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LINKING CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF NORTHERN PAKISTAN

The research addresses the conflict between sustaining rural livelihoods and establishing Protected Areas (PAs) in the mountain areas of Northern Pakistan. This research will assess the implications of the PA system on common resource use, with particular emphasis on the rights and access of the local communities. It will investigate the communities' responses to the PA system as well as explore alternatives for sustaining their livelihoods in order to cope with the adverse situation that has been created by the PA systems. The research will further examine how the strengthening of traditional access (use and maintenance) and rights of local communities to their natural resource can effectively contribute to livelihood security and conservation.

The aim of this research is to understand livelihoods, dependency on common resources, rights and access to these resources, and the nature of the conflicts that have been triggered by the PA system and the conversion of common property resources to state property, in Northern Pakistan. The purpose is to study traditional livelihood options and the communities' rights and access to the common resources to ensure livelihood security and conservation, with specific reference to two mountain communities: Shimshal and Naltar in Northern Pakistan.

Shimshal represents an alpine agro-pastoral community in the Khunjerab National Park, in which restrictions by the PA system on rights and access to the common resources have put constraints on the livelihood support system of the local people. The Shimshal community has traditionally developed agro-pastoral activities to secure their livelihoods. The community is known for the people's knowledge in raising livestock, specifically yaks. They have been employing traditional livestock management practices for many centuries in this area in accordance with their customary rights. However, the establishment of the PA, Khunjerab National Park, has not only altered the traditional practices and reduced the agro-pastoral livelihood options of the community, but it has also severely undermined their livelihood security.

Naltar community is a semi-nomadic community, situated in the dry temperate Reserve Forest adjacent to Naltar Game Sanctuary. This community relies on rangeland and forest resources, such as blue pine (*Pinus wallichiana*), edible pine (*Pinus gerardiana*), cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) and juniper species for their livelihood. Traditionally, the Naltar community has used the Naltar Reserve Forest as their pastoral area for maintaining their livelihood.

The study will enhance our understanding of the communities' perspectives on livelihoods and conservation, which will contribute to reconciling the communities' livelihoods and conservation. The research will help create scope and opportunities for these economically poor and vulnerable communities to build sustainable livelihood strategies.