

In an effort to mitigate the costs of wildlife conservation to rural communities, policymakers have implemented integrated conservation and development programs (ICDPs) in Africa. The purpose of these ICDPs is to attain the dual goals of increased conservation of wildlife and improved social and economic welfare in rural communities. ICDPs recognize that establishing local institutions, which empower rural households to act in their own interests, can be conducive to increased wildlife conservation. Accordingly, ICDPs promote growth and income diversification through the implementation of non-farm enterprises, which are complementary to wildlife conservation. However, despite high expectations, ICDPs have seldom been successful. Weaknesses of these programs include failed delivery of promised benefits, insufficient incentives for local communities to participate in wildlife conservation programs, lack of power devolution, and, in certain areas, continued and persistent biodiversity loss.

The implementation of ICDPs (or other programs whose purpose is to promote sustainable development) is likely to have an effect on the incentives that rural households face with respect to their consumption and production decisions. The principal purpose of my research is to investigate whether, and how, changes in shadow prices alter households, incentives, production and consumption behavior and full incomes, which in turn will impact on wildlife conservation. Developing this knowledge is a necessary first step towards determining which ICDP arrangements generate benefit to rural communities, while ensuring conservation of wildlife stocks. Empirical analysis will be conducted using information and data that is collected in Botswana, a country that has placed particular emphasis on using wildlife-based revenues to compensate rural communities for the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat. The purpose of this analysis is to inform development and conservation policies in African countries.