

ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

This seminar paper examines the role of Community-Based Conservation (CBC) in promoting environmental sustainability and community development in Ekiti State, Nigeria. CBC is a framework that prioritizes local community involvement in managing natural resources, combining environmental conservation with socio-economic development. The study reviews relevant literature to demonstrate how CBC utilizes Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices to tackle significant environmental issues such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and water pollution. This paper analyses case studies of successful Community-Based Conservation (CBC) initiatives from regions like Cross River and Ondo States, demonstrating how CBC enhances biodiversity protection and supports livelihoods through sustainable practices, including agroforestry and ecotourism. Social-ecological systems (SES) theory offers a framework that highlights the interdependence of human societies and ecosystems. The theory supports adaptive governance, emphasizing community involvement in decision-making for resource management, thereby enhancing resilience in social and ecological systems. The paper also analyses the involvement of government agencies, NGOs, and local authorities in offering institutional support for community-based conservation (CBC) via policies that acknowledge land tenure and resource rights. The findings indicate that CBC plays a significant role in meeting global conservation objectives, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land), while also providing avenues for poverty alleviation. The study concludes with recommendations to enhance legal frameworks, develop community capacity via education, and promote collaborative governance to tackle issues associated with resource depletion and climate change.

Keywords Community-Based Conservation, Sustainable Development, and Indigenous Knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Conservation initiatives have transitioned from a top-down methodology, characterized by government and international regulatory imposition, to a more participatory Community-Based Conservation (CBC) framework. CBC has achieved considerable international recognition owing to its emphasis on local community involvement in the stewardship and preservation of natural resources. This method combines conservation with local livelihoods, enabling communities to participate in decision-making processes actively (Ihemezie et al., 2022). CBC frequently underscores the significance of Indigenous knowledge and culturally relevant conservation techniques, promoting both environmental and social sustainability (Adeyanju et al., 2022).

Globally, CBC has demonstrated efficacy in regions such as Latin America, South Asia, and Africa. In

Nigeria, Community-Based Conservation (CBC) has demonstrated potential in areas such as the Niger Delta and Cross River State, where community involvement has resulted in enhanced sustainability in forest and mangrove management (Elisha & Golden, 2022; Isyaku, 2021).

Community-Based Conservation (CBC) is a framework that engages local communities in the stewardship and safeguarding of natural resources. It underscores the necessity for cooperative conservation policies that both save biodiversity and enhance the welfare of local communities. CBC contests the conventional conservation paradigm by amalgamating economic and social advancement with environmental sustainability (Ukpoju et al., 2023).

Globally, CBC is known for fostering local ownership of conservation programs, mitigating tensions between conservation agencies and local

populations, and enhancing biodiversity conservation in underdeveloped nations (Mbidzo et al., 2021). In Nigeria, Community-Based Conservation (CBC) efforts have garnered acclaim for their capacity to preserve biodiversity while concurrently enhancing the livelihoods of rural populations. The REDD+ programs in Cross River State engage communities in sustainable forest management and carbon credit initiatives (Isyaku, 2021). Community-driven mangrove restoration initiatives in the Niger Delta have been crucial in alleviating biodiversity loss and environmental degradation (Sam et al., 2023).

Ekiti State, nestled in southwestern Nigeria, boasts a wealth of natural resources, including diverse forests, rivers, and rich biodiversity. These resources are vital to the state's ecological health and support crucial ecosystem services, such as water regulation and soil fertility, which are essential for agriculture and livelihoods (Ukpoju et al., 2023). However, Ekiti faces pressing environmental challenges that threaten its natural heritage and the well-being of its communities. Deforestation due to logging and agricultural expansion has led to the degradation of forest areas and biodiversity loss. Unregulated farming practices have exacerbated soil erosion, diminished agricultural productivity, and damaged fragile ecosystems. Furthermore, industrial activities and improper waste disposal contribute to the growing problem of water pollution in the state's rivers and water bodies. Like many regions, Ekiti is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which can exacerbate existing challenges such as flooding and drought (Obateru et al., 2024).

These environmental challenges underscore the urgent need for effective conservation strategies, particularly those that empower and involve local communities who rely on these resources for their livelihoods (Gidebo, 2023). Community-Based Conservation (CBC) offers a promising approach to

address these challenges by integrating local knowledge and promoting community ownership of conservation initiatives.

Statement of Problem

Ekiti State, like numerous areas in Nigeria, is facing significant degradation of its natural resources, threatening both ecological integrity and community welfare. Forest reserves, essential for biodiversity and ecosystem services, have experienced considerable depletion because of unregulated logging, agricultural expansion, and unsustainable land management practices (Ilić et al., 2024). Deforestation results in habitat destruction and biodiversity loss, especially among endemic species (Sawyer et al., 2023). It also reduces ecosystems' ability to deliver essential services, including water regulation and soil fertility, which are vital for agricultural productivity and livelihoods.

Additionally, water resources in Ekiti State are under growing pressure due to pollution. Industrial waste and domestic activities lead to the contamination of water bodies, thereby compromising water quality and posing a threat to aquatic biodiversity (Obateru et al., 2024). This pollution presents risks to human health and contributes to environmental degradation. An essential barrier to successful conservation initiatives in Ekiti State is the insufficient engagement of local communities. Top-down conservation approaches, typically implemented by governmental agencies or external organizations, often marginalize local communities, resulting in reduced ownership and participation (Agwu et al., 2023). The absence of engagement obstructs the implementation of sustainable practices, potentially leading to ongoing environmental degradation through actions such as bush burning, overfishing, and illegal logging (Thorn et al., 2023).

Aim and Objectives

This seminar paper explored the diverse role of CBC in environmental protection and sustainable development in Ekiti State.

Specifically, the paper analysed how Community-Based Conservation (CBC) contributed to safeguarding biodiversity and promoting ecological health in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It investigated how CBC practices could foster sustainable development by balancing ecological preservation with the economic needs of local communities. Furthermore, the paper identified the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing CBC initiatives in Ekiti, focusing on leveraging Indigenous knowledge and empowering communities to take an active role in managing their natural resources. By assessing current conservation efforts and offering recommendations for enhancing community participation, the paper aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of how CBC could promote both environmental sustainability and community development in Ekiti State.

Theoretical Framework

Social-Ecological Systems (SES)

Social-ecological systems (SES) refer to the complex interactions between human societies and their environmental contexts, emphasizing the interdependence of social and ecological components. The notion that humans are integral to nature, rather than apart from it, has existed for an extended period; nonetheless, Fikret Berkes and Carl Folke are predominantly acknowledged as the principal advocates who established the Social-Ecological Systems (SES) framework in the 1990s.

Their research underscored the interdependence of human society and natural ecosystems, advocating for their examination as integrated systems rather than isolated components. This approach has significantly impacted sustainability

science, environmental management, and resilience thinking. The SES framework has emerged as an essential instrument for comprehending intricate environmental issues and formulating sustainable solutions.

Social-ecological systems (SES) theory provides a thorough framework for analysing the interactions between human societies and natural ecosystems. This theory asserts that human and ecological systems are interrelated and adaptive, indicating that alterations in one component of the system can affect the other (Thorn et al., 2023). SES theory posits that environmental and social dimensions evolve together, necessitating comprehensive management strategies that address both ecological integrity and social well-being.

SES theory posits that effective sustainable resource management in conservation must consider the intricate dynamics of human-environment interactions. SES highlights the necessity of incorporating local knowledge, practices, and governance frameworks into natural resource management, rather than viewing ecosystems as isolated from human impact (Thorn et al., 2023). This interconnected perspective is significant for tackling the issues of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, as it encourages adaptive, community-driven solutions.

Community-Based Conservation (CBC) aligns with the Social-Ecological Systems (SES) theory by emphasizing the active involvement of local communities in the management of natural resources. In Community-Based Conservation (CBC), communities are recognized as stewards of the environment, playing a crucial role in the protection and sustainability of ecosystems (Sawyer et al., 2023). SES theory underpins CBC by promoting decentralized, participatory conservation methods that leverage the knowledge and expertise of local communities.

SES theory emphasizes the significance of adaptive

governance, enabling communities to make informed decisions regarding resource utilization, monitor environmental changes, and modify their practices accordingly. This flexibility enables communities to react to environmental feedback, enhancing resilience in human and ecological systems (Thorn et al., 2023). SES theory emphasizes the importance of institutions in establishing supportive frameworks for community-based conservation (CBC), which includes policies that acknowledge land tenure, resource rights, and the necessity for long-term ecological monitoring.

Relevance of SES Theory to Understanding the Role of CBC in Ekiti State

Environmental degradation and resource depletion present significant challenges in Ekiti State. The SES theory offers a useful framework for analysing the role of CBC in promoting conservation and community development. The SES perspective emphasizes the significance of considering communities and ecosystems as interdependent systems, wherein the health of one directly influences the other. Involving local communities in decision-making allows CBC initiatives to utilize Indigenous knowledge and practices, which tend to be more sustainable and culturally appropriate (Obateru et al., 2024).

SES theory underscores the importance of collaborative governance involving local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Ekiti. This approach guarantees that conservation efforts are pertinent to local contexts and adaptable to the unique social and ecological conditions of the area. SES theory promotes the integration of contemporary conservation science with traditional practices, facilitating a balance between ecological preservation and community welfare.

The interrelation of communities and ecosystems in Ekiti is a fundamental aspect of applying SES

theory to CBC initiatives in the area. Communities in Ekiti rely on natural resources, including forests, water bodies, and agricultural land, for their livelihoods. Environmental degradation poses a significant risk to ecosystem health and local economies. SES theory emphasizes that alterations in ecosystem services, including deforestation and water pollution, can trigger cascading impacts on social systems, resulting in economic difficulties and food insecurity (Thorn et al., 2023).

Communities in Ekiti can actively manage their resources by implementing a CBC approach that integrates traditional knowledge with contemporary conservation strategies. This participatory approach cultivates ownership and accountability, essential for long-term sustainability. SES theory underscores community resilience, defined as the capacity of social and ecological systems to adapt to environmental changes while maintaining their essential functions (Sawyer et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community-Based Conservation (CBC) emerged in the 1980s as a response to the limitations of top-down conservation models, emphasizing the integration of local communities into conservation strategies. Community participation in decision-making and equitable benefit sharing from conservation efforts have demonstrated effectiveness in addressing environmental and socioeconomic challenges, especially in areas where livelihoods are closely tied to natural resources (Oladeji et al., 2022).

CBC has shown significant success in various geographical contexts. The Namibian Conservancy Program enables communities in Namibia to manage wildlife and gain advantages from ecotourism (Murenzi et al., 2023). Community forestry programs in Nepal have successfully restored degraded forests and strengthened local economies (Marennya & Usman, 2021). Indigenous

communities in the Amazon rainforest of Latin America significantly contribute to the management of extensive forest areas and the reduction of deforestation through communal land titles (Agwu et al., 2023).

Despite these accomplishments, CBC encounters ongoing challenges. Inadequate and irregular funding may impede the enduring sustainability and scalability of projects (Ebhaleme, 2022). Moreover, aligning conservation objectives with local economic interests, especially in regions dependent on resource extraction, presents significant complexities. External pressures, including land grabbing and the expansion of industrial agriculture, pose significant threats to community-led conservation initiatives (Wongnaa et al., 2024).

Nigeria has implemented several community-based conservation initiatives aimed at addressing deforestation, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation. The Cross River State REDD+ program engages local communities in sustainable forest management, focusing on carbon trading and forest conservation. In Ondo State, CBC initiatives concentrate on the preservation of forest reserves and the advancement of sustainable agriculture (Oladeji et al., 2022). These initiatives highlight the capacity of CBC to tackle environmental issues while promoting local development.

Government policies and NGO partnerships are essential in facilitating community-based care (CBC) in Nigeria. The National Policy on Environment and the Nigerian Conservation Foundation promote community engagement in conservation strategies (Sam et al., 2023). Non-governmental organizations, such as the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Global Environment Facility, offer technical and financial support to enhance local capacity and promote environmental awareness.

Successful CBC initiatives in various Nigerian states provide important insights for Ekiti State. The REDD+ program in Cross River State illustrates the efficacy of community engagement in forest conservation and the potential for benefit generation via carbon credits. Community-based Forest Management in Ondo State demonstrates the beneficial results of collaborative conservation strategies.

Natural Resources and Conservation Challenges in Ekiti State

Ekiti State has a significant abundance of natural resources, encompassing forests, rivers, and a variety of flora and fauna. Forest reserves, including the Ise Forest Reserve, play a critical role in biodiversity conservation and offer essential ecosystem services such as water regulation and soil conservation (Akarara & Azebi, 2024). The rivers of the state, notably the Ogbese River, play a crucial role in supporting local agriculture and fisheries, thereby significantly enhancing rural livelihoods.

Ekiti State faces a complex array of environmental challenges. Deforestation, primarily driven by illegal logging and the expansion of agricultural frontiers, poses a significant threat to the region's ecological integrity (Thorn et al., 2023). Furthermore, land degradation, exacerbated by unsustainable agricultural practices, has led to a decline in soil fertility and diminished agricultural productivity. This environmental degradation is further compounded by the loss of biodiversity, jeopardizing the intricate balance of the state's ecosystems. Habitat destruction and the over-exploitation of natural resources have placed numerous species at risk (Adenle et al., 2022). The cumulative impact of these challenges underscores the urgent need for comprehensive environmental conservation and sustainable land management strategies in Ekiti State.

Numerous conservation projects have been

launched in Ekiti State; however, the active involvement of local communities is essential for their sustained success. Projects that incorporate traditional knowledge alongside contemporary conservation methods show considerable potential for improving the sustainability of natural resource management (Ige et al., 2024). These initiatives enable communities to gain economic advantages from conservation via ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, and the commercialization of non-timber forest products.

Fo, Ibimilua, and Omidiji (2024) utilized a survey research method to evaluate the influence of environmental awareness on sanitation practices in Ekiti State. The study concentrated on three Local Government Areas (Ado, Oye, and Emure), each representing distinct senatorial districts. A judgemental sampling technique was employed to select 50 respondents, all of whom were teachers within these LGAs. The emphasis on educators sought to evaluate the contribution of environmental education in enhancing sanitation awareness and practices.

The research indicated a significant degree of environmental awareness and favorable attitudes towards sanitation among the participants. Educators demonstrated assurance in the state government's dedication to waste management, which has favourably impacted environmental education within educational institutions. This awareness has resulted in measurable behavioural changes and improved environmental conditions within the examined LGAs. Challenges remain, including inadequate government support, insufficient infrastructure, and a deficiency in proper waste disposal facilities, especially for hazardous materials.

The study emphasizes the significant impact of environmental awareness on the advancement of sanitation practices. The study highlights the relationship between education and community

behaviour through an emphasis on teachers. Despite ongoing challenges related to infrastructure and waste management, the observed positive attitudes and behavioural changes indicate a robust foundation for enhanced sanitation in Ekiti State.

Fo, Ibimilua, and Omidiji (2024) find that communities in Ekiti State, especially those with engaged teachers, exhibit increased awareness and favorable attitudes regarding environmental sanitation. The research highlights the necessity of ongoing educational initiatives, strong community involvement, and enhanced governmental backing to secure sustainable advancements in sanitation practices.

The study exhibits a potential gap due to its exclusive focus on teachers. Their role is essential; however, comprehending the viewpoints and practices of other community members, such as traditional leaders, youth, and diverse social groups, would yield a more comprehensive understanding of environmental awareness and sanitation behaviours in Ekiti State.

This is consistent with the ongoing research regarding the Role of Community-Based Conservation in Ekiti State, highlighting the significance of extensive community involvement in environmental conservation initiatives. Both studies acknowledge the interrelation of environmental awareness, community involvement, and sustainable practices. The findings of Fo, Ibimilua, and Omidiji (2024) highlight the beneficial effects of environmental education, underscoring the significance of community-based conservation approaches that prioritize education and awareness as essential elements for enhancing environmental stewardship and advancing sustainable resource management.

Both studies recognize the challenges associated with insufficient infrastructure and government

support, emphasizing the necessity for collaborative efforts and enhanced investment to address these deficiencies and attain sustainable environmental improvements in Ekiti State.

The role of Indigenous knowledge and local participation in conservation

Indigenous knowledge improves conservation initiatives in Ekiti State by integrating traditional approaches with contemporary resource management techniques. Communities in Ilukuno, Ikun- Amure, and Ijan Ekiti utilize traditional water management methods that cultivate ownership and accountability among local leaders, thereby guaranteeing sustainable water supply and ecological equilibrium ("Water Conservation Techniques by Ilukuno, Ikun-Amure, and Ijan Ekiti Communities in Ekiti State, Nigeria", 2022). The Erijiyan community's veneration of the goddess Osa-Erin illustrates how cultural beliefs safeguard sacred natural resources by preventing detrimental activities near sacred streams, hence protecting biodiversity and watershed integrity (Oladapo & Ogundele, 2018). Moreover, the ethnobotanical understanding of indigenous plants utilized for malaria treatment underscores the necessity of preserving medicinal flora, frequently jeopardized by contemporary farming methods (Chukwuma et al., 2019). These examples demonstrate that Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) enhance effective conservation while fostering community participation and sustainable behaviours vital for environmental stewardship in Ekiti State (Brownson et al., 2024) (Reyes-García et al., 2019).

Akinbobola, Ajayi, and Odeku (2022) utilized a qualitative methodology to examine Indigenous water management practices in three communities in Ekiti State: Ilukuno, Ikun-Amure, and Ijan Ekiti. Their methodology encompassed interviews, discussions, and observations to collect data on the historical context of water systems, community

regulations for water management and operation, informal limitations, resource contributions for initial investments, and community viewpoints on contemporary water system development. This qualitative method facilitated a comprehensive knowledge of the socio-cultural backdrop of water management within these communities.

The research revealed that water management strategies in the three villages integrated Indigenous knowledge with contemporary methods. Community leaders significantly influenced water management, cultivating a sense of ownership and responsibility that ensured a reliable water supply and proper upkeep of water infrastructure. The study emphasized the necessity of integrating traditional knowledge and practices into contemporary water resource management strategies to improve sustainability and community engagement.

Akinbobola et al. (2022) illustrate the significance of using Indigenous knowledge and community engagement in water resource management. Their findings underscore the necessity of acknowledging and integrating ancient methods into contemporary strategies to guarantee the sustainable and equitable management of water resources in Ekiti State.

The authors assert that community engagement, especially the influence of local leaders, is essential for the efficient and sustainable administration of water resources. They promote the integration of traditional knowledge and practices into contemporary water development initiatives to improve their efficacy and secure community ownership.

Akinbobola et al. (2022) offer significant insights into community-based water management, yet the study is confined to three communities. Subsequent research might examine the variety of water management practices throughout Ekiti State and assess the feasibility of expanding

effective community-based strategies.

This study aligned with contemporary studies regarding the "Role of Community-Based Conservation in Ekiti State." Both underscore the significance of community engagement and Indigenous knowledge in the management of natural resources. The findings of Akinbobola et al. (2022) substantiate the case for community-based conservation by illustrating the efficacy of community-led initiatives in the management of vital resources such as water. Both studies underscore the necessity of amalgamating ancient traditions with contemporary methodologies to guarantee the sustainability and efficacy of conservation initiatives.

The results of Akinbobola et al. (2022) align with the extensive literature on community-based natural resource management. Behailu et al. (2016) underscore the significance of Indigenous practices in water management for sustainable service delivery in Ethiopia, whereas Tripathi et al. (2018) accentuate the influence of socio-cultural attitudes on sustainable water resource management in Nepal. These studies, in conjunction with Akinbobola et al. (2022), emphasize the importance of acknowledging and integrating local knowledge and community involvement in environmental conservation and resource management techniques.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, focusing on the comprehensive review of secondary data sources to examine the role of Community-Based Conservation (CBC) in Ekiti State. The methodology involved an extensive analysis of existing literature related to CBC, environmental conservation, indigenous knowledge, and sustainable development. Sources included scholarly articles, government reports, and policy briefs from relevant organizations and conservation bodies. Additionally, case studies

from other regions in Nigeria, such as Cross River and Ondo States, were reviewed to provide comparative insights and lessons for enhancing CBC practices in Ekiti State. This literature-based approach enabled a detailed understanding of how CBC contributes to biodiversity conservation, environmental sustainability, and community livelihoods in Ekiti.

DISCUSSION

The efficacy of Community-Based Conservation (CBC) efforts in Ekiti State depends on numerous critical aspects, including efficient local governance, community solidarity, and economic diversification. Research indicates that CBC programs flourish when executed within a conducive national framework that promotes local government and community engagement. Findings from "Catalyzing Success in Community-based Conservation" (2022) underscore the necessity of empowering communities to participate in collective action. In Ekiti, community activity is essential for the preservation of natural resources, including forests and water bodies.

A vital consideration is the resolution of trust difficulties and internal conflicts within communities. Conflicts frequently emerge from competition for resources or disputes on the allocation of benefits from conservation efforts. Consequently, trust-building strategies and conflict-resolution frameworks are crucial for the enduring viability of CBC efforts. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) significantly contribute by strengthening local competence and promoting community ownership of conservation initiatives.

Moreover, participatory methodologies that emphasize community-established research priorities and cooperative processes can markedly enhance conservation results. These strategies guarantee that conservation initiatives correspond with local requirements and cultural principles.

Engaging local people in decision-making cultivates a sense of ownership and guarantees that conservation activities are customized to the unique natural and social circumstances of the area.

The study by Fo Ibimilua and Omidiji (2024) on environmental awareness and sanitation practices in Ekiti State corroborates these findings. Their research has shown that educators in three Local Government Areas (Ado, Oye, and Emure) significantly contributed to improving environmental awareness and cultivating favorable attitudes towards cleanliness. This is important as it emphasizes the influence of environmental education on community conduct, reinforcing the necessity for continuous educational programs to support CBC efforts. Nonetheless, the study also recognized obstacles including limited governmental backing and inadequate infrastructure, which impede the efficient execution of cleanliness and conservation methods.

Both studies—conducted by Fo Ibimilua and Omidiji (2024) and the current research on CBC—acknowledge the difficulties posed by inadequate infrastructure and governmental support. They underscore the significance of cooperative initiatives among government entities, local communities, and NGOs to rectify these shortcomings and foster sustainable environmental advancements in Ekiti State. Environmental education, community engagement, and governmental funding are seen as essential elements of effective Community-Based Conservation (CBC) efforts.

A notable discovery from the research pertains to the significance of local knowledge in conservation efforts. Communities in Ekiti State, including Ilukuno Ikun-Amure and Ijan Ekiti, have historically depended on traditional water management practices that promote a sense of

ownership and accountability among local leaders. These conventional methods not only guarantee a sustainable water supply but also preserve natural equilibrium. Cultural beliefs in communities such as Erijiyan, where the goddess Osa-Erin is revered, play a crucial role in safeguarding sacred natural resources like streams, hence aiding in biodiversity conservation.

The amalgamation of Indigenous knowledge with modern resource management practices is essential for the efficacy of CBC efforts. Akinbobola et al. (2022) illustrate that the integration of traditional water management traditions with contemporary technology can markedly improve community involvement and resource sustainability. This discovery highlights the necessity for conservation efforts in Ekiti State to integrate traditional knowledge, especially in domains like water resource management and biodiversity preservation.

The research findings underscore the necessity for a comprehensive strategy for CBC in Ekiti State. This methodology must integrate local government, community engagement, and traditional wisdom with contemporary conservation research to guarantee enduring sustainability. The participation of governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities is crucial for tackling the issues of environmental degradation, resource depletion, and climate change. Furthermore, prioritizing education and awareness campaigns is essential to improve community engagement and promote sustainable behaviours.

Community-Based Conservation (CBC) has become an essential strategy for attaining environmental preservation and poverty reduction in rural areas such as Ekiti State. By enabling local communities to engage in the management of natural resources, including forests and water bodies, CBC guarantees

ecosystem preservation while concurrently offering sustainable livelihoods (Ilić et al., 2024). This participatory method promotes sustainable agriculture, environmentally friendly farming practices, and forestry initiatives, alleviating environmental degradation and promoting alternative revenue opportunities, such as ecotourism, which can aid in poverty reduction.

The amalgamation of conservation strategies with livelihood enhancement guarantees that communities derive direct advantages from environmental protection. The sustainable gathering of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as medicinal herbs and fruits, illustrates how community-based conservation (CBC) can yield economic value with ecological advantages (Obateru et al., 2024).

CBC is vital in attaining essential Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). CBC aids in climate change mitigation by advocating for methods that diminish deforestation and improve carbon sequestration via reforestation. Additionally, by enabling communities to adopt sustainable agricultural and water conservation practices, CBC strengthens their resistance to the effects of climate change, including modified precipitation patterns (Gbadegesin & Gbadamosi, 2024).

CBC directly engages with SDG 15 by safeguarding, rehabilitating, and advocating for the sustainable utilization of terrestrial ecosystems. Community engagement in forest management and biodiversity protection is essential for mitigating biodiversity loss and addressing desertification, which are critical objectives of SDG 15 (Ilić et al., 2024).

Comparative Analysis and Insights Gained

Analysing successful CBC programs in other locations offers significant lessons for Ekiti State.

The REDD+ initiative in Cross River State exemplifies the efficacy of amalgamating carbon credit systems with biodiversity preservation via community-driven forest stewardship. Agroforestry initiatives in Ondo State demonstrate how community-based conservation (CBC) can enhance livelihoods while alleviating stress on forest resources (Isyaku, 2021). These approaches underscore the significance of solid land tenure rights and communal resource ownership to guarantee that conservation advantages directly enhance community welfare.

Global instances, including community-based conservation in Namibia and Nepal, underscore the significance of empowering communities through decision-making authority and benefit-sharing structures to attain long-term sustainability (Murenzi et al., 2023). These instances highlight the necessity for strong community governance frameworks and financial incentives to facilitate effective community-based conservation activities.

Adapting effective models to the local context of Ekiti State necessitates a meticulous evaluation of its distinct socio-economic and ecological attributes. Implementing agroforestry practices, as demonstrated in Ondo State, could mitigate environmental deterioration and livelihood issues. Moreover, policies that encourage community ownership of conservation initiatives, along with assistance from governmental bodies and NGOs, would be essential for reproducing the accomplishments witnessed in other areas (Gbadegesin & Gbadamosi, 2024).

Policy Implications for Enhancing Community-Based Care

Enhancing CBC in Ekiti State necessitates the rectification of critical policy deficiencies. A significant difficulty is the absence of robust legal structures that enable local communities to efficiently manage their resources. Inadequate

land tenure legislation and insufficient safeguards for community-managed conservation zones impede present conservation initiatives. A comprehensive legal framework is essential to explicitly delineate land and resource rights, guaranteeing that communities are accountable for and derive benefits from sustainable resource management (Obateru et al., 2024).

Governments ought to implement regulations that institutionalize community rights to forests and other resources, ensuring long-term security and facilitating their involvement in conservation initiatives. These frameworks must incorporate methods for addressing disagreements between conservation authorities and local groups, especially about resource utilization.

Collaborative Alliances for CBC Success

Effective community-based collaboration requires robust cooperation among governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, and local populations. Governments can offer crucial financial assistance, technical proficiency, and policy direction. Non-governmental organizations can enhance capacity building, education, and community involvement, ensuring that local entities acquire the requisite skills and knowledge for sustainable resource management (Gbadegesin & Gbadamosi, 2024).

Establishing forums for conversation and collaboration among different stakeholders might mitigate the issues associated with CBC, including disputes around land use and resource rights. By harmonizing the interests of conservation agencies, communities, and various stakeholders, CBC can serve as a potent tool for attaining environmental sustainability and rural development in Ekiti State.

The success of Community-Based Conservation (CBC) initiatives in Ekiti State is influenced by several key factors, including effective local

governance, community cohesion, and economic diversification. Research indicates that CBC projects are more likely to succeed when they are situated in supportive national contexts that promote local governance and empower communities to engage in collective action (Catalyzing Success in Community-based Conservation, 2022) (Fariss et al., 2022).

Additionally, addressing trust issues and conflicts within communities is crucial for fostering collaboration ("Catalyzing Success in Community-based Conservation", 2022). Establishing Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) enhances local capacity and encourages community members to take ownership of conservation efforts (Horwich et al., 2015). Furthermore, participatory approaches prioritising community-defined research agendas and collaborative processes can significantly improve outcomes by ensuring conservation efforts align with local needs and cultural values (Mulrennan et al., 2012). These factors collectively contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of CBC initiatives in the region.

CONCLUSION

The research on Community-Based Conservation (CBC) in Ekiti State highlights the critical significance of involving local communities in the management and preservation of natural resources. CBC serves as an effective mechanism for mitigating environmental degradation and enhancing the livelihoods of rural communities. Active community involvement in conservation efforts fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for natural resources. The community-centric approach is essential for the long-term sustainability of conservation projects.

The primary advantage of CBC in Ekiti State is its capacity to utilize Indigenous knowledge effectively. Traditional ecological practices, including water management systems and respect

for sacred forests, offer culturally relevant and ecologically effective conservation methods. Indigenous knowledge enhances sustainability in natural resource management and ensures that conservation practices are tailored to local contexts. This study emphasizes that sustainable conservation efforts must integrate the knowledge, culture, and active participation of communities dependent on these resources for their survival.

A significant finding is the function of collaborative governance. The study indicates that the participation of governmental institutions, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is crucial for the success of community-based collaboration (CBC). The actors furnish essential financial, technical, and policy support that empowers local communities to manage their natural resources effectively. The study identifies gaps in legal and institutional frameworks that require attention to enhance the empowerment of local communities. Enhanced land tenure policies, improved enforcement of resource rights, and clearer legal recognition of community-managed conservation areas are crucial for increasing the effectiveness of community-based conservation initiatives.

The research identifies various challenges that need to be addressed to guarantee the success of CBC in Ekiti State. Challenges encompass inconsistent funding, insufficient technical expertise, and inadequate institutional support. The potential conflicts between traditional conservation methods and modern scientific approaches present challenges that require careful management to prevent the alienation of local communities. The study highlights that integrating traditional knowledge with modern conservation science presents a promising approach for future advancements.

This study highlights the transformative potential

of CBC in reconciling ecological preservation and economic development. The active involvement of local communities and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge can enhance environmental sustainability and aid in poverty alleviation through community-based conservation (CBC).

Recommendations

The findings of this study on the Role of Community-Based Conservation (CBC) in Ekiti State underscore the need for a comprehensive strategy to enhance environmental conservation and sustainable development. Several key recommendations have emerged from the research, which focuses on fostering community engagement, integrating Indigenous knowledge, and strengthening institutional support.

o Strengthening Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Strengthening the legal frameworks that empower local communities is essential for the effectiveness of CBC in Ekiti State. The research underscores the necessity for policies that explicitly endorse community ownership of natural resources, guaranteeing that communities receive definitive land tenure rights. Formalizing these rights enables communities to possess the autonomy required for sustainable resource management and protection against external exploitation.

Furthermore, collaboration between government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is essential for the development and implementation of policies that enhance community participation. The establishment of legal frameworks that acknowledge and uphold resource rights is crucial for promoting active community participation. This encompasses the provision of technical assistance and funding to guarantee that local conservation initiatives are not impeded by financial constraints. limitations.

o Leveraging Indigenous Knowledge and

Cultural Practices

One of the key findings of the study is the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge and traditional conservation practices into modern conservation strategies. Indigenous practices, such as traditional water management and forest preservation, have been shown to significantly contribute to sustainable resource use in Ekiti State. The study recommends that conservation projects explicitly incorporate this knowledge to ensure the long-term sustainability of ecosystems. Traditional leaders and community elders should be included in the planning and implementation phases of conservation projects to ensure that Indigenous practices are respected and maintained.

In addition, leveraging cultural beliefs and practices that promote conservation, such as the protection of sacred groves and rivers, can enhance biodiversity protection and foster a strong conservation ethic within local communities. Integrating these cultural elements into CBC projects will foster a sense of ownership and accountability among community members.

o Capacity Building and Education

The study recommends that conservation initiatives in Ekiti State should prioritize capacity building and environmental education. These efforts should target not only community leaders but also the broader population, including youth and marginalized groups. By enhancing the technical skills of local community members in sustainable agriculture, forest management, and biodiversity conservation, CBC initiatives will be better equipped to meet their objectives.

Public awareness campaigns focusing on the importance of biodiversity conservation and sustainable practices should be intensified. This includes engaging local schools, institutions, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to

promote environmental stewardship. Strengthening environmental education will ensure that future generations are informed and capable of maintaining conservation efforts.

o Enhancing Economic Opportunities through Conservation

A critical aspect of ensuring the sustainability of CBC initiatives is linking conservation with economic benefits. The study highlights the need to promote ecotourism and the sustainable commercialization of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as viable economic alternatives for rural communities. These activities can provide communities with financial incentives to maintain their ecosystems while reducing their reliance on destructive practices such as logging or over-farming

. By developing eco-friendly tourism around forest reserves and rivers, communities in Ekiti can generate revenue from their natural resources without depleting them. Government and NGOs should support these initiatives by providing the necessary infrastructure and training to ensure that ecotourism is managed sustainably and benefits local communities directly.

o Fostering Collaborative Governance

The study stresses the importance of collaborative governance in CBC efforts. Conservation cannot be achieved solely by communities or external agencies; rather, a partnership approach is needed. The government, NGOs, and local communities must work together to share knowledge, resources, and responsibilities in conservation projects. By promoting participatory governance models, CBC initiatives can ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and inclusive, fostering greater community trust and cooperation.

This collaboration should also extend to conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly where

conservation goals may conflict with community livelihood needs. Creating dialogue platforms where these issues can be addressed will prevent conflicts from undermining conservation projects and ensure the long-term viability of CBC initiatives.

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