

GENDER ROLE IN WILDLIFE PROTECTION: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS IN CANTANHEZ NATIONAL PARK (GUINEA-BISSAU, WEST-AFRICA)

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Gender plays an important role in the way people interact with conservation programmes. For instance, African women are less positive towards conservation initiatives than men, due to their low participation in decision-making processes. Generally, men dominate decision-making. This presentation considers how gender interferes in the way men and women from Tombali perceive wildlife – i.e. chimpanzees - and Cantanhez National Park. Two hypotheses are considered: (i) Men and women see famine as their biggest life constraint (ii) Though villagers depend on farming to feed their families; women are more negative regarding the national park than men. In-depth interviews (N=47) and 5 focus groups were conducted (N=47) for 9 weeks, respectively with men and women. Women-only groups were vital since these (according to information of previous visits) are more difficult to interview due to their busy daily routine. Testimonies were recorded and analysed using content - textual and conceptual - analysis techniques and Atlas.ti (version 6.0.12) was used. Famine does emerge as subjects' major concern, which explains their intolerance to chimpanzee crop-raiding. The absence of alternative livelihoods and compensations contributes to their anger against wildlife, especially chimpanzees. Though women's expectations about their future are low, men hold positive prospects regarding the support they might get from social researchers and NGOs. Women could be good allies in the future, although empowerment programmes are needed to engage them in conservation practice. It is also imperative to create a compensation plan and a set of solutions that would allow villagers to be less park (and its services) dependent.

Keywords: chimpanzees, conservation, gender, social perceptions