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## The Socio-Cultural and Economic Impacts of Mau Forest Displacement among the Ogiek Community in Kenya

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### Abstract

*The main purpose of the study was to examine the Socio-cultural and economic impacts of Mau Forest displacement among Ogiek Community in Kenya. The study was guided by Marketing Mix Theory. This study adopted a descriptive survey method. The study targeted 15,000 household members of the Ogiek community and key informants drawn from Government Agencies, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and non- governmental organizations while respondents were drawn from Multi-stage-cum-stratified random sampling technique in selecting 150 respondents for this study. The study was conducted between the month of September 2020 and May 2021. The instruments used for collection of data relevant to this study were questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussions. The sample size of 150 respondents was calculated using Curry formula of (1984). The study utilized descriptive statistics techniques for analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed by use of measures of central tendencies such as frequencies, means and percentages while qualitative data were summarized and interpreted in line with the research objective and question. Results of data analysis were presented in form of figures and tables. Findings revealed that Mau Forest displacement has affected the use of common property. The displacement has even gone to the extent of causing death to the affected community members. The Ogiek community have suffered economically as they compete for resources and opportunities in their new areas, they are also socially and culturally challenged as they adjust to new norms and way of life within the host communities, the study revealed that the community struggle to mingle with the host communities sometimes resulting into conflicts due to divergent socio-cultural norms. In conclusion, displaced persons are prone to a lot of social-cultural and economic challenges. The community members livelihood is put at risk as they struggle to survive in the new place, that differs with their original home within the Mau Forest. The study recommends that the government should do a comprehensive relocation, compensation plan and livelihood diversification strategies for the community.*

**Keywords:** Household livelihood, Socio-cultural and economic, Mau forest displacement and Ogiek Community.

## INTRODUCTION

Forest displacement has profound socio-economic impacts on Indigenous communities, disrupting their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices. When Indigenous people are removed from their ancestral forests due to deforestation, government policies, or commercial interests, they lose access to vital resources such as food, medicine, and materials for shelter (Daniel & Berhanu, 2018). This displacement often leads to increased poverty, food insecurity, and unemployment as these communities struggle to adapt to new environments and economic activities that are unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, the loss of forest land undermines their cultural heritage and social cohesion, as many traditional practices and community bonds are intrinsically linked to their natural environment (Annandale et al., 2021).

Indigenous communities around the world have historically depended on forests for their livelihoods, cultural practices, and sustenance (Rahman, & Alam, 2016). These communities often reside in forested regions where they derive their daily needs from the natural resources available. However, increasing deforestation, government policies, and commercial interests have led to significant displacement of these communities. The displacement from their traditional forest habitats has profound socio-economic impacts, disrupting their way of life, and threatening their cultural heritage and economic stability (Pendril, Persson, Godar, & Kastner, 2019).

Globally, the issue of forest displacement is prominent in countries like Brazil, home to a vast portion of the Amazon rainforest. The Brazilian Amazon is inhabited by numerous Indigenous groups who rely on the forest for food, medicine, and spiritual practices. However, with deforestation rates reaching an alarming rate—over 1 million hectares were lost in 2020 alone (World Bank, 2020)—many Indigenous people have been forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. This displacement leads to loss of traditional livelihoods, increased poverty, and social disintegration as these communities struggle to adapt to new environments and economic activities that are often foreign to their traditional ways of life (Nepstad et al., 2018).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is equally dire, with countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) facing significant challenges. The DRC contains a large portion of the Congo Basin, the world's second-largest rainforest. Indigenous communities, such as the Pygmies, depend on these forests for their subsistence and cultural identity. However, deforestation and displacement due to mining, logging, and agricultural expansion have severely impacted these communities. According to Global Forest Watch (2020), the DRC lost approximately 1.2 million hectares of forest cover in 2019, leading to widespread displacement and socio-economic hardships, including food insecurity and loss of income-generating activities (Fa et al., 2016).

The Batwa people of Uganda provide a poignant example of the socio-economic impacts of forest displacement. Historically, the Batwa lived in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, relying on hunting, gathering, and traditional agriculture. In the early 1990s, they were evicted to create conservation areas for endangered mountain gorillas. This displacement severely affected their socio-economic well-being, stripping them of their land and access to resources that were crucial for their survival. The Batwa have since struggled with poverty, landlessness, and marginalization, experiencing high rates

of malnutrition, unemployment, and loss of cultural identity. The forced displacement has highlighted the critical need for inclusive conservation strategies that respect and integrate the rights and livelihoods of indigenous communities.

In Kenya, the socio-cultural and economic impacts of forest displacement on Indigenous communities are pronounced, particularly among the Ogiek and Sengwer people. The Mau Forest Complex and the Embobut Forest, home to these communities, have faced extensive deforestation and conservation-driven evictions. The Kenya Forest Service reported that from 2000 to 2020, the country lost about 452,007 hectares of forest cover (KFS, 2020). These displacements have resulted in significant socio-cultural and economic disruptions, including loss of traditional livelihoods such as honey gathering and herbal medicine collection. Moreover, the evictions have exacerbated poverty levels, reduced access to basic services, and led to conflicts over land and resources (Chomba et al., 2015). The forced removal from their ancestral lands has not only undermined their economic stability but also threatened their cultural heritage and social cohesion. The study sought to assess how the loss of access to their traditional forest resources has affected their economic stability, socio-cultural cohesion, and overall quality of life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Forest Displacement

Displacement is often taken to mean the forced removal of local communities from their land. However, the World Bank's definition now includes displacement from resources without community movement: "Relocation or loss of shelter; loss of assets or access to assets; or loss of income sources or means of livelihood, whether or not the affected persons must move to another location, or the involuntary restriction of access to legally designated parks and protected areas resulting in adverse impacts on the livelihoods of the displaced persons" (World Bank, 2021). Forest displacement refers to the forced removal or displacement of local or indigenous communities from their traditional forest habitats due to various factors such as deforestation, government policies, or commercial activities. This phenomenon disrupts the intricate balance these communities have with their natural environment, impacting their livelihoods and cultural practices (Jones, Smith, & Brown, 2020).

Communities living in or around strictly protected areas, where resource restriction is incurred, could therefore now fall under the World Bank definition. This review adopts the traditional interpretation of displacement as the physical removal of communities from the land, with the costs of restricting resources for local community use. The most documented example of displacement is the removal of indigenous communities from Yellowstone National Park by the US army. It has been suggested that Yellowstone served as a protectionist 'model for the American West and then the rest of the world. The displacement of local people from national parks is one of the most controversial and contested aspects of protected areas (Rodríguez & Silva, 2020), and is often used to highlight the conflict between biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction (Wright & Hill, 2021).

### Socio-cultural and economic impacts of forest displacement on the community

Jones et al. (2020) explored the impacts of forest displacement on indigenous communities in the Amazon rainforest on Brazil. The study found that displacement led to loss of access to traditional

resources, decreased income opportunities, and cultural disruption among indigenous groups. Smith and Anderson (2019) examined the economic consequences of displacement among indigenous communities in Indonesia. Their study highlighted that displacement often resulted in decreased income from forest-based activities like hunting and gathering, pushing communities into poverty. The findings underscored the need for sustainable land-use practices that integrate indigenous knowledge and rights to mitigate economic hardships post-displacement. The economic impacts of forest displacement are profound, affecting household livelihoods and economic stability within affected communities.

Garcia and Lu (2018) analyzed the social and cultural impacts of displacement on tribal communities in India. The research documented how displacement led to loss of traditional knowledge, weakened community ties, and increased social inequality. They argued for inclusive development policies that respect cultural diversity and empower indigenous communities to preserve their heritage amidst rapid environmental changes. Forest displacement disrupts social structures and cultural practices within indigenous communities, impacting their identity and cohesion. Thompson et al. (2018) investigated the health impacts of displacement on forest-dependent communities in Africa. Their study in Tanzania revealed that displacement disrupted access to clean water and healthcare services, leading to higher rates of malnutrition and infectious diseases. Study advocated for improved health interventions and community-based healthcare systems to address the health needs of displaced populations. Displacement affects the health and well-being of indigenous communities, exacerbating vulnerabilities and health disparities.

Wright and Hill (2021) studied the environmental consequences of displacement in Southeast Asia, focusing on Indonesia. The research highlighted how deforestation for palm oil plantations displaced indigenous communities and led to habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity, and increased carbon emissions. The findings underscored the importance of conservation strategies that prioritize both environmental sustainability and indigenous rights. Forest displacement contributes to environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, impacting ecosystems and climate resilience. Rodríguez and Silva (2020) examined the policy implications of displacement in the context of forest tenure reform in Africa. The research in Mozambique discussed how unclear land tenure rights and top-down conservation policies marginalized indigenous groups, leading to land conflicts and displacement. They proposed participatory approaches to natural resource management that recognize and protect indigenous land rights. Governance structures and policies play a crucial role in exacerbating or mitigating the impacts of forest displacement on indigenous communities.

Chen et al. (2019) explored community resilience among displaced indigenous groups in the Philippines. Their study highlighted how communities engaged in collective action, diversified livelihoods, and advocated for land rights to rebuild their lives post-displacement. They emphasized the importance of supporting community-led initiatives and strengthening local governance frameworks to enhance resilience and sustainable development. Despite challenges, indigenous communities demonstrate resilience and adaptive strategies in coping with displacement and rebuilding livelihoods.

Kim and Park (2021) discussed future directions in integrating biodiversity conservation with sustainable development in forest

landscapes. Their research emphasized the need for holistic approaches that incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, empower local communities, and foster partnerships between governments, NGOs, and indigenous organizations to achieve environmental and social sustainability.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey method. This method is appropriate for data collection in camps at a household level in Kipkurere, Serengonik Kelbui camps and Chemusya settlement scheme. Descriptive survey methods provide a suitable means through which community views, opinions, attitudes, perceptions, aspersions, and suggestions regarding the phenomenon under investigation are obtained (Seeram, 2019).

The target population was 15000 household members (obtained from settlement office, provincial administration and special program ministry). The Key informants (based on Age, Education level and their position in the society), was drawn from 1 Government Agency, 1 Ogiek community leader and 3 non-governmental organizations.

**Table 1. Sample size determination Table**

Size of population	Sampling percent
0-100	100%
101-1,000	10%
1,001-5,000	5%
5,001-10,000	3%
10,000 and above	1%

By Curry, (1984)

### Study Sample and Data Collection

The sample size was obtained using the rule of thumb as indicated in the table above as this is suitable for smaller population ( $1\% \text{ of } 15,000 = 150$ ). This was deemed appropriate as the formula produced a manageable sample size of 150 which was less expensive during data collection, consumed less time and provided accurate results compared to widespread population.

**Table 2. Sampling Frame**

Cluster	Target population	Sample size
Kipkurere	298	$298/1495 * 150 \approx 30$
Chemusyan	598	$598/1495 * 150 \approx 60$
Cengalo	300	$300/1495 * 150 \approx 30$
Kelbui	299	$299/1495 * 150 \approx 30$
<b>Total</b>	<b>1495</b>	<b><math>\approx 150</math></b>

Simple random sampling technique was used to select residents and purposive sampling technique for key informants. The researcher used both primary and secondary data obtained for the study by use of questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussions research instruments.

### Data analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean score, frequencies and percentages while qualitative data from interviews and focused group discussion was summarized and interpreted in line with the



research objective and question. Results of data analysis were presented in form of figures and tables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Response rate

Out of 150 questionnaires distributed, 129 were filled and returned for data analysis. This gave a response rate of 86.0%.

### Socio-cultural and economic Impacts of Mau Forest displacement among the Ogiek community

In table 3, the study sought to answer the question on the Socio-cultural and economic impacts of Mau Forest displacement on household livelihood among Ogiek Community in Kenya. This was necessary to analyze so as to make generalizations on what should be done to assist the affected community. Key: F=frequency, %=Percentage. Descriptive statistics of the responses are presented as shown in the Table.

**Table 3. Social economic impacts**

Social economic impacts	Descriptive	Yes	No	Total
Has displacement from Mau Forest affected the use of common property?	Frequency	97	32	129
	Percentage	75.3	24.6	100
Has displacement from Mau Forest affected your group activities?	Frequency	84	45	129
	Percentage	65.3	34.7	100
Has displacement from Mau Forest led to loss of cultural practices of the community?	Frequency	92	37	129
	Percentage	71.3	28.7	100
Has the displacement led to disruption of social cohesion among the community?	Frequency	83	46	129
	Percentage	64.7	35.3	100
Has the displacement affected the community source of food?	Frequency	95	34	129
	Percentage	74	26	100
Has displacement from Mau Forest exposed you to any diseases?	Frequency	87	41	129
	Percentage	67.3	31.7	100
Has displacement from Mau Forest caused any death?	Frequency	78	51	129
	Percentage	60.7	39.3	100
Has the displacement affected the level of income from forest resources and livestock production	Frequency	101	28	129
	Percentage	78	22	100

Source: Field data, 2014

Table 3 presents findings on the effect of place strategy on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. The findings as depicted from the table indicated that displacement from Mau had caused a lot of negative economic impacts to those affected. As indicated in table 3, majority of the respondents 97(75.3%) agreed that Mau forest displacement has affected the use of common property. Further, among the respondents 84(65.3%) agreed that Mau Forest displacement affected group activities, 92(71.3%) agreed that displacement from Mau forest led to loss of cultural practices, 83(64.7%) agreed that Mau forest displacement led to loss of social cohesion, 95(74%) agreed that Mau forest displacement result to community source of food, 87(67.3%) agreed that displacement from Mau forest exposed them to diseases and 78(60.7%) accepted that displacement from Mau forest caused death and finally 101(78%) agreed that the displacement has resulted into loss of income and livestock production.

These findings are in line with a study done by World Bank (2021), Forced displacement is a humanitarian crisis: but it also produces developmental impacts short and longer term, negative and positive - affecting human and social capital, economic growth, poverty reduction efforts, environmental sustainability and societal fragility. A prevailing view is that refugees are a burden on the development aspirations of host countries and populations and that negative socio-economic and environmental impacts and costs outweigh the positive contributions (actual or potential) that forcibly displaced people might make. The losses incurred by the displaced populations themselves reinforce perceptions of vulnerability and dependency and thus assumptions of the burden they might impose.

Another study done in Nepal by Garcia and Lu (2018) also was in agreement with the study findings. In the study while identifying and analyzing economic impact of the internal displacement the study has found positive towards employment status, business status and remittances status, and very negative towards agricultural status. In the urban, sub-urban and cities areas, active and educated people found good opportunity at the place of destination and they are satisfied with the work and the income they earning. The active but uneducated displaced people started doing small business-like opening tea-coffee shop, bread shop and they are also satisfied with the income they earning at the place of destination. Due to forceful displacement many people flew to next country for earning for the survival for their family members. By the rebel

party, people are forced to leave their home, property and their land. The rebel party captured and locked their homes. The displaced people were helpless and couldn't use their land for agriculture so agricultural status after displacement seems very poor.

A study conducted by (Brockington and Schmidt-Soltau 2004) concurs with the findings of the study that conservation-related resettlement exercises, set within already unstable and dynamic contexts of economic and social change, have often exacerbated preexisting conditions of poverty and social disintegration lists eight of the most significant impoverishment risks from involuntary resettlement: landlessness; joblessness; homelessness; marginalization; food insecurity; loss of access to common property resources; increased morbidity and mortality; and community disarticulation. Rural societies have developed livelihoods and subsistence strategies contingent upon access to specific local resources.

The study sought to investigate the relationships between the Ogieks and the host community. The findings indicate a positive relationship between the two (Table 4)

**Table 4. Cross-tabulation on interaction between the Ogiek's and the host community**

		How have you mingled with the host community?			Total
		Through intermarriage	Attending common social gatherings	Practicing common cultural practices	
Have you freely mingled with the host community?	Yes	80	25	16	121
	No	7	0	1	8
Total		87	25	17	

The Ogiek community noted that they freely mingle with the host community, through inter-marriages (66), others have mingled by attending common social gatherings (20) and others (12) interact by practicing common cultural practices. Those who did not mingle with the others according to the focus groups noted that the host community does not trust them. Others perceived that the host community fear competition of resources with them thus the negative social relationships.

**Interviews response from Key informants**

The key informants provided critical insights into the socio-cultural and economic impacts of the Mau Forest displacement on the Ogiek community. Government agency representatives highlighted the severe economic challenges that the community faces due to the loss of access to forest resources. They emphasized that the Ogiek people, traditionally dependent on the forest for their livelihoods, are struggling to adapt to new economic activities in areas where they have been resettled. The government officials also pointed out that the compensation and relocation efforts have been insufficient, leaving many Ogiek families without adequate support to rebuild their lives.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with the Ogiek community echoed these concerns, noting the profound cultural disruptions caused by displacement. These organizations observed that the forced removal from their ancestral lands has led to the erosion of traditional practices and a weakening of community bonds. They reported that the Ogiek, who have a deep spiritual connection to the forest, have lost not only their source of livelihood but also their cultural identity, which is intricately tied to the land.

The Ogiek community leaders expressed deep distress over the displacement, stating that it has caused significant psychological and social stress among community members. They mentioned that many Ogiek people feel alienated in their new environments, leading to increased cases of depression and other mental health issues. The leaders also raised concerns about the hostility they face from the host communities, which has led to social conflicts and further marginalized the displaced population. One Ogiek community leader noted that; *“Displacement has led to*

*homelessness and some died due to cold environments”*. In the displacement areas majority of the respondents noted that the host communities were hostile about their resettlements in the new areas.

**Focused group discussion responses**

The focus group discussions (FGDs) provided a platform for members of the Ogiek community to share their personal experiences and challenges resulting from the displacement. Participants expressed a strong sense of loss and disorientation, highlighting that their traditional ways of life have been severely disrupted. Many participants described how the displacement has led to loss of income and forced them into unfamiliar occupations, such as small-scale farming or casual labour, which they find challenging and less rewarding compared to their previous forest-based activities.

Socially, the FGDs revealed that the displacement has strained the Ogiek's relationships with the host communities. While some participants mentioned positive interactions through intermarriage and shared social gatherings, others detailed experiences of social exclusion and hostility. These strained relations have exacerbated the sense of loss and alienation felt by the Ogiek, complicating their efforts to integrate them into their new environments.

Culturally, the FGDs revealed practices such as Totemism, taboos, and sacredness of water sources within the Ogiek indigenous community on the verge of being lost. These practices are essential to environmental conservation since they foster environmental conservation. The members agreed strategies adopted in enhancing cultural practices in conservation efforts among the Ogieks indigenous community needs to be preserved and passed on to feature generations this will enhance relationship between community members and the environment.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion displaced persons are prone to a lot of social-economic and cultural problems. They have to struggle much for livelihood in the new place, and always under pressure to make ends meet. The social, cultural, economic and other values of life within the host communities differ with that in the forest and have

to undergo several changes which makes adapting to the new life outside the forest a challenge. Through the displacement, the community right to life is threatened, Moreso, women, children and the elderly are badly affected by displacement and may take a long time to recuperate and get back on their feet. From the study it is noted that the Ogiek community suffers economically as they compete for resources and opportunities in their new areas of settlement, they are also socially challenged as they adjust to new norms and way of life within the host communities, though it was revealed in the study that they struggle to mingle with the host community sometimes results into conflicts due to divergent socio-cultural norms. The displaced people also face additional burden to meet expenses for house rent, food, education, medical treatment and others, which shifts the burden to the government in assisting the displaced community.

## Recommendations

The study recommends on the following;

1. The government should develop a policy and law requiring thorough social impact assessments for activities that may result in eviction, including in forest areas, and a mechanism for community participation to examine whether specific evictions are absolutely necessary, and whether there are alternatives to eviction, particularly for those groups who have traditionally lived in the forest.
2. The government should do a comprehensive relocation and compensation plan. Move swiftly to put in place a comprehensive relocation and compensation plan for any proposed evictions, including in forest areas. The resettlement plan must be in accordance with international human rights and Internally Displaced Persons standards, including respect for the right to participation of those affected, and the parameters for such plans should be enacted in legislation.
3. The plan should not be used as means to prevent legitimate return of groups to their areas of origin, particularly if it has been occupied by others. The resettlement plan must be designed in a way to minimize corruption and sufficient support is provided to ensure that livelihoods on new land are sustainable and that any costs in purchasing land in resettlement areas, to be incurred by those being resettled, are affordable.
4. Plans should be put in place to provide alternative livelihood activities for the displaced community to assist them in rebuilding their lives and making sure school going children are given and opportunity to learn and get educated.

### Recommendation for further studies

Explore the psychological and emotional effects of displacement on individuals, especially children, within the Ogiek community. This research could examine mental health support systems, and the overall well-being of displaced persons.

Analyze the Bio-Physical impact of the displacement on the Mau Forest ecosystem.

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