, and Gorillas. At the moment, what is mostly found are the herbivores and rodents like Deer, Hare, Grass cutter, Porcupines, drills and Chimpanzees, Pangolins and a very rich rainforest.

1.4. Results and Discussions

1.4.1. NGOs active in the Bangem Sub Division

As a result of the biodiversity richness of Bangem Sub Division, many NGOs after the 1990s established satellite offices in Bangem to plan and coordinate key conservation and development activities. However, for the sake of this paper, the following key NGOs have been surveyed based on their continuous presence and long-term services to the communities within the subdivision on the one hand, and their involvement in conservation and livelihood activities on the other hand.

Table 1. NGOs operating in Bangem Subdivision on forests protection and agriculture

Name of NGO	Year of	Domain activity(ies)
Community Action for Development (CAD)	2003	Nature conservation, agriculture, environmental education, alternative support to hunters/bushmeaters, 1994 Wildlife enforcement
Philanthropic Development Center (PIDEC)	2004	Livelihoods enhancement through agricultural extension and assistance, skill training, wildlife management
Centre for Community Regeneration & Development (CCREAD)	2006	Vocational training, environmental sustainability, human rights, women and youth empowerment
Partners for Productivity Promotion (PFPP)	2000	Livestock promotion, loan schemes for poor youths and women,
Rise for Nature Cameroon	2003	Nature conservation, community forest management, agricultural extension, community regeneration schemes and poverty alleviation programs

Source: Author's survey, 2021

1.4.2. Key Forest conservation and sustainable farming interventions of NGOs

The main five NGOs contacted for the purpose of this paper revealed that in June 2011, a joint program was approved for implementation which was coordinated by a consortium formed by these organisations coordinated and hosted by Centre for Community Regeneration and Development (CCREAD-Cameroon). This integrated program had both components of direct conservation/forest protection activities and livelihood components with focus on sustainable farming activities.

The program named the "Rise for Nature "covered 15 local communities on beekeeping, organic gardening, assisting community groups on cash crop cultivation, capacity building, creation of community wildlife control groups, education on wildlife laws and environmental education, creation of community forest protection zones/household reserves and support of mainstream forest protection programs of the state. The data presented and analysed is therefore that of the consortium of the five NGOs and also the individual NGO related interventions which were not part of the consortium's activities.

Table 2. Outcome of the Rise for Nature program by the target NGOs in Bangem Subdivision

Community information		Livelihood project data			Conservation project data		
Name of Community	Population	No: of livelihood projects	Beneficiaries	% covered	No: of conservation projects	No: of people reached	% covered
Njimbeng	128	2	28	21.87	4	100	78.12
Nninong	852	1	105	12.32	2	682	80.04
Babubock	623	1	20	3.21	3	468	75.12
Epen/Mbang	1,300	1	245	18.84	2	500	38.46

Ngombo	230	1	12	5.21	3	175	76.08
Ekanjoh Bajoh	856	0	0	0	6	546	63.78
Ekona Mombo	222	0	0	0	2	50	22.52
Manyemin	452	1	152	33.62	7	400	88.49
Mbabe	369	0	0	0	2	180	48.78
Deck/Ehang	87	0	0	0	5	50	
Ngusi	1,650	2	178	11.33	3	700	42.42
Ntahli/Bambe	841	0	0	0	4	625	74.31
Bermin	580	1	45	7.75	2	250	43.10
Bekume	233	0	0	0	1	75	32.18
Ndom	239	1	33	13.80	1	97	40.58
Total	8,662	11	818		47	4,898	100

Source: Author's survey, 2021

Table 2 is a direct reflection of the interventions piloted by the NGO consortium within the framework of the Rise for Nature program according to the feedback received from the 15 communities involved. Findings as presented on table 2 show that out of 8,662 inhabitants from 15 communities reached by the program, 4,898 inhabitants representing 57% of the community have been reached by the direct forest protection activities of the program. Examples of these projects include support for the creation of parks and reserves, forest and wildlife law enforcement, environmental conservation education in schools and communities and the development of a youth conservation strategy. The consortium argued that its interventions merge forest conservation and the promotion of direct agricultural projects. However, the evaluation report represented on table 2 above show that out of 8,662 inhabitants drawn from 15 communities; only 818 people from different households representing 9% of the communities are reached through typical livelihood improvement projects.

Though 56% coverage rate is significant, the data also show that 44% (100% - 57% + 9% = 44%) of the communities targeted are not reached or served by the projects. This revelation is a pointer to the fact that the link between

social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development interpreted as a direct response action aimed at striking a positive balance between environmental conservation and rural development is currently challenging (Norris, 2008), and might not be a good model for replication by different organizations except the major drawbacks are analyzed (Mellor, 2002). The evidence from table 2 above depicts a situation in which more attention is placed on programs and projects which protect biodiversity while the needs of the local communities in terms of their social and economic opportunities are considered secondary (Table 2 shows that 47 direct conservation projects were planned and implemented as against 11 direct livelihood projects). However, it is hard to tell if implementing organizations are responsible for these variations because it could be as a result of wider political contexts of donors and state architectures in place.

In response to the survey questions, the five leaders of the organisations contacted further revealed that their different organisations apart from this larger consortium program had also been conducting different related activities as presented in table 3 below.

Table 3. Individual NGO activity evaluation report from 2015-2020

Name of organization	Domain of activity	Target communities	Number of conservation projects completed from 2015-2020	Number of farming projects from 2015-2020	No. of Beneficiaries reached (Direct/indirect)	Rate of completion (%)
Community Action for Development (CAD)	Nature conservation, agriculture, environmental education, alternative support to hunters/bushmeat traders, 1994 Wildlife enforcement.	4 Clans of Bangem Sub Division, Southern part	5	6	4,369	65
Philanthropic Development Center (PIDEC)	Livelihoods enhancement through agricultural promotion and assistance, skill training, wildlife management	Bangem, Tombel and Nguti Sub Divisions focusing on women and youth activities	3	1	5,782	76
Centre for Community Regeneration & Development (CCREAD-Cameroon)	Vocational training, environmental sustainability, human rights, women and youth empowerment	Nguti, Bangem and Tombel Sub Divisions focusing on poor forest communities	4	2	4,896	72
Partners for Productivity Foundation (PFPP)	Livestock promotion, loan schemes for poor youths and women,	Bangem Sub Division only	8	3	6,851	57
Nature Cameroon	Nature conservation, community forest registration, agricultural extension, community regeneration schemes and poverty alleviation programs	Nguti Sub Division only	4	2	2,123	51
TOTAL			24	14		

Source: Aauthor's survey, 2021

Apart from the joint Rise or Nature program implemented by the 5 organisations together, the five organisations equally planned and implemented individual projects within these same communities which were not within the framework of the consortium as shown on table 3 above.

From 2015 to 2020, 24 individual forest protection activities were completed as against 14 sustainable farming projects by the different organisations in Bangem Sub Division. During the information sessions with these NGO leaders, they revealed that their internal results of achievements which they have recorded in the delivery of environmental conservation and rural development related projects have not been without constraints. According to the results of the findings, PFPF completed the highest number of conservation projects (8 projects benefiting a total of 6,851 local community members throughout Bangem Sub Division with a success percentage of 57%. On the other hand, PIDEK covering a broader community implemented the highest number of agricultural/livelihoods projects (8 projects reaching 5,782 at a success percentage of 76. On aggregate performance, CAD maintained the highest balance in terms of forest conservation and poverty alleviation programs in the Kupe Muanenguba Division. CAD completed 5 broad conservation projects and 6 rural development projects reaching a total of 4,369 community members. Nature Cameroon, another local organization based in Bangem Sub Division recorded the least success within the period under investigation.

They completed 4 conservation projects and 2 rural development projects reaching 2,123 people.

On aggregate, this field evidence points to the fact that, whether in a consortium or individually, NGOs are yet to attain a balance in the planning and implementation of forest protection and livelihood enhancement projects. This is evident from table 2 where as a consortium, the 5 NGOs implemented 47 forest conservation and protection related projects as against 11 farming and livelihood projects. At the individual NGO level, table 2 also show that NGOs implemented 24 forest protection projects as against 14 farming and livelihood projects. This might not mean the NGOs are not doing a good job, but simply highlights the absolute need to find more comprehensive and context specific measures to attain a balance between forest protection and livelihood improvement in Bangem subdivision.

1.5. Major Challenges of NGOs in achieving a nexus between forest protection and sustainable farming

1.5.1. Passive involvement of local communities

In the Bangem Sub Division, the designation of forest lands into different forms of protected areas has not fully been in line with the needed expectations of engaging the local communities. From the interviews with the heads of the 5 local NGOs and review of their program evaluation reports, Protected Areas (PAs) are one of the core integrated interventions, but rates of involvement of different stakeholders during and after their creation have varied as shown on table 4 below

Table 4. Involvement of stakeholders during the creation of Protected Areas (BNP)

Involvement before the creation of PAs		Involvement after the creation (management/benefits)	
Stakeholders	Percentage (%) of involvement	Stakeholders	Percentage (%) of involvement

Non-Governmental Organizations	50	Non-Governmental organizations	25
Government, including councils	100	Government	75
Local chiefs (Union of chiefs)	65	Local Chiefs	05
Indigenous community members	10	Community members	05

Source: Author's survey results, 2021

The survey as reflected on table 4 above show the resentment by NGOs on the fact that during the process of creating protected areas, they are effectively mobilized by the state and its partners to assist in mobilizing communities (50%), as against 25% in the management process once the PAs are finally created. According to these NGO leaders, this kind of partnership complicates their interventions as it directly causes indigenous buffer zone communities to view their activities illegitimate and against the community. It helps to radicalize the villagers. While even state involvement is reduced from 100% during creation to 75% after the creation of parks, the involvement of traditional leaders and village community members is seen to drop drastically based on the interviews conducted. This trend renders NGO interventions

extremely weak and less effective in merging forest protection and livelihood improvement.

1.5.2. Contrasts in financing conservation and sustainable farming projects

International organizations supporting projects in Bangem Sub Division and those that are financing community base organizations seem to have a preference in supporting projects with 70% direct focus on conservation. In the area of fostering sustainable livelihoods such as sustainable agriculture, capacity building for local groups, fostering education and health programs, there is limited commitment in the funding of these programs as they are often thought to be the direct responsibility of the central government.

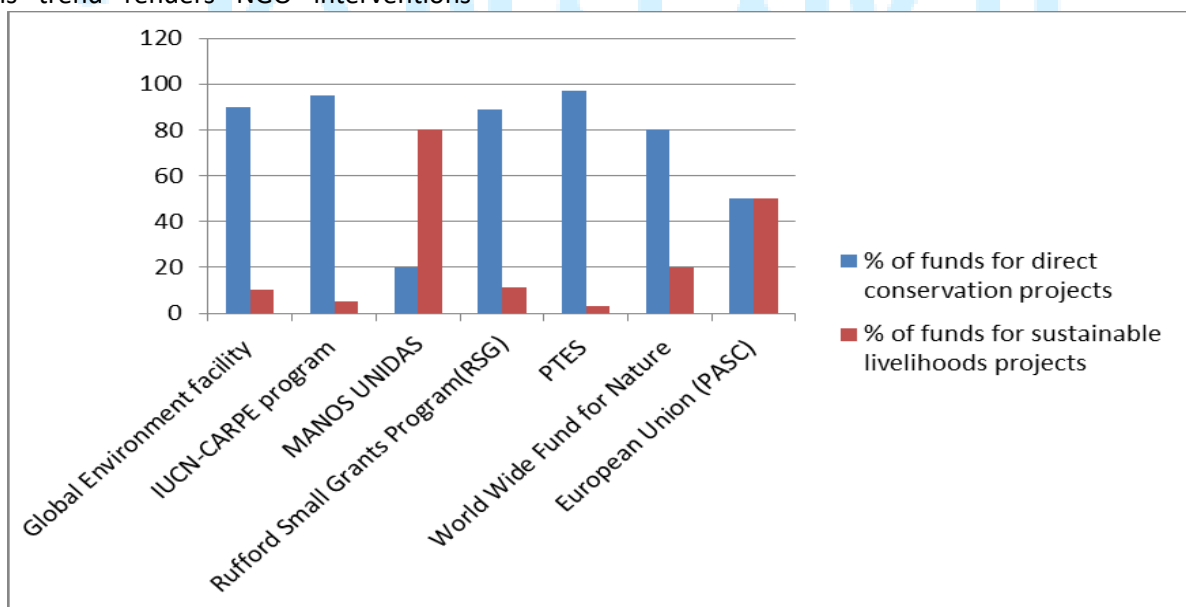


Figure 3. Level of funding commitments by selected donors of projects

Source: Author's analysis of project evaluation reports, 2021

In the Bangem area, the work of NGOs has continued to assist the government in its development drives. In figure 3, the study revealed that more than 85% of donors present in the area concentrate their

resources towards the funding of direct forest and wildlife conservation activities while just 15% of funding by these donors is directed towards the funding of sustainable livelihood activities such as

sustainable agriculture (organic gardening, livestock and beekeeping) This funding contrast has helped in fueling conservation crisis as local people who in their attempt to survive continue to unscrupulously and indiscriminately exploit nature despite the laws enforced. . MANOS UNIDAS, a Spanish catholic organization funding PIDEDEC in Bangem for many years is one of the few organizations which have continued to support the promotion of livelihood enhancement activities which have helped to some extent in the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. Different projects supported by the different programs of the European Union in collaboration with organizations such as CCREAD-Cameroon, Community Action for Development have also contributed their quota.

From the funding contrasts shown in figure 3, it might become difficult for local NGOs to source for additional funding to compensate for the funding gaps. At some points, NGOs might be forced to continue working more on forest protection activities. Analytically, one would think however that this contrast could also be blamed on the NGOs themselves

because they must be able to represent the community and not change their mission as soon as donor mission changes.

1.5.3. Deficiency in socio-economic infrastructure for local communities

NGO leaders interviewed indicated that private and public institutions have intersections in

the society through different processes which generate positive and negative consequences on man and the environment. For local communities, there are basic requirements which can enable a community to move from one stage of growth to another while the absence or the poor state of these basic requirements will generate continuous areas of conflicts and dependencies. Of the over 170,000 people, of which more than 70%, depend directly on the exploitation of nature in one way or the other in the Bangem Municipality, there has been a wide deficiency in social and economic opportunities for the local people to exploit.





Plate 1. The poor state of Roads within and around Bangem
Source: Author 'survey, 2021

Following the results of the survey carried out within the framework of this paper, 98% of NGO respondents during the interviews conducted indicated that the over 178 rural communities within which their activities take place are extremely poor in public infrastructures. They held the view that it is the responsibility of the state to make sure villages are connected to at least farm to market roads. Without these basic facilities, it is going to remain difficult for NGO interventions to have any commensurate

outcomes.

1.5.4. Unsustainable programs and projects

Respondents to the survey questions presented monitoring and evaluation gaps and incompetence as a key challenge. In Bangem Sub Division, both forest conservation and sustainable farming projects tend to be very temporal with very few closely monitored and evaluated at the end as planned.

Table 5. Sustainability levels for projects (2015-2020)

Type of projects	Number	Project duration		
		1-12 months	1-2 years	3years +
Direct forest/wildlife conservation	19	13	4	2
Direct livelihood projects	9	6	3	0

Source: Author's survey, 2021

Survey results on table 5 reveal that from the year 2015-2020, a total of 19 direct conservation projects were implemented by different stakeholders in the target communities. Out of this number, more than 70% of the projects did not run for more than 12 months. Four projects were implemented for more than 12 months, but did not continue 24 months thereafter, while only 2 out of 19 projects had a presence in the forest communities continuously for three years. While 19 direct conservation projects were implemented from 2015-2020, only 9 direct livelihood enhancement projects were implemented within these

communities during the same period. Out of these 9 projects, 6 projects did not run for more than 12 months; only 3 projects were visible for 2 years and none lasted for three years.

Table 6. Number of projects closely monitored and evaluated

Total number of projects	Number of closely monitored/evaluated projects	Number of projects not monitored and evaluated at the end
28	10	18
Percentage (%)	35.71	64.29

Source: Author's survey, 2021

The survey revealed that only 35.71% of the total number of projects implemented were closely monitored and evaluated while 64.29% of projects implemented were never monitored and evaluated (Table 6). Considering therefore the duration of projects and their level of monitoring and evaluation, NGO leaders held that a majority of the projects implemented whether to foster conservation or improve the livelihoods of the forest community people are short term actions which have not been able to trickle down and trigger local development while ensuring that forest and wildlife resources are effectively protected against increasing human pressure.

They further noted that there are also proofs that more interest from donors within the area is towards funding direct conservation activities rather than fostering the empowerment of people through the introduction of viable alternative livelihoods. Respondents alluded to the fact that poor mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation plans during and after the implementation of projects if not checked will continue to cause a bridge and a widening gap in merging

conservation needs and livelihoods imperatives within the area. To these local organizations, most of their donors insist on monitoring and evaluation, but provide a very limited budget for monitoring and evaluation of projects. 100% of the NGOs indicated that most of their past donors provide one-time off funding and refuse to provide enough support for monitoring and administrative costs to keep programs alive.

1.5.5. Lapses in educational and communication programs

The results of the interviews and review of reports showed that there is widespread ignorance on why people need to conserve forests and wildlife resources around them. This has reduced their level of participation in past and ongoing conservation projects. The non-existence of community radio programs in Bangem and Nguti Sub divisions through which people could be educated on forest and wildlife conservation issues has also widened knowledge gaps. The lone community radio in Nyasoso has very little coverage and does not even serve the people of Tombel sub Division as a whole.

Table 7. Access to information on conservation and agricultural innovations

N ^o of people in 15 communities	N ^o of people reached by educational programs	N ^o of people not reached	N ^o of community groups carrying peer education programs
12,236	5,325	6,911	3
Percentage	43.52	56.48	20

Source: Authos's survey, 2021

As shown on table 7, the percentage covered is below average (43.52%) given that even out of this percentage covered, there are indications that lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of these programs will further reduce progress. It was also revealed that there are only 3 community peer education groups in just 3 communities (20%) out of the 15 communities involved, which are helping in educating community members on the need to preserve their environment.

These revelations are a pointer to the fact that there is still the need to expand and speed up environmental education programs within these communities to raise awareness and engage many more community peer groups. This ignorance amongst target communities reduce chances of collaboration between NGOs and communities, thus limiting the extent to which NGO interventions could generate results.

1.6. Conclusions and policy recommendations

Gathering from both existing literature and the survey results, it is extremely difficult to ignore the complexities in dealing with forest protection and agricultural linkages (Ramanathan, 1992 & Norris, 2008). While the reviewed literature show that gaps in monitoring and evaluation capacities of NGOs are instrumental in limiting success (Wahlen, 2014), interviews with NGO leaders also revealed that lapses in monitoring and evaluation capacities of organisations greatly account for imbalances in forest protection and sustainable agricultural promotion. NGOs, as key stakeholders might have outlined financing contrasts between conservation and livelihood projects, but it is hard to draw a conclusion on this because it might be dependent on the extent to which these local organisations display competence and compliances as credible, and flexible institutions (Ostrom, 1991 & Gondo, 2010) that can be trusted. The literature identifies the need for participatory local governance if NGOs must attain the required results of linking conservation and livelihoods sustainably (Patterson, 1998 & Berkes, 2006), but the survey shows that the local NGOs operate in isolation of state programs to some extent because 4 of the 5 NGOs indicated that they have very limited practical collaboration with the government on a long-term basis. This might therefore be one of the reasons why their objectives of achieving a nexus between forest protection and sustainable farming might remain challenging especially with all the key challenges they identified.

It is evident that the challenges of reconciling forest protection and the enhancement of livelihoods is worth analysing (Berkes, 2006), but cannot be achieved without maximum collaboration between state and non-state actors working together with a similar objective. Though the case study treated in this paper focused on NGOs, existing literature supports the argument that the relationship between

conservation, agriculture and economic development as a whole remains complex and intricate (Czech, 2008 & Ichikawa, 2006). While the case of NGOs operating within Bangem Sub Division might have specific challenges in fulfilling their objectives, it is hard to generalise that these kinds of challenges might apply to organisations operating within different contexts.

1.7. Policy Recommendations

1. NGOs remain very important in program planning and delivery, but it is extremely important for them to operate within the framework of state mechanisms to incentivize collaboration with the state. This would ensure program sustainability and greater chances for long term budget support from local and international partners in environment and development mainstreaming
2. The designing of forest protection and sustainable farming programs by NGOs should consider the major community characteristics and dynamics which may block or enable program success. NGO programs should therefore be embedded within the wider community contexts and not based on managerial objectives.
3. Partnerships with NGOs by donors should identify the level of professionalism and experiences of organisations and their staff members to ensure the institutions are better structured with the specific mission of achieving a balance between forest protection and sustainable farming. This would help eliminate NGOs which are ready to change their objectives and mission at any time as donor funding objectives change.

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