

Activists put pressure on govt not to tamper with Loliondo

By The guardian reporter
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Loliondo

An international consortium of local communities, indigenous peoples and NGOs have expressed concern to the government that it should not temper with the proposed Loliondo Game Controlled Area (GCA) fearing that by doing so would threaten both conservation and local livelihood interests.

In a letter addressed to President Jakaya Kikwete, the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, the consortium says they are deeply concerned that excising 1,500 km² of disputed land from community access “could only have a major negative effect on local livelihoods and social wellbeing.” Furthermore, the letter states, “it could create a serious and lasting impediment to sustainable conservation practices in the broader Serengeti region.”

This is the first official statement made by a conservation-focused body that is requesting the government to reconsider its position. In March this year MNRT announced their plan to set aside 40 percent of the total area of Loliondo Game Controlled Area as a wildlife corridor, which would prohibit community residence or livelihood activities on the most important section of land for grazing and water access.

The government has consistently defended their position citing wildlife and ecological conservation as the driving force behind the decision.

In recent weeks there has been a lot of attention brought to the matter, particularly from the local communities that will be affected by the decision and human rights groups who claim this decision will negatively impact the local communities that have rightful ownership to the land.

Although advocates have pointed out that the Maasai’s contribution to conservation in the area,

the ICCA Consortium is expressly noting concern that this new land allocation could negatively harm conservation efforts in the area, countering the government's rationale for their decision.

The group, known as the ICCA Consortium, promotes global recognition of, and support to, areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs). It is a partner organization of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN