Engaging communities in protected area conservation is crucial for law enforcement efforts to be effective in addressing wildlife crime, and to be fair and beneficial to communities.

Wildlife crime is a major challenge to conservation and development. Improving the effectiveness of law enforcement in protected areas by intelligence-led approaches is a crucial strategy to mitigate this. However, little is known about the role of local community members in the provisioning of information, or the role that local people play in tackling wildlife crime.

METHODS

- To understand the perceptions of people working directly with local communities on the conditions under which they provide information to park rangers.
- We used Murchison Falls Protected Area - the largest protected area in Uganda - as a case study.
- Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to understand the perceptions of staff from the Uganda Wildlife Authority and other non-governmental organizations.

RESULTS

- People who provide information are those who:
  - have trusted relationships with rangers;
  - interact regularly with community outreach rangers (either formally through community programs or informally);
  - believe that the protected area benefits them and their community.
- All respondents believed that information provided by local people can enable the success of wildlife crime investigations.

CONCLUSIONS

- Engaging communities in protected area conservation is crucial for law enforcement efforts to be effective in addressing wildlife crime, and to be fair and beneficial to communities.

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