



Serengeti National Park © Equilibrium Research

‘REVISITING LEOPOLD’ IN THE CONTEXT OF TANZANIA NATIONAL PARKS AND TANZANIA AS A COUNTRY

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National Parks of Tanzania are in the highest category of Protected Areas in the country. Other protected areas, in the context of wildlife conservation include Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Game Reserves, Game Controlled Areas and Wildlife Management Areas.

The first National Park in Tanzania, the Serengeti, was established in 1959 before independence when the country was under the British colony. One of the pioneers in establishing the national parks system in the country was Bernhard Grzimek who started this task in 1950s. To date, 55 years later, there are 16 national parks across the country.

The mandate of national parks in the country is: “To manage and regulate the use of areas designated as National Parks by such means and measures to preserve the country’s heritage, encompassing natural and cultural resources, both tangible and intangible resource

values including the flora and fauna, wildlife habitats, natural processes, wilderness quality and scenery therein and to provide for human benefit and enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generation”

In comparison to national parks goal as recommended in the Leopold Report, “biotic association within each Park be maintained or where necessary recreated as nearly possible condition that prevailed”, it is evident that, this recommendation talks about one component in conservation which can be summarized as “ecosystems / habitats restoration”. It could have been expanded to include conservation of cultural components which are within the areas designated as national parks. Cultural components are one of the various kinds of visitors’ attractions in the parks and may also be of educational / research value.

The current Committee’s response to Leopold’s report states the goal of National Parks System as “to steward NPS resources for continuous change that is not yet fully understood to preserve ecological integrity and cultural

and historical authenticity, provide visitors with transformative experiences and form the core of a national conservation land and sea scape". Having covered cultural and historical components as well as enjoyment of visitors in the National Parks, this goal does not hint about what to do to prevent encroachment in the National Parks which may be caused by anthropological activities. In our experience as a country (Tanzania) we are currently facing a big problem of wildlife corridors and wildlife migrator routes encroachment which may lead to "genetic weakness" among the victims (i.e. wildlife species which could survive if allowed moving from one area to another).

All three goals, i.e. the mandate of TANAPA, a goal as suggested by Leopold and the response from the current American NPS, do not mention about provision of conservation education which at present seems to be a key component in conservation of national parks in the world.

The Revisiting Leopold policies match those of TANAPA however, they could be improved to include the permission of human interference in resolving some ecosystem problems; for example, because of climate change which affect the national parks as well, TANAPA has a policy of artificially providing water for the wildlife in some of its national parks. Another sort of human interference is provision of veterinary services to wildlife in case of diseases outbreaks in or adjacent to the parks.

Because of their pristine condition, national parks of Tanzania serve as living laboratories which are conducive for conducting scientific researches which provides useful information for adaptive management. Sharing of conservation information with other conservation organizations outside the country is vital tool in improving management of the Parks in the country. TANAPA is thus in the process of establishing a 'sister ship' approach with protected areas of a similar nature with a respective counterpart in Tanzania.

In the reviewed Leopold report, the role of science has been given higher consideration as the only requirement in implementation of NPS's goals and policies. However, in the context of Tanzania as a country, conservation goals and policies will be best implemented if the conflicting laws / policies across the ministries could be resolved; conservation experts were given opportunities (not be interfered) to accomplish their respective responsibilities; the local communities be well equipped with conservation education and the importance of conservation in provision of ecosystem services such climate regulations and others.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the reviewed goals and policies by the current NPS Committee do not differ largely with TANAPA's. The focuses are the same, emphasizing preservation of ecological integrity, cultural and historical authenticity as well as providing spectacular or transformative visitors' experiences.

Sharing of information with regard to conservation is of vital importance as it may be a way of solving several conservation challenges especially the ones brought about by the climate change. Adaption and use of new technology in enhancing conservation is of enormous importance as it may help cut operational costs especially in protection of resources in the Tanzania National Parks and other protected areas. Currently, TANAPA has embarked on e-management including use of Geographical Information System (GIS) in various management and conservation matters.

Despite all these good policies and goals, the national parks of Tanzania face a number of challenges some of which are caused by conflicting policies; for example, some parks are facing serious water problems especially during dry seasons. The conflict here is agriculture for human food and availability of water for wildlife (conservation purpose).

It could be of great assistance if there would be coordinated global efforts in matters relating to conservation. For example, without considering political boundaries, conservation laws, goals and policies could be synchronized. This would help to solve a lot challenges including poaching of elephants and rhino in Tanzania.