

## **The Influence of Culture on Women Inclusion in Natural Resource Management in Mara North Conservancy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The discussion about the role of culture in natural resource management has been ongoing for years mainly in developing countries. This has mainly been after empirical findings that women are more passionate about natural resources around them. Women compare natural resources with the future of their children. However, women continue to lag behind in natural resource management with this being blamed on cultural limitations. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of culture on women inclusion in natural resource management in Mara North conservancy. The study was guided by social exclusion theory which explains the social factors that may limit women involvement in natural resources management. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The study used primary data which was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Interviews were administered to the Mara North Conservancy Managing Director and community leaders. Data was analyzed quantitatively. Regression results indicated that there was a positive and significant influence of culture on inclusion of women in natural resource management. Further, management practices did not have influence on women inclusion in natural resource management. The coefficient of correlation ( $R$ ) was 0.445 and  $R^2$  is 0.198. The coefficient of determination  $R$  square indicates that 18.8% of Women Inclusion in NRM is explained by culture prevailing at the Mara Conservancy. With the introduction of management practices, coefficient of correlation improved to 0.502 with  $F$ -change of  $0.02 < 0.05$  implying that managerial practices were significant intervening variable on the relationship between culture and women inclusion. Thus, the women inclusion cannot be achieved without appropriate culture and appropriate management practices. The study concluded that culture and management policies are significant predictors of women inclusion in NRM. The study recommended for measures of promoting culture change to promoting women inclusion in natural resource management such as seminars, counseling and trainings. Management of Mara North conservancy to explore ways of enhancing more women inclusion in natural resource management.*

**Key Words:** *Culture, Management Practices, Natural Resource Management, Mara North Conservancy*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Traditionally, women participation in various social economic and political had been minimal. However, there have been global efforts to involve women in social economic and political matters. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995), the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights was meant to mark a turn around to women exclusion. Following the declaration, more women have been able to serve in political offices, are protected by laws against gender-based violence, and live under constitutions guaranteeing gender equality. The declaration acknowledged that women had an essential role to play in the approaches to natural resource management (Findler, Wind & Barak, 2016). Women participation has been recognized globally as the key ingredient to

addressing the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognizes the importance of women participation to addressing the modern world challenges. The goals requires gender equality which encompasses parity in education, political participation, and economic empowerment (UN Women, 2015). Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is also recognized as an ingredient to sustainable development by Goal 5 under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which seek to address the 21st century challenges.

Failure to involve women in natural resource management has detrimental effect since women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men as they constitute the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources (Findler, Win and Barak, 2016). Furthermore, they face social, economic and political barriers that limit their coping capacity. Women are also charged with the responsibility to secure water, food and fuel for cooking all which are affected by effectiveness in management of natural resources (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Regionally, women inclusion has also been a challenge despite its importance. Adriana (2013) conducted a study on the extent to which gender was being mainstreamed in water resources management in Mkoji Sub-catchment in Tanzania. The study found that gender provisions of Tanzania water policy had not been implemented neither were these understood by most of the people. Gender mainstreaming issues were neglected and misunderstood by most of the people. Akoyoko (2014) investigated the integrating gender aspects in natural resource management in ensuring the sustainability of environmental projects in Senegal. The study concluded that women inclusion played a key role in Natural Resource Management. Integrating women aspects could ensure the sustainability of environmental projects. The sustainability of natural resource management depends upon the institutions involved in resource management at the local level. Heavy state involvement in natural resource management has been justified based on the prevalence of market failures, notably the positive and negative externalities and the strategic importance of the resources. Policies of devolving management responsibility from the state to users have become increasingly widespread in response to the performance deficiencies of government agencies, the fiscal crisis of the state, and broader policies of decentralization. The success of these policies depends upon the local capacity for collective action, but the factors that encourage or inhibit the collective action are insufficiently understood (Findler, *et al.*, 2016).

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The degradation of Kenya's natural resources and critical ecosystems continues unabated, albeit numerous initiatives of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations at conservation (Isyaku, *et al*, 2014). The degradation of the natural resources has been partly blamed on lack of inclusion of women who are more passionate about the resources around them (Findler *et al.*, 2016). Although Mara North Conservancy is committed towards the environment, wildlife and promoting the welfare of the community, the impact that women inclusion has on its success is not well established by the existing literature. Women are typically poorly represented in the conservancy management committees, despite generally relying more heavily on natural resources. This could lead to an information dissymmetry within the committee and potentially poorly informed decisions that disadvantage women. Understanding this is critical owing to the fact that natural resource management plays a role in ensuring sustainable development. This study therefore sought to determine the influence of culture on women inclusion in natural resource management, in Mara North conservancy.

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

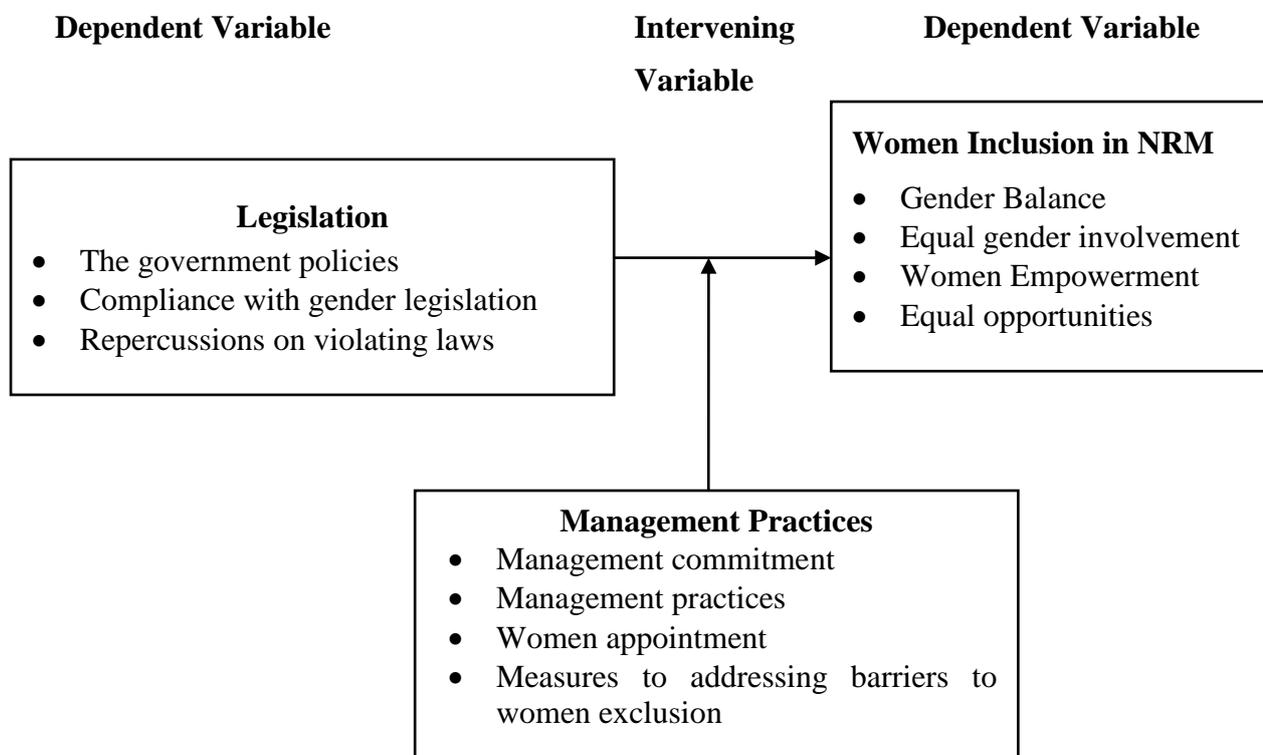
The overall purpose of this study was to determine the effect of culture on women inclusion in natural resource management in Mara North conservancy.

The study attempted to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. To examine the extent to which cultural beliefs influence women inclusion in natural resource management in Mara north conservancy.
- ii. To determine the moderating effect of managerial practices influence women inclusion in natural resource management in Mara North conservancy.

### 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual framework is a virtual or written product that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied which includes, the key factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them. The study's conceptual framework is as shown by Figure 1. The independent variable was culture and intervening variable was managerial practices.



*Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework*

### 5. REVIEW OF THEORY

The study was anchored on Social Exclusion Theory. Social exclusion is a rupturing of the process of declining participation, access, and solidarity. At the societal level, it reflects inadequate social cohesion or integration. At the individual level, it refers to the incapacity to participate in normatively expected social activities and to build meaningful social relations. The concept of social exclusion was originally developed in France by sociologists. In French Republican thought, it refers to a process of 'social disqualification' (Paugam, 1993). Social exclusion includes economic, social and cultural exclusion. Social exclusion theory argues

that social excluded members of the society are restricted of their economic mobility and are denied the benefits accorded to other members of society. According to social exclusion theory, social exclusion arises from three main sources of stigma: past trauma at the hands of a dominant or majority population, such as a recent history of slavery or dispossession of a homeland; membership in ethnic groups that are differentiated by color, language and religion; and membership of groups that are assigned lower social status in their country, such as that accorded to lower castes in countries with caste systems (Horowitz, 1985). In many countries and cultures, women hold lower social status than all boys and men. In Kenya, women consist of 70% of socially excluded people in the society (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007).

The theory's implication to the study is that women involvement in natural resource management will be as a result of social exclusion. Social exclusion occurs where women fail to get adequate or appropriate education to make capable of full involvement in natural resource management. Women are also limited by the culture where traditionally culture has not been supportive to ensure that women contribute fully in management of natural resources around them. Women are also economically not empowered and hence may not fully participate in natural resource management. The theory thus explains the social factors that may limit women involvement in natural resources management. Critics of social exclusion theory argue that social exclusion theory is based on an 'underlying moral meta-narrative' which assumes that social inclusion or integration, as the opposite of social exclusion, is inherently good and desirable. As a result, efforts to tackle exclusion can often be led by implicit normative assumptions about how social life should be organized. This often ignores the ways in which the terms of inclusion can be problematic, disempowering or inequitable (Hickey & du-Toit, 2007). Hickey and du-Toit (2007) argued that the concept of social exclusion sees poverty and inequality as a result, primarily, of unequal economic and power relations, thus requiring efforts to change the societal, political and economic dynamics that keep people disadvantaged. Many impoverished and exploited people are in fact included, but on highly adverse terms. Indeed, total exclusion on any dimension is rare, and so adverse incorporation might be a preferable term to social exclusion for many situations (Hickey & du-Toit, 2007).

## **6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A case study research design was used for this study. A case study involves the study of a unit/person or small group, a situation or a specific case. The design was appropriate for this study due to its holistic approach which aims to capture all the details of a particular individual or group as presented in real life situation. This was necessary in analyzing and understanding what undermines women inclusion in natural resource management. The target population was 20 employees working at the Mara North conservancy, 850 community members, 80 county government officials and 150 project stakeholders at the conservancy. These population was targeted due to the fact that they are they are the ones directly involved on operations at Mara North Constituency thus the most conversant for the study.

A sample size of 92 respondents of the population was selected using simple random technique from the identified target population. The study used primary data which was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Interviews were administered to the Mara North Conservancy Managing Director and community leaders. Questionnaires were used since they are fast to administer and respondents can fill them at their convenience time. Questionnaires are also cost effective and give the respondents an opportunity to confirm the information being sought before responding to the questions. Interviews were conducted with

key informants in the sector, and these included the management at the conservancy and elders in the community nearby. Interviews were conducted using the developed checklist that helped to direct and guide the interviewer. The qualitative data from the open ended questions was analysed using content analysis because the focus was on interpretation of the results rather than quantification. While quantitative data from the close ended questions was interpreted by use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and analysed through the use of descriptive statistics which include frequencies, percentages, standard deviation and arithmetic mean. The analysed data was then represented in figures and tables. Multiple linear regression was used to determine the relationship between the factors examined by this study on women inclusion in natural resource management.

## 7. STUDY FINDINGS

### 7.1 Influence of Culture in Natural Resource Management in Mara North Conservancy, Narok County, Kenya

The study sought to determine the influence of culture in women inclusion in natural resource management in Mara North Conservancy, Narok County, Kenya. To achieve this, a five point Likert scale was applied. The findings of the study are shown by Table 1.

**Table 1: Culture**

Culture	VSE	SE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	SD
There are cultural barriers that limit women inclusion in natural resource management	4	14	19	40	25	3.68	1.105
Natural resource management is believed to be considered to be the men's role	14	19	21	25	22	3.23	1.353
Women are faced with many family obligations that hinder them from undertaking in conserving their natural resource	10	24	16	36	15	3.22	1.245
There are social norms that guide the elder women inclusion process at Mara North Conservancy	12	20	15	32	21	3.3	1.336
Women fear to take up the natural resources management roles due to the perceived inferiority complex	11	20	15	36	19	3.31	1.291
Women's attitude towards natural resource management does not encourage women participation	0	6	30	42	22	3.8	0.858

*Key: VSE=very small extent, SE= small extent, ME= Moderate extent, LE= large extent, VLE= very large extent, SD=Standard Deviation*

The respondents agreed that there are cultural barriers that limit women inclusion in natural resource management and women's attitude towards natural resource management does not encourage women participation with means of 3.68 and 3.8 respectively indicating a very large extent. They were however neutral on the rest of the statements regarding to the influence of culture stating a moderate extent. Specifically, on women fearing to take up the natural resources management roles due to the perceived inferiority complex a mean of 3.31

was attained, on natural resource management is believed to be considered to be the men's role a mean of 3.23 was attained, on women are faced with many family obligations that hinder them from undertaking in conserving their natural resource 3.22 was attained, while there are social norms that guide the elder women inclusion process at Mara North Conservancy a mean of 3.3 was attained. The findings implied that culture was a hindrance in women inclusion in natural resource management at Mara North conservancy. However, the respondents seemed not to clearly relate culture to women inclusion in natural resource management.

A respondent from the County Government while responding to the influence of culture on women inclusion in natural resource management said:

*“The culture existing at Narok County village setting has been not been supportive of women involvement in natural resource management. Such roles in the community are being perceived to be men's roles. This has been hindering inclusion of women where some women have been nominated to take these positions but they decline. We have been running programs to enlighten the communities on equality and the capacity of women. With time, we expect communities will get the importance of the women inclusion in all community initiatives”.*

## 7.2 Influence of Management Practices in Natural Resource Management in Mara North Conservancy, Narok County, Kenya

The study sought to determine the influence of managerial practices in women inclusion in natural resource management in Mara North Conservancy, Narok County, Kenya. To achieve this, a five point Likert scale was applied. The findings of the study are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Management Practices**

Management Practices	VSE	SE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	SD
The management at Mara North Conservancy ensures that women are equally included at natural resource conservation	1	0	24	51	25	3.98	0.774
The management has set up measures to ensure women inclusion	7	17	22	33	20	3.41	1.202
Women are given a higher priority during selecting those to be involved in natural resource management	9	6	28	36	21	3.54	1.152
The managerial positions are generally considered to belong to the men	17	9	21	37	16	3.26	1.321
The management plays a huge responsibility in ensuring that the all barriers enhancing women exclusion are removed	6	20	27	26	21	3.36	1.197

*Key: VSE=very small extent, SE= small extent, ME= Moderate extent, LE= Large extent, VLE= very large extent, SD=Standard Deviation*

On whether the management at Mara North Conservancy ensures that women are equally included at natural resource conservation, the respondents strongly agreed with a mean of 3.98 implying a very large extent. The respondents also agreed on women are given a higher priority during selecting those to be involved in natural resource management with a mean of 3.54 indicating a large extent. The respondents were however neutral on the management has

set up measures to ensure women inclusion and the management plays a huge responsibility in ensuring that the all barriers enhancing women exclusion are removed having means of 3.41 and 3.36 showing a moderate extent. While managerial positions are generally considered belonging to the men, the respondents disagreed with a mean of 3.26 indicating a low extent. The findings thus imply that the entire managerial practices and policies all act to favour and facilitate women inclusion in the natural resource management through equal participation, formulation of appropriate measures and removal of women inclusion barrier. Therefore, the managerial practices are generally oriented towards ensuring that there was gender inclusion in natural resource management at the Mara North Conservancy.

### 7.3 Regression analysis

The regression analysis was used to establish the relationship that exists between the research variables. The independent variable was culture, intervening variable management practices and dependent variable was Women Inclusion in NRM. The regression model summary results obtained are shown by Table 3.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	Change Statistics		Sig. F Change
							df1	df2	
1	.445a	0.198	0.188	0.69491	0.198	19.462	1	79	0.000
2	.502b	0.252	0.233	0.67527	0.054	5.664	1	78	0.020

a. Predictors: (Constant), Culture

b. Predictors: (Constant), Culture, Management Practices

The coefficient of correlation (R) was 0.445 and R<sup>2</sup> is 0.198. The coefficient of determination R square indicates that 18.8% of Women Inclusion in NRM is explained by culture prevailing at the Mara Conservancy. With the introduction of management practices, coefficient of correlation improved to 0.502 with F-change of 0.02<0.05 implying that managerial practices were significant intervening variable on the relationship between culture and women inclusion. Thus, the women inclusion cannot be achieved without appropriate culture and appropriate management practices. The findings were as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Model ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.398	1	9.398	19.462	.000a
	Residual	38.15	79	0.483		
	Total	47.548	80			
2	Regression	11.981	2	5.99	13.137	.000b
	Residual	35.567	78	0.456		
	Total	47.548	80			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Culture

b. Predictors: (Constant), Culture, Management Practices

c. Dependent Variable: women inclusion in NRM

The ANOVA results for regression coefficients indicated that model was significant since the p-value was 0.000 which was less than both 0.01 (99% confidence level) and 0.05 (95% confidence level). This thus shows that the model was significant in explaining influence Women inclusion in culture in NRM. The model coefficients obtained by the study are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Model Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.01	0.353		5.688	0.00
	Culture	0.434	0.098	0.445	4.412	0.00
2	(Constant)	1.385	0.432		3.203	0.002
	Culture	0.347	0.102	0.356	3.394	0.001
	Management Practices	0.271	0.114	0.249	2.38	0.02

*a. Dependent Variable: women inclusion in NRM*

From the results obtained, indicated that culture and management practices had positive coefficient and p-value<0.05. The positive coefficients which are significant implying that they improve women inclusion in natural resource management (NRM).

## 8. SUMMARY

To a large extent, the respondents agreed that there were cultural barriers that limited women inclusion in natural resource management and women's attitude towards natural resource management. However, there were still minimal social practices that guided the women inclusion process at Mara North Conservancy. Culturally, women inclusion in resource management was determined to be restricted in that apart from widows and educated women, women generally faced limitations in resource management. The respondents were neutral on whether women were fearing to take up the natural resources management roles due to the perceived inferiority complex; perception of natural resource management to be the men's; women were faced with many family obligations that hinder them from undertaking in conserving their natural resource and that there were social norms that guided the elder women inclusion process at Mara North Conservancy. The findings implied that culture was a hindrance in women inclusion in natural resource management at Mara North conservancy. However, the respondents seemed not to clearly relate culture to women inclusion in natural resource management or there are minimal social practices that guide the women inclusion process at Mara North Conservancy. Multiple regression analysis indicated a positive and significant influence of culture on inclusion of women in natural resource management. This meant that culture was an important factor contributing to women inclusion in natural resource management.

The findings revealed that the management at Mara North Conservancy ensured that women are equally included at natural resource conservation. The respondents also agreed on women are given a higher priority during selecting those to be involved in natural resource management. They however disagreed on managerial positions were generally considered belonging to the men. These findings implied that the managerial practices were oriented towards ensuring that there was women inclusion in natural resource management at the Mara North Conservancy. However, multiple regression analysis indicated that management practices did not have influence on women inclusion in natural resource management. This

could have been due to the fact that the management of Mara North conservancy had over the years included women in natural resource management that change on level of inclusion could not be attributed to changes in management practices.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

From the study's findings, the study makes several conclusions. To begin with, the study found out that despite the numerous efforts undertaken by the government, NGOs, community leaders and management, there still exists minimal women inclusion in natural resource management at Mara North Conservancy. The study thus concludes that there exists male dominance in natural resource management which could be due to them being prioritized more. Women are therefore not given an equal chance to contribute in resource management in spite of their potential benefits. The study found out there exists two factors that influence the entire women inclusion process in the NRM at the conservancy which are culture and managerial policies. The regression analysis revealed that strong relationship between these factors and women inclusion in resource management at the conservancy. The study thus concludes that the low women inclusion in NRM that has persistent in the recent past could brought about by these factors. The study further concludes that an evaluation and improvement of these factors would result in increased women inclusion in NRM at Mara North Conservancy.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Study also found a positive and significant influence of culture on inclusion of women in natural resource management. This meant that culture was an important factor contributing to women inclusion in natural resource management. The study therefore recommends for measures of promoting culture change to promoting women inclusion in natural resource management. Education programs such as seminars, counseling and trainings to be undertaken so as to ensure that more women are able to actively participate in decision-making, planning, supervision of implementation and management of natural resource management. This will significantly reduce the already pre-existing male dominance in the conservancy. Study findings were that management practices did not have influence on women inclusion in natural resource management. However, management practices were found to support women inclusion in natural resource management. The study therefore recommends that management of Mara North conservancy to explore ways of enhancing more women inclusion in natural resource management.

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