

ABSTRACT

Development of the Maasai Mara Game Reserve and other wildlife reserves threaten indigenous land rights as Maasai people are relocated to make way for conservation. Pressures from national and international agencies are shrinking the land surrounding the community and limiting their ability to graze cattle. Being a pastoralist society with a cattle-based economy, limited access to grazing lands has detrimental effects on the community. In the face of climate change, increased drought and inconsistent rain patterns will increasingly hinder the community's access to traditional livelihood strategies.



BACKGROUND

Maasailand is some of the best conserved land in the Serengeti ecosystem due to years of ecological stewardship from the Maasai community. Recognition of pastoralists' indigenous ecological knowledge by rangeland professionals and management teams is fundamental to ecosystem health in East Africa (Mapinduzi et al., 2003).

- In Kenya, droughts will have the most severe impacts in the drylands which dominate <80% of the country, including the semi-arid Maasailand (Kamau and Mwaura, 2013).
- Climate change is one of the major global challenges of the 21st century and according to the UN, it is essential for countries to take mitigation and adaptation actions.
- Those who are economically disadvantaged and marginalized are disproportionately affected by the effects

of climate change and extreme events, the AR4 (IPCC Fourth Assessment Report) identified indigenous peoples of Africa as highly vulnerable (Olsson et al., 2014).



Maasailand Map Credit: Julie Narimatsu

CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE AMONG THE MAASAI OF NAROK, KENYA

Kelli M. Williams

University of Arizona School of Geography and Development

METHODS

I spoke with key stakeholders from the community using semi-structured interviews, including managers and employees of various conservancies, Maasai community members, the Game Warden at the Maasai Mara Game Reserve, Maasai tour guides, and other affiliates. In total, 27 informal interviews were conducted. These participants were invited to speak freely about their personal and professional experiences in Maasailand and their responses were stated with the full knowledge that they would be used in a report. These interviews were acquired through the assistance of MERC (Maasai Education, Research, and Conservation Center) and with the help of a translator, Parsaloi Ole Dapash.



"You can't control the drought, you have no idea of controlling nature." – Maasai Community Leader

100% of people interviewed mentioned grazing rights as a central issue



"So, it's like, you can't graze in the park, you can't graze in the conservancy, then where do you go." – Maasai Community Elder

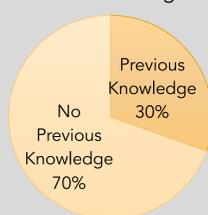
100% of people interviewed mentioned drought as a central issue

RESULTS

Future changes in climate compound the issues the community is facing such as poverty, human and livestock population growth, and inadequate access to resources (Bedelian and Ogutu, 2017). The increased frequency of drought and higher intensity of extreme weather events such as detrimental rains will increase hardships for the community. The climate vulnerability of the Maasai depend on the resilience of the ecosystem (Galvin et al., 2004). Historical land use practices of the Maasai, including nomadism, are now unavailable due to land privatization and range fragmentation. For communities especially reliant on their ecosystem, the social and economic vulnerability of the population is reliant on the resilience of the ecosystem (Galvin et al., 2004). This is especially relevant for pastoral systems whose economic viability revolves around grazing capacity. Results show that 70% of peoples interviewed did not know what climate change is.

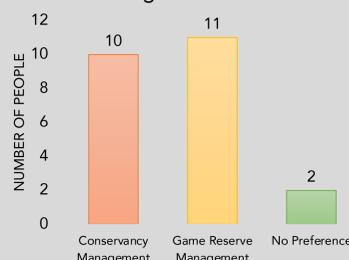
"The big problem we have with climate change is that we depend on cows and when there is drought, cows die. And we used to graze in the park but since the management changed, there is no grazing in the park so they are just kind of, what can we do next?" – Maasai Tour Guide

People With Previous Knowledge of Climate Change



Previous Knowledge No Previous Knowledge

Preference for Land Holding Organizations



"You can see most of the animals are found here and it's because the Maasai people are the only ones who can coexist with wild animals because they don't eat wild meat and they don't kill animals, they don't engage with any violence against wildlife. They are, I think, the people who can coexist with wildlife and other conservation oriented agendas." – Maasai Mara Game Reserve Warden



RECOMMENDATIONS

- For the **Maasai Community**, consider starting a Maasai run Conservancy to secure Maasai land and grazing rights. Also, seek legal council to negotiate for the community's rights while leasing land to Conservancies. Consider implementing a plan for drought to secure the community's livelihood.
- For the **Conservancy Management**, recognition of the Maasai community's role in the ecosystem should be considered and grazing plans should be implemented. If restricted grazing continues, run a program for livestock feed and water supplementation in times of drought.
- For the **Narok County Government**, recognize the need for community mobility throughout Maasailand and develop relevant policies.



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