

Effect of Donor Grant Funding on Financial Sustainability of Community Conservancies under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya

Samson Kinyaga^{1*}, Fredrick Mutea¹, Nancy Rintari¹

¹Business School, Kenya Methodist University, P.O. Box 267–60200, Meru, Kenya

*Corresponding Author Email: samkinyags@gmail.com

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Abstract

Community conservancies play a vital role in biodiversity conservation, ecosystem protection, and improving community livelihoods in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands. Despite their contribution, many conservancies continue to experience financial sustainability challenges arising from unstable revenue streams, rising operational costs, and dependence on external financing. Donor grant funding remains a major source of financial support for conservation programmes, wildlife protection, and community development; however, uncertainties in donor priorities and funding continuity threaten long-term sustainability. This study examined the effect of donor grant funding on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. The study was anchored on Resource Dependence Theory and adopted a positivist research philosophy, quantitative research approach, and descriptive correlational research design. A census of 180 respondents drawn from 45 community conservancies was conducted. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and simple linear regression in SPSS Version 25. The study achieved a response rate of 86.7%. The findings established a positive and statistically significant relationship between donor grant funding and financial sustainability ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.05$). Regression analysis further revealed that donor grant funding significantly predicted financial sustainability ($\beta = 0.624$, Beta = 0.681, $t = 12.140$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 46.4% of the variation in financial sustainability ($R^2 = 0.464$). The study concluded that stable and predictable donor grant funding strengthens liquidity, operating-cost coverage, reserve adequacy, and reinvestment capacity among community conservancies. It recommends strengthening long-term donor partnerships, diversifying donor portfolios, improving grant management systems, and enhancing financial accountability to promote sustainable conservation financing.

Keywords: *Donor grant funding, financial sustainability, community conservancies, conservation finance, Northern Rangelands Trust, Kenya.*

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1. Introduction

Financial sustainability has become a fundamental concern for conservation organizations because long-term biodiversity conservation depends on stable, predictable financial resources that can support ecological protection, institutional governance, community development, and operational continuity. Community conservancies require adequate financing to sustain wildlife protection, ranger operations, habitat restoration, infrastructure development, grazing management systems, and community livelihood programmes. Consequently, financing strategies have become important determinants of institutional resilience and conservation effectiveness (Bohorquez et al., 2022). Among the available financing mechanisms, donor grant funding remains a major source of operational support, particularly in developing countries where internally generated revenues are often inadequate to sustain conservation activities (OECD, 2022).

Donor grant funding provides financial resources from bilateral agencies, multilateral organizations, philanthropic foundations, conservation organizations, and international development partners to support biodiversity conservation, ecosystem management, climate adaptation, and community development initiatives. Stable donor financing enables conservation institutions to finance recurrent expenditures, strengthen governance systems, improve institutional capacity, and undertake long-term conservation planning (Deutz et al., 2021). However, heavy dependence on donor funding exposes conservation organizations to financial risks arising from changing donor priorities, restrictive grant conditions, declining international support, and uncertainties surrounding grant renewals (Lindsey et al., 2021).

Globally, donor financing remains an essential component of conservation finance because protected areas and community conservancies frequently experience funding deficits that cannot be addressed through internally generated revenues alone. International biodiversity financing continues to support conservation programmes across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, thereby strengthening ecosystem restoration, wildlife conservation, and climate resilience (Emerton et al., 2022). Nevertheless, conservation institutions relying predominantly on donor financing often experience financial instability whenever donor priorities shift or international funding declines, demonstrating that financial sustainability depends not only on the availability of donor funding but also on its predictability and effective management (Deutz et al., 2021).

Across Africa, donor financing has made a substantial contribution to sustaining community-based conservation initiatives operating under challenging socio-economic and ecological conditions. Empirical evidence indicates that conservation institutions receiving stable donor support maintain stronger financial resilience and operational continuity than organizations characterized by fragmented or irregular funding arrangements (Waithaka et al., 2022). Similarly, studies have shown that predictable donor financing enhances institutional sustainability by strengthening financial planning, improving governance, and supporting long-term conservation investments (Bedelian et al., 2024).

In Kenya, community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust have contributed significantly to wildlife conservation, ecosystem restoration, conflict mitigation, and socio-economic development across northern Kenya. These conservancies finance conservation programmes through donor grants, tourism income, conservancy enterprises, and ecosystem service revenues, although donor grants remain the principal source of operational

financing for many conservancies (Wachira et al., 2024). However, fluctuations in donor disbursements, restrictive funding conditions, and uncertainties surrounding grant renewals continue to threaten long-term financial sustainability (Pas et al., 2023). This study therefore examined the effect of donor grant funding on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

1.1 Problem Statement

Community conservancies play a critical role in biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, wildlife protection, and community livelihood improvement across northern Kenya. Their ability to sustain these functions depends largely on adequate and predictable financial resources capable of supporting recurrent operational expenditures, conservation programmes, infrastructure maintenance, and community development initiatives. Donor grant funding has therefore remained one of the principal financing mechanisms supporting community conservancies because internally generated revenues alone are often insufficient to finance long-term conservation obligations (Deutz et al., 2021; Waithaka et al., 2022).

Despite the continued importance of donor financing, financial sustainability among community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust remains uneven and structurally vulnerable. Conservation systems across Africa continue to experience funding deficits exceeding 40% of their annual operational requirements, while conservancies heavily dependent on externally generated financing frequently experience operational uncertainty resulting from changing donor priorities, restrictive grant conditions, delayed disbursements, and declining international conservation financing (Western et al., 2022; Lindsey et al., 2021). Within the Northern Rangelands Trust network, donor grants finance a substantial proportion of operational activities, yet uncertainties surrounding grant renewals and funding predictability continue to constrain long-term financial planning and institutional resilience.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that donor financing contributes positively to conservation effectiveness and institutional sustainability. Previous studies by Deutz et al. (2021), Waithaka et al. (2022), Wachira et al. (2024), and Pas et al. (2023) established that stable donor financing enhances operational continuity, reserve accumulation, and financial resilience among conservation organizations. However, most existing studies have examined donor funding as part of broader conservation financing mechanisms rather than isolating its specific contribution to financial sustainability within community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust. Consequently, localized empirical evidence regarding the effect of donor grant funding on financial sustainability remains limited. This study therefore examined the effect of donor grant funding on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To determine the effect of donor grant funding on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀: Donor grant funding has no statistically significant effect on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on Resource Dependence Theory, developed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), which explains that organizations depend on external actors for critical resources required for survival, growth, and long-term sustainability. The theory argues that organizations operating in resource-constrained environments inevitably establish relationships with external stakeholders who control strategic resources, particularly financial capital. Consequently, organizations become vulnerable to fluctuations in funding availability, changing stakeholder priorities, and environmental uncertainty (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The theory therefore emphasizes the importance of managing external resource relationships to enhance organizational stability and reduce dependence on single funding sources (Hillman et al., 2009).

Within conservation finance, Resource Dependence Theory provides an appropriate explanation for the financing structure of community conservancies. Conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust depend substantially on donor agencies, development partners, conservation organizations, and philanthropic institutions to finance biodiversity conservation, ranger operations, ecosystem restoration, infrastructure development, and community livelihood programmes. Stable donor grant funding therefore reduces financial uncertainty while strengthening organizational resilience, operational continuity, and long-term financial sustainability (Waithaka et al., 2022). The theory further suggests that developing relationships with multiple funding partners enhances institutional autonomy by reducing vulnerability to abrupt changes in donor priorities or funding withdrawal (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Empirical evidence supports these theoretical propositions. Conservation institutions relying heavily on unstable external financing experienced significant financial disruption during periods of global economic uncertainty (Lindsey et al., 2021). Similarly, diversified and predictable donor financing has been shown to strengthen financial sustainability through improved liquidity, reserve adequacy, financial planning, and operational continuity among conservation institutions in Eastern Africa (Wachira et al., 2024). Although the theory has been criticized for emphasizing external resource dependence while giving limited attention to internal managerial capabilities, it remains highly applicable in explaining donor financing within community conservancies because these institutions continue to rely substantially on external financial resources to sustain conservation activities. Accordingly, the theory provided the foundation for examining the effect of donor grant funding on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Donor Grant Funding and Financial Sustainability

Donor grant funding is widely recognized as one of the most important financing mechanisms supporting conservation organizations, particularly within developing countries where internally generated revenues remain inadequate to sustain conservation programmes. Donor grants finance biodiversity conservation, wildlife protection, ecosystem restoration, institutional development, infrastructure improvement, and community development

programmes, thereby strengthening institutional resilience and long-term financial sustainability (Deutz et al., 2021; Waithaka et al., 2022).

Evidence from developed economies demonstrates that stable donor financing substantially improves institutional financial sustainability by enhancing liquidity, operational continuity, and long-term financial planning. Deutz et al. (2021) established that conservation institutions operating with structured donor financing frameworks experienced lower financial volatility and greater institutional resilience than organizations characterized by fragmented grant financing. Similarly, Emerton et al. (2022) reported that multi-year donor financing significantly improved reserve accumulation and strengthened conservation financing across protected-area management systems.

Studies conducted across Africa similarly demonstrate the importance of donor financing in supporting conservation sustainability. Waithaka et al. (2022) found that biodiversity finance supported through international donor partnerships significantly improved liquidity stability and strengthened conservation financing among protected areas in Eastern Africa. Likewise, Lindsey et al. (2021) reported that conservation institutions receiving stable donor support demonstrated greater resilience during periods of tourism disruption compared with organizations relying predominantly on tourism revenues. However, these studies also observed that excessive dependence on donor financing exposes conservation institutions to operational vulnerability whenever donor priorities change or international funding declines.

Within Kenya, donor financing remains a dominant source of operational funding among community conservancies. Wachira et al. (2024) established that donor-supported conservancies maintained stronger financial resilience, improved reserve adequacy, and enhanced operational continuity than conservancies relying primarily on internally generated revenues. Similarly, Pas et al. (2023) found that governance quality significantly influenced the effectiveness of donor financing through improved financial accountability and efficient allocation of donor resources. Nevertheless, previous Kenyan studies have largely examined donor financing within broader conservation finance models without specifically isolating its influence on measurable indicators of financial sustainability, including liquidity stability, operating-cost coverage, reserve adequacy, and revenue predictability.

Although previous empirical studies consistently demonstrate the importance of donor financing in supporting conservation institutions, comparatively limited evidence exists regarding the specific contribution of donor grant funding to the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. This study therefore addressed this contextual and empirical gap by examining donor grant funding as an independent predictor of financial sustainability.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the proposed relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as presented in Figure 1.

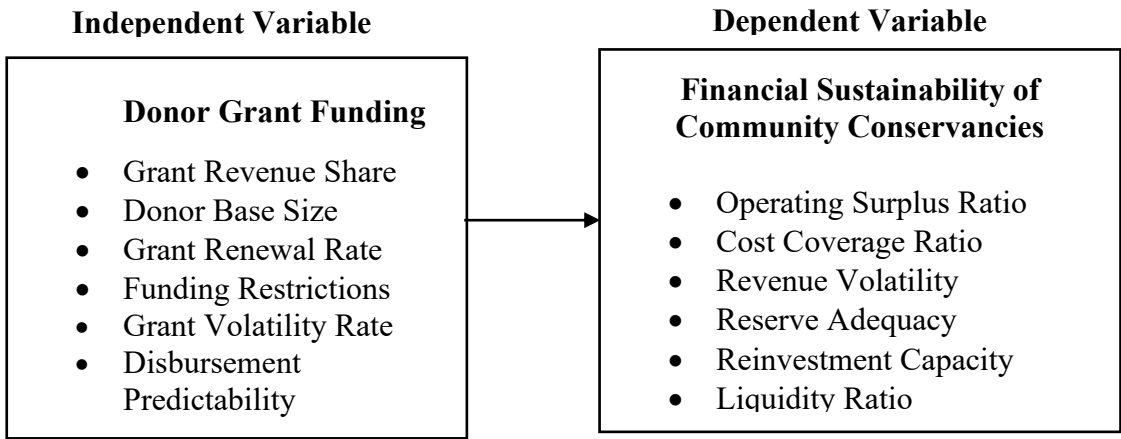


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and a quantitative research approach to examine the effect of donor grant funding on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. A descriptive correlational research design was employed, whereby the descriptive design described donor grant funding practices, while the correlational design established the relationship between donor grant funding and financial sustainability (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This design was appropriate for examining the association between the study variables and determining the predictive effect of donor grant funding on financial sustainability (Kothari, 2004).

The target population comprised 180 respondents drawn from 45 community conservancies under the Northern Rangelands Trust. The respondents included Conservancy Managers, Finance Officers, Enterprise Managers, and Carbon/PES Coordinators because they possessed adequate knowledge of donor financing and institutional financial management. Owing to the manageable population, a census approach was adopted to include all respondents in the study.

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires containing demographic information and Likert-scale items measuring donor grant funding and financial sustainability. A pilot study involving 18 respondents was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Content validity was established through expert review (Hair et al., 2022), while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951).

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Descriptive statistics summarized the study variables, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation examined the relationship between donor grant funding and financial sustainability. Simple linear regression analysis determined the predictive effect of donor grant funding on financial sustainability. Diagnostic tests confirmed that the assumptions of regression analysis were satisfied before hypothesis testing. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% level (Gujarati & Porter, 2021). Field (2022) guided the interpretation of the regression results.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The study targeted 180 respondents drawn from community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. Of the distributed questionnaires, 156 were completed and returned, representing a response rate of 86.7%, while 24 questionnaires were not returned, representing 13.3%. According to Babbie (2021), response rates exceeding 70% are considered adequate for quantitative survey research because they minimize non-response bias and enhance the reliability of statistical findings. Consequently, the achieved response rate was considered satisfactory for subsequent descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned questionnaires	156	86.7
Unreturned questionnaires	24	13.3
Total distributed questionnaires	180	100.0

The high response rate was attributed to prior authorization obtained from the Northern Rangelands Trust, continuous follow-up during data collection, and the willingness of conservancy management personnel to participate in the study. All returned questionnaires were screened for completeness and consistency before coding, and each was found suitable for statistical analysis. The high level of participation strengthened the representativeness of the sample and increased confidence in the generalizability of the findings to community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Donor Grant Funding

The study examined respondents' perceptions regarding donor grant funding as a financing mechanism influencing the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. The findings indicated relatively high agreement that donor grant funding contributes substantially to institutional sustainability. Donor grants contributing a significant share of total conservancy revenue recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.781$), indicating that donor financing remains the principal source of operational funding for many conservancies. Similarly, the existence of multiple donor funding sources recorded a relatively high mean score ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.864$), suggesting that many conservancies have diversified their donor partnerships to reduce dependence on individual funding agencies.

The findings further revealed that donor funding levels fluctuate across financial years ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.917$), while donor grants are renewed with moderate consistency ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.042$). Respondents also agreed that donor funding is accompanied by substantial funding restrictions ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.835$), reflecting the conditional nature of conservation financing. Grant disbursement predictability recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.108$), suggesting that delayed or unpredictable donor disbursements remain a major challenge affecting operational planning among community conservancies.

The overall composite mean score of 3.85 (SD = 0.925) confirmed that donor grant funding remains an important financing mechanism supporting institutional operations and financial sustainability among community conservancies. The findings support Resource Dependence Theory, which argues that organizations operating in resource-constrained environments inevitably depend on external financial resources to sustain institutional operations and organizational continuity (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Similar findings were reported by Coad et al. (2022) and Spenceley et al. (2021), who established that donor financing contributes substantially to conservation financing despite challenges associated with funding uncertainty and operational restrictions.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Donor Grant Funding (N = 156)

Statement	Mean	SD
Donor grants contribute a significant share of our total revenue.	4.18	0.781
Our conservancy receives funding from multiple donors.	3.94	0.864
Donor grants are renewed consistently.	3.57	1.042
Most donor funds come with usage restrictions.	4.11	0.835
Donor funding levels fluctuate significantly across years.	3.88	0.917
Grant disbursements are predictable and timely.	3.42	1.108
Composite Mean / SD	3.85	0.925

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Financial Sustainability

The study examined the level of financial sustainability among community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. The findings indicated that the sampled conservancies had achieved a moderate to relatively high level of financial sustainability across the selected indicators. Reinvestment of surplus funds into conservation activities recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.02, SD = 0.791), suggesting that many conservancies prioritized reinvesting internally generated surpluses into conservation programmes, ranger operations, infrastructure development, and community initiatives. Similarly, total revenues adequately covering operating costs recorded a mean score of 3.84 (SD = 0.882), indicating that available revenue streams generally supported recurrent operational expenditures and enhanced institutional continuity.

The findings further revealed satisfactory performance in other financial sustainability indicators. Consistent generation of operating surpluses recorded a mean score of 3.71 (SD = 0.936), while maintenance of strong liquidity levels recorded a mean score of 3.58 (SD = 0.964). These findings suggest that many conservancies maintained adequate financial capacity to support routine operations and meet short-term financial obligations. Revenue fluctuations being manageable also recorded a moderate mean score of 3.46 (SD = 1.041), reflecting moderate confidence in conservancies' ability to withstand variations in revenue inflows.

Maintenance of adequate financial reserves recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.118$), suggesting that although conservancies generally demonstrated satisfactory financial sustainability, reserve accumulation remained comparatively weaker than other financial performance indicators. This finding may reflect the financial pressures associated with fluctuating tourism income, delayed donor disbursements, rising operational costs, and increasing conservation expenditures, which continue to constrain long-term reserve accumulation.

The composite mean score of 3.67 ($SD = 0.955$) confirmed that community conservancies generally maintained a moderate to relatively high level of financial sustainability. The findings suggest that adequate operating surpluses, operating-cost coverage, liquidity strength, and reinvestment capacity collectively enhanced institutional resilience and conservation continuity. The qualitative responses further supported these findings, with respondents indicating that diversified revenue sources, prudent financial management, donor support, and reinvestment of surplus funds strengthened operational sustainability while improving the capacity of conservancies to finance conservation programmes and community development initiatives.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Financial Sustainability (N = 156)

Statement	Mean	SD
Our conservancy consistently generates an operating surplus.	3.71	0.936
Total revenues adequately cover operating costs.	3.84	0.882
Revenue fluctuations are manageable.	3.46	1.041
The conservancy maintains adequate financial reserves.	3.39	1.118
We reinvest surplus funds into conservation activities.	4.02	0.791
The conservancy maintains strong liquidity levels.	3.58	0.964
Aggregate Mean / SD	3.67	0.955

4.4 Pearson Correlation Analysis

The results presented in Table 4 indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between donor grant funding and financial sustainability among community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.05$). The findings imply that conservancies receiving stable, adequate, and predictable donor grant funding were more likely to maintain stronger liquidity, adequate financial reserves, improved operating-cost coverage, greater reinvestment capacity, and higher overall financial sustainability than conservancies characterized by unstable donor financing.

The positive correlation further demonstrates that donor grant funding remains an important financing mechanism supporting conservation operations within community conservancies. Stable donor financing enables conservancies to sustain conservation programmes, strengthen institutional capacity, finance recurrent operational expenditures, and improve long-term

financial planning. These findings corroborate previous empirical studies, which established that donor financing contributes significantly to institutional resilience and conservation sustainability among organizations operating in financially constrained environments (Waithaka et al., 2022). Wachira et al. (2024) similarly found that stable donor partnerships strengthen the financial resilience and operational continuity of community conservancies.

The findings also support Resource Dependence Theory, which argues that organizations operating in resource-constrained environments rely substantially on external financial resources to sustain institutional operations and long-term continuity. Accordingly, stable donor grant funding enhances financial sustainability by reducing vulnerability associated with uncertain internally generated revenues while strengthening organizational resilience and conservation financing.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Category	Donor Grant Funding (X ₁)	Financial Sustainability (Y)
Donor Grant Funding (X₁)		
Pearson Correlation	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)		
N	156	
Financial Sustainability (Y)		
Pearson Correlation	.681*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	156	156

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.5 Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis

The study further examined whether donor grant funding significantly predicts the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. The null hypothesis (H₀₁) stated that donor grant funding has no statistically significant effect on financial sustainability.

The model summary results indicated a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.681$, confirming a strong positive relationship between donor grant funding and financial sustainability. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.464$) showed that donor grant funding explained 46.4% of the variation in financial sustainability among the sampled community conservancies. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.461 further confirmed the robustness of the regression model after adjusting for sample size. These findings suggest that improvements in donor funding adequacy, funding predictability, grant reliability, and donor diversification are associated with enhanced financial sustainability among community conservancies.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.681	0.464	0.461	0.530

Dependent Variable: Financial Sustainability

The ANOVA results further confirmed that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 147.382$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that the model adequately explained the relationship between donor grant funding and financial sustainability. The significant F-statistic demonstrates that the observed relationship was not due to random variation but represented a meaningful predictive relationship. These findings indicate that donor grant funding is a significant predictor of financial sustainability among community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	41.268	1	41.268	147.382	.000
Residual	47.971	171	0.281		
Total	89.239	172			

Dependent Variable: Financial Sustainability

The regression coefficients revealed that donor grant funding had a positive and statistically significant effect on financial sustainability ($B = 0.624$, $\text{Beta} = 0.681$, $t = 12.140$, $p = 0.000$). The findings indicate that a one-unit increase in donor grant funding is associated with a 0.624-unit increase in financial sustainability, holding other factors constant. Since the significance level was below 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which stated that donor grant funding has no statistically significant effect on financial sustainability, was rejected. The findings therefore demonstrate that donor grant funding significantly enhances the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya.

These findings support Resource Dependence Theory by demonstrating that stable access to external financial resources strengthens organizational survival, improves liquidity stability, enhances reserve adequacy, increases reinvestment capacity, and supports continuity of conservation programmes. The results are also consistent with previous empirical studies which reported that stable donor financing enhances institutional resilience, strengthens conservation financing, and improves long-term sustainability among community-based conservation organizations operating within environmentally vulnerable ecosystems (Wunder et al., 2021; Snyman & Bricker, 2021).

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	1.284	0.217	—	5.917	.000
Donor Grant Funding	0.624	0.051	0.681	12.140	.000

Dependent Variable: Financial Sustainability

5. Conclusion

The study established that donor grant funding has a positive and statistically significant influence on the financial sustainability of community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. The findings demonstrated that stable, predictable, and adequately managed donor financing enhances liquidity stability, operating-cost coverage, reserve adequacy, reinvestment capacity, and overall institutional financial resilience. Conservancies receiving consistent donor support were found to possess greater capacity to finance recurrent conservation activities, maintain operational continuity, strengthen community development programmes, and withstand financial uncertainties arising from fluctuations in internally generated revenues.

The regression analysis confirmed that donor grant funding significantly predicts financial sustainability, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study therefore concludes that donor grant funding remains a critical financing mechanism for sustaining community conservation initiatives within the Northern Rangelands Trust. Nevertheless, long-term financial sustainability depends not only on the availability of donor resources but also on funding predictability, effective grant management, financial accountability, and the development of strong partnerships with multiple development partners. These findings support Resource Dependence Theory, which emphasizes that organizations operating within resource-constrained environments enhance institutional sustainability through stable and strategically managed external resource relationships.

6. Recommendations

Community conservancies operating under the Northern Rangelands Trust should strengthen donor relationship management by developing long-term strategic partnerships with multiple development agencies, conservation organizations, philanthropic institutions, and international funding partners. Diversifying donor portfolios would reduce dependence on individual funding agencies and minimize financial vulnerability arising from changing donor priorities and funding uncertainties.

Conservancy management boards should strengthen grant management systems by improving financial planning, accountability, transparency, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms. Effective financial governance will enhance donor confidence, improve grant renewal prospects, facilitate timely disbursement of funds, and strengthen institutional credibility among existing and prospective development partners.

The Northern Rangelands Trust should support member conservancies in developing institutional resource mobilization strategies that integrate donor grant funding with complementary financing mechanisms such as ecotourism income, conservancy-based

enterprises, and ecosystem service revenues. Such integrated financing approaches would improve financial resilience by reducing overdependence on external grants while strengthening long-term institutional sustainability.

National government agencies, conservation development partners, and environmental financing organizations should establish multi-year conservation financing frameworks that provide predictable and sustainable funding for community conservancies. Stable financing arrangements would strengthen long-term conservation planning, improve reserve accumulation, enhance operational continuity, and contribute to the achievement of national biodiversity conservation and sustainable development objectives.

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