



Community-Based Fire Management Practices Among Maasai Herders and Wildfire Risks in Northern Kenya: An Ethnographic Study

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Abstract

This study examines community-based fire management practices among Maasai herders in northern Kenya to understand how they mitigate wildfire risks. The study employed an ethnographic approach to gather qualitative data through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with Maasai elders and community leaders, and focus group discussions. Data collection was conducted in three pastoralist villages within northern Kenya's Samburu District. A significant finding is the reliance on traditional fire management practices that involve controlled burns to manage vegetation and reduce wildfire risks. These practices are particularly effective during specific times of year when conditions are less conducive to wildfires. The study concludes that community-based fire management can significantly mitigate wildfire risks in Maasai pastoralist areas, emphasising the importance of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into contemporary conservation efforts. Recommendations include formalising community-led fire management initiatives and incorporating these practices into national forest and wildlife policies to enhance wildfire risk reduction strategies.

Keywords: *Kenyan, Maasai, Ethnography, Sustainability, Livestock, Community Development, Indigenous Knowledge*

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