

Evaluating CBNRM

How well does community-based conservation work, for whom and under what circumstances?

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and payments for ecosystem services (PES) initiatives are proliferating throughout the Global South. In theory, they enable conservation and development goals to be met simultaneously in poor rural areas, but there are conflicting views as to how well they work, for whom and under what circumstances.

Several factors contribute to the lack of clarity over CBNRM/PES effectiveness:

- Ecosystem services and poverty are complex, multidimensional concepts

- Trade-offs between different types of outcomes

The PIMA project

An interdisciplinary, mixed-methods impact evaluation using a quasi-experimental design

The PIMA project aims to evaluate :

- The nature, quantity and quality of ecosystem services benefits WMAs deliver
- Governance of ecosystem services in terms of access to and distribution of benefits from WMAs
- Effects of WMAs on livelihoods, poverty and wellbeing

Interdisciplinary, mixed methods

To address these aims, the project uses:

- GIS-based analysis of remotely sensed data and aerial counts of wildlife and livestock
- Focus group discussions, questionnaire-based livelihood surveys and resource use histories
- Key informant interviews with local government, WMA representatives and individual users

Quasi-experimental design

To understand the effects of WMAs, we are employing a BACI (before-after, control-impact) design. To construct a valid counterfactual, we are matching a stratified sample of WMA villages and households to comparable non-WMA units based on observable socio-demographic, economic and biophysical covariates. Matching reduces the influence of potential biases arising from non-random allocation of WMA benefits and restrictions.

Improving community-based conservation

PIMA will deliver insights and best practice lessons generalizable to the millions of individuals whose livelihoods and wellbeing are shaped by WMAs and comparable CBNRM/PES initiatives. Our findings will empower rural people making collective and individual resource use decisions and inform national governments and international donors deciding how to invest scarce resources for ecosystem services and poverty alleviation.

