



**FRANCIS NONO > NATIONAL PARKS**

## Animal-human feud: UWA needs to formulate compensation policy

**O**n April 13, 2018, the wildlife and tourism community woke up to the sad news of a possible poisoning of 11 lions at Hamukungu fishing village in Lake Katwe Sub-County, Kasese District located in Queen Elizabeth National Park. As a matter of fact, suspected poisoning of various species of animals have been on the high in recent years in most reserves in Uganda as a result of conflict between animals and communities neighbouring the parks. In most cases, community members kill these animals in retaliation to rampant cases of destruction of crops, livestock and other household property by straying animals.

Aware of the fact that population of people are in the increase around the game areas, and to some extent people are forced to fight for spaces with the animals, this is one reason enough for those concerned to look at promoting human-animal co-existence.

As a community engagement specialist in conflict sensitivity context, I urge Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) to engage a lot more on dialogues with communities within the various game parks in Uganda.

Taking into consideration key guiding questions for engagement - in what ways are game parks bringing development around the park and do communities benefit from it? What problems are communities facing around the parks; issues of revenue sharing, promoting sustainable tourism and development? These are some of the guiding principles that can be taken into consideration

and used to promote peaceful animal-human co-existence. With that, the communities around the park would feel valued, especially on what is not being done right as well as paying attention to the impact the animals have created on economic gains on people around the parks. Having participated in a number of community dialogues on Animal-Human Conflict in the course of my work with Refugee Law Project, there are quite a number of silent issues that UWA should consider:

To most communities around the parks, the issue of compensation policy is not clear. Communities present their grievances, but they are never compensated after animals have destroyed their livelihoods such as crops and livestock destruction. Is there a clear policy on compensation for such losses?

Rangers in most cases create communication gaps between the communities around the parks. Some community members cannot interface with the rangers, considering that historically, poaching and encroaching on the parks have been the lifestyle of some people. Community sensitisation should be encouraged through friendly approaches from rangers and the park authorities in order to promote peaceful co-existence.

In some cases, community members around the reserves, for example, around Murchison falls, have accused rangers of killing their own and that their bodies are in most cases never found. This

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could also create retaliatory attacks, which impacts on the animals.

The issue of non-restriction of animal movements from the parks has created tensions in the promotion of harmonious animal-human co-existences and some community members believe that the park authorities are not interested in restricting animal movement. Hence the rampant human-animal fights for the same space.

Through this, some people have condemned the uncontrolled animals’ movements and to that effect, their school-going children cannot now go to school. This too brings unease among communities neighbouring the parks.

This is something that the relevant authorities need to take into consideration. There should be trenches dug around the parks to stop the animals from straying to attack community members.

There are cases of Rangers being killed by community members. However, there is also a section that says not every person who go to the park is a poacher, but that some of them are only interested in collecting firewood. Hence the authority needs to change approach in building good relationships with parks neighbouring communities.

Due to limited sensitisation of communities on the benefits of parks around them, people do not see any benefit of the parks to them. They say the animals bring problems for them they destroy their crops and domestic animals. Actions necessary to promote animal-human co-existence are:

Government, through UWA, should come up with a compensation policy on losses due to destructions of people’s economic gains caused by animals.

There is need to encourage and support sensitisation of communities around the parks on the benefits to them. UWA should be facilitated with effective transport means and it must have a desk that handles peoples’ complaints.

UWA and rangers should be trained on human rights issues in handling poachers/community members around the park. The communities should be encouraged to engage in alternative sources of livelihoods such as art and craft whose products they can sell to tourists in the parks to get money.

UWA staff should improve their relationship with the communities around parks through consistent community engagements. Also revenue sharing should be streamlined. Trenches should be dug around the park to stop the animals from crossing over to attack the community.

**Mr Nono is a transitional justice practitioner/ Community outreach officer, Refugee Law Project nonofrnecs@gmail.com**