

Community Conservation Paradigm: The Case Studies of Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary and ILNgwesi Community Conservancy in Kenya

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Abstract

Conservation of biodiversity outside designated protected areas in Kenya, in the 21st century, is becoming increasingly difficult due to declining available land space, increasing human population, alienation of local people, lack of socio- economic incentives for conservation and lack of suitable models to be adopted. Although, the traditional national park model, led to the establishment of the key Kenyan parks and reserves, it cannot be adopted by any further study as it mainly emphasizes the wilderness and its biological resources, and places less emphasis on expertise, needs and development of local communities (Wishitemi, 2008:103). Hence, the current network of protected areas is under many threats, unpopular and resented by local communities. As a result, the concept of community participation in tourism and other development initiatives has gained support since the 1980's. Biodiversity resources outside Kenyan parks and reserves are under dangers of extermination unless communities are brought back to the center of conservation and appropriate community conservation areas outside this current network of Protected Areas are explored. Moreover, these community conservation areas must incorporate local wishes and succeed in working in lived landscapes that present a meeting place for human needs and conservation of local resources, especially in wildlife dispersal areas and pastoral communities of Kenya. Of necessity, community conservation initiatives must originate and be run by local people, and these projects should generate sustainable livelihoods, while securing dependable, sustained access to essential natural resources. Using the case study of Mwaluganje elephant sanctuary and IIngwesi community conservancy, this study examines the efficacy of community conservation. Specifically, the study assesses how the development of community conservancies have contributed to environmental conservation and improved livelihoods of the local community. Finally, the paper discusses the development and future prospects of community conservation in Kenya.

Keywords: Community, Conservation, IIngwesi, Mwaluganje, Paradigm, Sanctuary

1. Introduction

A community could be viewed as a group of people, often originating from the same geographic area, who identify themselves as belonging to the same group (Lindberg *et al*, 1998). The people in a community are often related by language, blood or marriage, and may all subscribe to the same norms, culture and beliefs. Although communities can have many things in common, they are still very complex and should not be thought of as homogenous groups. Communities comprise of specific groups, such as tenants and landowners, the wealthy and the poor, the old and new residents. How these groups respond to changes is influenced variously by kinship, religion, politics and other factors that identify the community and how each member fits in them. Often such shared relationships and identities have been transmitted through time over generations. A community may therefore be united or divided in thought and action depending on the issue at hand.

In conservation, a community could be conceptualized as having a place-based connotation, where communities are defined according to a group of people's physical location and their relationships with the surroundings. Further, it should be emphasized that a community involves a group of people who share resources and who have same values, needs, attitudes, expectations, inclinations, inspirations, passions, and aspirations. They also perceive their environment and resources in the same manner. More importantly, communities rarely act as homogenous wholes as there are always conflicts and differences of opinion and orientation. All in all, there are always qualities in a community that are conducive or necessary for the success of conservation and tourism. Among these are transparency, leadership, community organization, solidarity, cooperation (Serie, 1998, cited in TMI, 1998), and indigenous knowledge and assets- tangible and intangible.

In addition, the increasing demand on pristine natural resources of community environments implies greater pressure on the stewardship roles of tourist destination communities (TMI, 1998). As stewards of their own local environment, communities are better placed to anticipate and regulate the negative impacts of tourism. Community-

based initiatives can thus provide a means through which local control can be maintained and local concerns be addressed. They also represent a means to strengthen traditional stewardship roles of communities. By carefully creating conservation initiatives that are community-oriented, practitioners and policy makers, whether from within or without the community, have the opportunity to strengthen traditional stewardship roles for the benefit of the current and future generations. Sustainable Development will be based on ethics of care for the holistic life of community now and in the future. It should be seen to emphasize that development must be people –centred and conservation –based (Gakahu, 1998).

2. Community Conservation

Community Conservation is hinged on the premise of empowering local people around the world and enabling them to realize their potential as protectors of their lands and resources and creators of their future. In this regard, Community-based conservation is a response to older conservation movements that emerged in the 1980s through escalating protests and subsequent dialogue with local communities affected by international attempts to protect the biodiversity of the earth. Older conservation movements disregarded the interests of local inhabitants (Brockington, 2001:83). This stems from the Western idea on which the conservation movement was founded, of nature being separate from culture. The object of community-based conservation is to incorporate improvement to the lives of local people while conserving areas through the creation of national parks or wildlife refuges (Gezon, 1997). While there have been some notable successes, unfortunately community-based conservation has often been ineffective because of inadequate resources, uneven implementation, and overly-wishful planning. Some critics have also complained about often unintended neocolonialist undertones involved in the particular conservation projects.

2.1 Community Participation in Conservation

The concept of community participation in tourism and other development initiatives has gained support since the 1980s. Consequently, this concept is considered as a tool, strategy, means and an end in itself. There are many forms of participation among them: direct versus indirect participation; passive vis-à-vis active participation; real, token and remedial participation; popular; and equitable participation. These are best illustrated by Pretty, (1995)'s interpretations of participation, Cornwall's typology and Arnstein (1970s) ladder of citizen participation, which gives a measure of the degree and extent of community involvement in conservation and related activities. Arnstein's typology of participation has 8 steps ranging from manipulation (the lowest stage) to citizen control (the largest / apex) as shown in the tables below.

2.2 Typologies for Measuring Community Participation

There are four types of typologies namely: Pretty's, Arnstein's and Andrea Cornwall's as shown on tables 1-3.

Table 1: Pretty's Typology

Form of participation	Details of each form/type/component
Passive participation	Participation is through being told what is going to happen or has already happened. The administration or project management makes the unilateral announcement without getting people's views/response. Information shared belongs to external professionals.
Participation in information giving	Participation is through communities giving answers to questions posed by researchers and project managers through questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. Targeted communities/people have no opportunity to influence the outcome of the survey results nor their accuracy
Participation in consultation	Communities/people participate by being consulted, and external agents listen to their views. However, the external agents define both problems and solutions, and may modify views collected. The consultation and decision-making processes are skewed towards the agents, and they have no obligation to take on local people's views.
Participation for material incentives	Community participation is through provision of resources like labour in return for food, cash or materials. When incentives cease/end, participation ends.
Functional participation	Community participation is through formation of groups to meet pre-determined objectives related to the project (s). Involvement is normally at a later stage of the project cycle after major decisions have been made. Groups initially depend on external structures but may become independent over time.
Interactive	Participation is through joint analysis which leads to action plans and the formation of new

participation	local groups or strengthening of existing ones. Employs structured learning processes and groups eventually take control over local decisions and the structures for sustainability.
Self-mobilization/ Active participation	Participation is through taking initiatives independent of external agencies and institutions. People take control of their actions and initiatives, and also determine their future and destiny. Power and control over all aspects of development rests with the local community.

Source: Pretty, J. (1995). The Many Interpretations of Participation. *focus* 16: 4-5

Table 2: Arnstein's Typology

Step/stage of participation	Details about each step/stage
8- Citizen control	Local communities become the main actors and owners, also take charge of and control the conservation/development/tourism process. They are empowered as Robert Chambers (1983) in his book "Whose knowledge counts: putting the last first" notes "The stick is handed to them". Change agencies and other outsiders like tourism officers become advisers, catalysts and facilitators of the process.
7- Delegated power	Power and authority are devolved and delegated respectively to communities/target groups, and roles, responsibilities and tasks shared.
6- Partnership	Communities/target groups and outsiders work together as partners in making decisions, and also together direct the conservation or process.
5- Placation	Placation implies pleasing/diffusing anger/making less angry. It is also a healing process which involves minimizing local community hostility, mistrust, resentment, and antagonistic attitudes all of which arise as a result of marginalizing local community involvement in tourism and development. This is achieved through consultation, capacity building workshops, and giving tokens.
4- Consultation	Involves dialogue and information sharing through consultative meetings. Aims at arousing awareness of local communities about the importance of tourism and related activities.
3- Informing	Involves dissemination of information aimed at sensitizing communities and improving relationships between communities and tourism officers and practitioners.
2- Therapy	Implies soothing, and is also a healing process. Mainly achieved through giving rewards and tokens, as well as through awareness raising.
1- Manipulation	Entails manipulating/playing with the psychology or mental capacity of communities or target groups, changing their mental thinking, attitudes and perceptions.

Source: Arnstein, (1969). The ladder of participation

According to Arnstein, the first two stages (1-2) represent non-community participation, stages 3-5 represent degrees of tokenism (ie rewards and incentives are given to target communities to elicit their support), and stages 6-8 represent degrees of citizenship (ie communities or target groups take control of the process and are actively involved).

Table 3: Andrea Cornwall's Typology

Step/stage of participation	Details about each step/stage
Co-option	Local communities/target groups are co-opted into the development process or committees spearheading development.
Compliance	Communities are made to abide/comply with rules, and regulations governing development or tourism initiatives.
Consultation	Communities are consulted to give their views. Involves dialogue and information sharing through consultative meetings. Aims at arousing awareness communities
Cooperation	Communities agree to co-operate with tourism managers and other external agencies on tourism and development issues and agree to work together.
Co-learning	Communities and outsiders sit together and learn from each other. Local communities' indigenous knowledge and skills are integrated in scientific knowledge.
Collective action	Communities and their resources are mobilized to support tourism for the benefit of communities. Tourism officers and development partners and agencies facilitate the process and give advice.

2.3 Strategies Used in Community Conservation

One strategy of community-based conservation is co-management or joint management of a protected area. Co-management combines local peoples' traditional knowledge of the environment with modern scientific knowledge of scientists (WPC Recommendation 25 Co-management of Protected Areas 2003). This combination of knowledge can lead to increased biodiversity and better management of the protected area. Local communities and indigenous people are the stewards of the natural places governments work to conserve. They depend on the environment for their survival, and over generations have developed traditions and practices to sustainably manage their natural resources. Today these communities face growing challenges such as outside competition for land and resources, conflict with wildlife, and human population growth. In developing countries for example Kenya, local communities often lack economic opportunities and have limited access to social services. In this regard, there is a growing concern for protection of wildlife, preservation of habitats and empowerment of the people to conserve resources while improving their livelihoods. Thus, it has come upon the realization of all stakeholders in wildlife management that there is a close relationship between humans and the environment, and incorporation of elements of governance, gender relations, health and education into the conservation work.

For success to be realized, an integrated Approach that addresses the wide range of social and cultural issues affecting the environment is paramount since people in rural areas depend heavily on nature and have often developed traditions governing the use of natural resources. Hence, exclusion from decisions affecting these resources threatens their livelihoods and cultures, and limits conservation. Further, Indigenous people often live in the world's most bio diverse regions and require specialized approaches that respect their cultural heritage, rights and environment. Thus it is envisioned that, Community conservation will build a sustainable balance between people and nature by empowering local communities to reduce poverty, enhance their opportunities and well-being, and strengthen their role as environmental decision makers.

2.4 Rationale for Community-Based Conservation

Wildlife is one of Africa's greatest natural assets and is an important economic resource for the tourism industry (Rutten, 2002). This is consistent with Akama and Kieti (2003), who assert that, Kenya's national parks and reserves form the pillar of Kenya's tourism industry. As a result, wildlife based tourism encouraged the establishment of state-protected areas, mainly national parks and reserves, in many parts of the developing world. This led to the eviction of respective local people from their traditional lands and hence made such rural communities poorer than they originally were (Nelson, 2004). Kenya has moved a long way in her approach to wildlife conservation and utilization since independence. The Government has recognized over time that wild animals constitute a part of the natural resources of the land which should be safeguarded and utilized in the process of development (Williams et al, 1994).

The distribution of the benefits from wildlife has however been very uneven. With the country having a very small population at the time, there was little concern about any conflicts of interest between human and wildlife needs. When national parks and reserves were established between the 1930s and independence it was widely assumed that the empty wildlife dispersal areas would always remain as a permanent feature of Kenya's natural environment. Within the context of this vision, it was not deemed necessary to consult the public on a subject that was thought to be too complicated to be comprehended by local communities. Ironically, it is local people now have the last word on the viability of the migratory populations of everywhere in Africa (Williams et al 1994:149). Kenya's human population has increased to over 40 Million from an estimated 6 million in 1963. Likewise, wildlife populations have increased since the ban on hunting in 1976. Additionally, since the creation of KWS in 1989, there has been a tremendous reduction in commercial poaching. As man continues to search for land to settle and farm, more and more pressures are placed on Kenya's wildlife habitat.

In Kenya, past history has not made wildlife an economic asset for the average Kenyan. Rather, wildlife has been a major liability to those who must live within wildlife's range. The commitment of KWS to change and address this issue cannot be over emphasized. Wildlife is a resource that must pay in order for it to compete with other resources and to have any real future in the country. The formulation of policies to guide the management of wildlife outside protected areas allowed KWS to recognize its inability to provide hands-on management as no conservation initiative can succeed without community support and involvement (Okello et al, 2003). In line with this, its policies seek delegation of responsibilities to communities, and to intermediaries (such as government agencies or non-governmental organizations who can help to mobilize communities to utilize wildlife sustainability.

Community conservation has been existent in policy documents in Kenya but had not been practiced before 1990s. Sessional paper 3 of 1975 recognized that the established Wildlife Protected Areas (WPAs) are not viable or complete ecosystems and would require the involvement of communities, especially the local land owners outside the Protected Areas to consummate the ecosystem such as is to be found in Amboseli national reserve's gazette area is only 392.26 KM² but it requires about 4,000KM² to complete the ecological process. The rest of the land is owned by local Maasai whose main occupation is ranching /livestock keeping. Livestock keeping is compatible with conservation in the harsh marginal areas. Relations between the local populations and wildlife are also complex, difficult to understand and extremely controversial. Increase in human population has put great pressure on protected land and generally on wildlife habitat (Williams et al, 1994). Until the colonial legislation labeled traditional hunting (subsistence utilization of wildlife) illegal, game had constituted the major source of animal protein and in some instances the main source of food for most tribes in Kenya.

Conservation is about local values and without their recognition, national values for a resource cannot be realized and consequently the global values/ conventions cannot be achieved. There has to be a way of marrying the local, national and global values. In the harsh marginal lands that characterize most of the tourism-intensive regions of the developing countries, life is rather communal and not individual. Culture binds these communities to the wildlife in order to communally and not individually, maximize from the scarce resources because of the harsh life. Culture is usually strong in much tourism intensive areas in developing countries, making the communities consume natural resources under control of their cultural values. This explains why, for instance, the Maasai of Kenya have lived with wild animals for ages as they only feed on game meat during very extreme dry periods as the only alternative source of food. Cultural attachments are hence very strong in marginal lands. Land outside Protected areas is essential to their protection. However, local communities cannot protect a resource they are not benefiting from. It has therefore, since the 1990s become paramount to incorporate local communities so as to access land that is not owned by the government but is crucial for the sustainability of the ecosystem. In this regard, community conservation paradigm is based on the premise that those who live with wildlife should benefit so as to win their goodwill for conservation and enhancement of wildlife resources.

In Kenya, tourism in community lands came about with the introduction of Community Wildlife Service in the 1990s, when the government actively recognized that local indigenous communities play a vital role in conservation of wildlife, the only avenue left for indigenous local communities to benefit was tourism, hence the spread of the concept of community based tourism (CBT) in the country. The key rationale underlying the approach and objectives of CBT for conservation and development is that CBT, through increased intensities of participations, can provide wide spread economic and other benefits, and decision making power to communities. These economic benefits act as incentives for participants and the means to conserve the natural and cultural resources on which income generation depends (TMI, 2000). The current interest in community based approaches to tourism emerges from the following areas of concern: First, the search for more effective strategies for conservation and development: policies based on strict enforcement and protection to conserve natural resources has not always been successful, neither has the top-down centralized decision-making and management structures of the development process. From an environmental and economic perspective, if local people are not involved, it is likely over time, that the resources on which tourism depends will be destroyed and the investment lost (Brandon, 1996, cited in TMI, 2000:4). Second, a moral perspective that argues that management by local people accompanied by devolved decision- making is more preferable since it can be more accountable and sustainable in the long run. Third, in the case of tourism, another related issue that supports the interest in community based tourism (CBT) is the commercialization, monopolization, and accumulation of benefits from tourism among relatively small numbers of beneficiaries. There has been, and continues to be, increased concern that benefits and proceeds be more widely distributed among the communities, especially since the costs are often borne by local communities in the form of collective restriction or loss of access to resources at the sites. Indigenous local communities will only appreciate wildlife if they see themselves to be beneficiaries.

By the turn of the century, much of the policy dialogue on rural development and resource conservation in the Sub Sahara Africa focused on Community based tourism (CBT). For Africa, pastoralist communities had incentives to conserve and profit from the wildlife that had long co-existed with their cattle in savannah rangelands. Community based tourism is therefore about to enable local communities to acquire direct income from tourism ventures that operate on their precious lands (Nelson, 2004).

3. Development of Community Conservancies

Lack of community involvement in resource conservation has become a serious management problem around many wildlife protected areas in Kenya, with the resources shrinking in proportion to human expansion. More significantly, wildlife protected areas are not completely viable ecosystems and require involvement of communities especially local land owners outside wildlife protected areas in order to consummate them. Such a move is only possible through involvement, and agreements with local communities.

By the late 1970s, interests of conserving whole ecosystems and apportioning some of the tourist cake to the host /local communities living around protected areas (PAs) brought about a national recognition of community participation in conservation (Okungu, 2001). Currently, community based wildlife resource management has attracted widespread international attention (leach *et al.*, 1999). Across difficult parts of the world, local resource owners have largely indicated that wildlife protection is important and that wildlife habitats near their respective communities are important for their quality of life. Community based conservation is effective in changing the top-down approach to wildlife protected area conservation applied by many governments of the developing world as it emphasizes the position of those people who bear the costs. The key rationale for this move is that community involvement can provide widespread economic and other benefits including empowerment for decision-making to the communities. The economic benefits act as incentives for participants and the means to conserve the natural resources on which income generation depends. Moreover, lack of involvement of local communities in wildlife conservation as well as not stimulating in them economic interests in resource conservation will be reason for their continued indifference to poaching and bush meat trade or concerns for the plight of wildlife migration corridors and dispersal areas (Kiringe and Okello, 2007). Communities living adjacent to wildlife protected areas in Kenya have since time immemorial been involved in wildlife conservation albeit in customary or traditional mechanisms (Barrow *et al.*, 2000). Development of community based projects is a way of involving the local people in wildlife management whilst allowing them to benefit financially and infrastructurally from the initiatives.

Community based approaches to decision-making in the management of protected areas are increasingly being implemented in many areas as possible strategies of meeting rural livelihood needs as well as supporting conservation objectives (Barrow *et al.*, 2000). Community conservation as an approach to conservation areas and values in many countries will survive only if they address human concerns. If they do not have the support of local people, the future of such areas is insecure because in the search for means of survival, the temptation to exploit protected resources may be irresistible (Barrow *et al.*, 2000).

3.1: A Case of Mwaluganje Community Elephant Sanctuary

One of the generally regarded successful cases of community involvement in wildlife conservation and management in wildlife conservation and management in dispersal areas in Kenya is the Mwaluganje Community Elephant Sanctuary (MES). Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (MES) is a community-owned and managed 6000 acres elephant sanctuary in the Coast Province of Kenya, Kwale district. It is located 45 kilometers south west of Mombasa and is adjacent to the Shimba Hills National Reserve. The sanctuary was formed in the early 1990s as a cooperative project between the people of surrounding Mwaluganje community, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Born Free Foundation (BFF), and the Eden Wildlife Trust. It is an example of an ecotourism, as well as Community-Based Conservation initiatives. It showcases recent trends in integrated conservation management initiatives. It was started when USAID, through its Conservation of Bio Diverse Resource Areas (COBRA) program founded KWS (Kenya Wildlife Service) to help the local farming communities establish the reserve on their land. The region had for a longtime served as a dispersal corridor for elephants on their migration between Shimba Hills to the south and the Mwaluganje forest to the North.

In an apparent attempt to transform the no-win situation to a win-win situation for the parties involved, more than 200 families voluntarily contributed land to the present day Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary, resolving not to farm on the land so that it could serve as the elephant habitat. In return, the families became shareholders and managers of Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary and begun to receive annual dividends from tourism activities in the area.

This arrangement provided jobs for the local people as guards and game scouts. Revenues from the sanctuary have enabled the community to build classrooms, improve road network and enjoy a steady water supply. The endeavor has also led to an increased community tolerance and appreciation of wildlife. Mwaluganje Elephant sanctuary (MES) boasts of being the first ever community owned conservation enterprise solely dedicated to the protection of

the elephants. This community involvement arrangement has minimized Human-Elephant conflict in the area and enhanced the socio-cultural and economic well being of the local people. The sanctuary upholds high standards of environmental protection and has consequently promoted the preservation of the rich culture of the local Digo and Duruma people.

Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary caters for both local and international tourist markets, offering unique opportunities to tourists for elephant spotting and bird watching. The Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary Management in conjunction with the Born Free Foundation has developed an education bursary scheme to pay school fees for needy students. In 2000, the Mwaluganje community was able to allocate part of its revenue to sponsor 45 primary school pupils, a great achievement in education in the area. Thus the community conservation scheme has improved school enrolment and enhanced pupils' performance in an area that once had the lowest levels of literacy in Kwale District. An economic analysis in 2002 indicated that the shareholders made about twice as much per acre from running the sanctuary than they could from farming corn (USAID, 2002). Consequently, Mwaluganje Elephant sanctuary depicts a case in point where community involvement in resource management has yielded conservation and economic benefits for both the local people and the country in general.

3.2: *IL Ngwesi Community Based Tourism Enterprise*

On the same note Il Ngwesi Group Ranch on Kenya's Laikipia Plateau has had great success in reducing local poverty and conserving biodiversity through promotion of ecotourism and establishment of a community-owned trust responsible for local land management. The ranch itself is a collectively owned initiative of 499 local households that incorporates an exclusive ecotourism lodge and a locally led committee responsible for land and resource management. By limiting poaching through community patrols and leading efforts to sustainably manage local resources, the trust has helped to secure a more certain future for wildlife on Il Ngwesi and neighboring reserves. Poverty at Il Ngwesi has been tackled through the redirection of tourism revenues back to the local community. By adopting a collaborative approach to resource management, Il Ngwesi has achieved remarkable success in promoting local livelihoods without compromising the integrity of the natural environment.

Il Ngwesi lodge in Kenya was developed by members of Il Ngwesi group ranch (a registered group of around 500 pastoral households with collective tenure rights over their land). A recent participatory assessment of livelihood impacts revealed that impacts on natural capital, particularly grazing resources, and access to physical infrastructure are more important to most members than the nearly 50 new jobs. The wildlife/wilderness area around the lodge provides emergency drought grazing. The lodge's physical presence, radio, and vehicle help to keep others out and provide emergency access to a hospital, which was previously lacking. The Il Ngwesi Community consists mainly of Maasai pastoralists living on the Laikipia Plains of north-central Kenya. The community owns and runs a group ranch that covers 165 km², and contains a population of 500 households. Next to the ranch lies the highly successful Lewa Downs Wildlife Conservancy, an established wildlife sanctuary. Its success has in large measure arisen because of its owner's initiatives, of working up close relationships with conservation-minded donors and NGOs, and of expansive social networks that extend into the Maasai community and far beyond Laikipia. The owner is, in other words, a man with considerably more power than the neighbouring Maasai. Over the years, livestock grazing pressure and intercommunity conflicts over pasture arose in Il Ngwesi. Competition between wildlife and domestic livestock for the available pasture and water was aggravated by frequent droughts and famine. At the same time, Lewa Downs faced a problem. Its elephant populations were growing so large that the Conservancy's area could no longer support them. The Conservancy's owner needed additional land, water and safety for these animals, and it was with this in mind that, in the late 1980s, he began negotiating with his neighbours. The result was a complete reconfiguration of the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch consisting of two main elements. First, the designation of nearly half the group ranch – 8000 ha – as a conservation area, in which habitation was banned and livestock grazing was permitted only in times of need; and second, the construction of a luxury eco-lodge that generated revenue for biodiversity conservation (patrols that guard against poaching, overgrazing and 'excessive' logging) and for investment in community infrastructure and services (Swallow *et al.* 2007). The implication was that improved grazing management improved soil water infiltration and feed availability, which would in totality improve livestock water productivity at landscape scales (Cook *et al.* 2009).

Moreover, the lodge is managed and staffed by the local community, who act as guides to visitors both at the lodge and on bush walks. Benefits from the Il Ngwesi lodge have been realised on several levels. Revenue currently stands at KShs 3 million per year (c.USD47 000), of which approximately one third is paid out in salaries, a third covers

ecotourism operating expenses, and a third is available as benefits to the community in the form of community projects identified by the group ranch committee and approved by members. The highest priority is the provision of schools (so far, three schools have been improved), followed by school bursaries and the provision of health facilities. Funds are also used for road building and providing transport, as well as building cattle dips (Watkin 2003). Management of the Group Ranch lies in the hands of the Il Ngwesi Community, although the owner of the Lewa Downs Conservancy maintains his interest as a member of the board.

This example is illustrative of how instrumental ('good') leadership can be in generating positive resource-conserving outcomes, while at the same time, yielding dividends to the powerless. While the leader, in this case, seems to have avoided confrontation with dominant elites, he has been privy to the opportunities available. He has had knowledge of tourism trends, of what an eco-lodge might constitute, of land and water management and practice and so on. This was all knowledge that the Il Ngwesi community did not have or were unaware of. Such savvy is also important in anticipating and rebutting external political threats to livestock, water and land policies. Il Ngwesi has now become a viable enterprise, certain to attract the attention of local, regional and national interests. In this sense, the leader here seeks to work as a buffer between nefarious external political interests and those of the Il Ngwesi community.

4. Research Methodology

This study used secondary and primary information. Secondary information was collected from both published and unpublished materials while primary information was gathered with the aid of interviews and focus group discussions. The study respondents included; the managers and owners of both Il ngwesi and Mwaluganje conservancies, KWS community conservation wardens and local leaders. A total of 20 key informants were interviewed and one focus group discussion held. The research participants were labeled as follows: managers and owners were labeled as INGW 1, INGW 2... INGW 10 and MWA 1, MWA 2...MWA 10 for Il ngwesi Mwaluganje respondents respectively, KWS community conservation wardens were labeled as KWS M1 and KWS M2 whereas, focus group participants were labeled as F1, F2...F3.

5. Findings

The study findings revealed that both Il Ngwesi Community Tourism Enterprise and Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary are the best examples on the efficacy of community conservation. Specifically, the results demonstrated that the development of community conservancies have contributed to environmental conservation and improved livelihoods of the local community. The study findings revealed that Il ngwesi is one of the first community conservation initiatives in Kenya. This is best illustrated in the following statement by one of the study respondents:

Il ngwesi lodge which lies at the edge of Mukogodo hills is one of the first community-led conservation initiatives to be established in northern Kenya. It has generated enterprises such as the cultural boma (or village), camel safaris and campsites (KWS M1).

In addition, the study revealed that community conservation has contributed significantly towards environmental conservation and improved quality of life of the local community members. For instance one of the respondents asserted that:

Il ngwesi conservancy and lodge is the perfect example of community conservation achieving near perfect balance between the desire of the community to earn a livelihood and maintain wild animals in their natural habitat (KWS M2).

The above results were consistent with respondents from Mwaluganje conservancy where community conservation initiative has led to improved quality of life of local residents. This is best described in the following statement:

The people of Mwaluganje in Kinango district control the entrance to the game sanctuary, collecting revenue and presiding over its day to day running. As a result, families earn a living from this. The community has established a bursary for needy students. The community was not getting anything out of this land because the elephants destroyed everything. But under this new arrangement, the community will earn direct revenue from tourists (MWA 1).

Moreover it came evident that the Government of Kenya through Kenya wildlife service is committed to ensure that communities living adjacent to wildlife protected areas embrace conservation as alternative economic activity to improve their livelihoods:

KWS is committed to improving the lives of the people living adjacent to Wildlife Protected Areas through supporting projects that would generate sustainable livelihoods, while securing

dependable, sustained access to essential natural resources. In this regard KWS in May 2011 sponsored a five-day tour for Taita Taveta county Wildlife stakeholders to the successful community sanctuaries including Il Ngwesi, where residents have embraced Wildlife conservation. The tour was an eye opener and the residents in Taita taveta should either engage in ecotourism activities in their ranches and benefit from wildlife resource or continue reeling under poverty (KWS M1).

On the contribution of community conservation to the quality of life, the study revealed that tourism in community conservation areas has enabled local community members gain access to the basic needs. This is best described in the following statement by one of the respondents:

...proceeds accrued from conservancies in Isiolo and Samburu, including Il ngwesi, go directly to support education, health and nutritional needs, thereby reducing residents' dependence on purely livestock based livelihoods (INGW 1).

This was echoed by another respondent who asserted that:

The alternative income generation from tourism activities taking place in community conservancies brings the much needed cash into the local economy, diversifies livelihoods, reduces risk and promotes more sustainable use of the fragile environment (INGW 2).

The study findings further established that community conservancies are deemed by Wildlife management Stakeholders as the best strategy to curb the ever-shrinking resources within protected areas. As such various mechanisms have been put in place to win the community's support. This is evident in the following statement;

The local community has achieved greater things from their wildlife conservation efforts. In response, Lewa Conservancy has developed several programmes in line with vision 2030 to assist the local community. Women and youth micro credit programmes, including community policing programmes and social development groups, like beekeeping, have also been developed (INGW 3).

This was further echoed by another respondent who asserted that:

Community conservation is a real story, a story of development and of communities being empowered to take their fate into their own hands. Several organizations have partnered with the community to improve services. Wild wildlife fund, for instance, recently unveiled a plan to improve the Shimba Hills ecosystem of which the community is involved (MWA 2).

6. Discussion

There are number of issues that should be addressed if Kenya's efforts to incorporate the local population in the benefits of wildlife conservation and ecotourism are to succeed. First, in most of the areas, there exists mistrust between the community and other major stakeholders in the conservation agenda such as the government. Mistrust is a common barrier to any cooperation process and often results in a lack of support for collaborations. It can result in skepticism about the motives behind the conservation objectives. This further propels opposition towards the wildlife conservation initiative. Mistrust between the land owners, conservationists and government agencies could be overcome in part by proactive communication. Relationships need to be developed by the conservationists, with the local government and community representatives before any wildlife conservation ideas can be effectively sold to the community.

Another issue is that there is often miscommunication and misinformation about the real objectives of conservation. Miscommunication and a lack of understanding about the main goal of conservation by governmental and conservation agencies is a major barrier to community involvement in wildlife conservation. A greater number of land owners only "hear" about wildlife conservation projects to be established in their environment and this becomes a potential roadblock to the success of any such initiative. Communication problems also occur in relation to public meetings. Many times, land owners feel isolated or confused at stakeholders and public meetings because of the use of unfamiliar, technical conservation and legal terminologies. In response, an effective means of communication and education could be initiatives at direct contacts with the community at their convenience. At the same time land owner participatory meetings should entail citing of examples of successful community based wildlife conservation initiatives in other areas. By detailing how such programs can impact on the socio-economic and ecological welfare of the communities such meetings could prove helpful in sidestepping any barriers that could arise due to preconceived perceptions. For the conservation agency, inviting community representatives from successful cases, involving the agency in other parts of the country to substantiate its ideas could make its work a lot

simpler. This could build confidence and faith in the conservation agency and hence win it much favor and support from community members. Finally, most land owners need technical assistance in negotiating contracts in case of working out partnerships with tourism investors. Partnerships can play an important role in filling technical and financial gaps facing communities.

In a nutshell, the most important aspect of the Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary is that it has realized small successes first and is well on its way towards achieving even bigger socio-economic and ecological benefits. The inclusion of communities and local resource users in the management of conservation areas has been seen to help prevent further loss of habitats and imminent decline in stocks of biodiversity. Such involvement, however, needs to be sensitive and to include land use planning strategies that strike a balance between conservation initiatives and the pursuance of rural livelihood objectives, mostly agriculture in many parts of the country. The Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary project is proof of this. Such an approach and benchmark created by Mwaluganje Elephant sanctuary is seen from an appreciation that wildlife cannot continue to be conserved entirely for its own sake at the expense of the human population adjacent the protected Areas (PAs). Ways and strategies have therefore to be availed to target both wildlife conservation and the provision of economic and non-economic values to the people who live within and around wildlife habitats.

Too often, traditional knowledge and expertise in conservation is undervalued or misunderstood by many governmental and non-governmental agencies attempting to implement sustainable resource management programs involving local communities. A more integrated approach would be to blend the traditional and modern methods, highlighting the benefits of both. In fact, a recommended approach to local natural resource management would be for governments to provide the legal and administrative framework to support traditional management systems. Such a move engenders community support, trust and active involvement from the beginning of any project.

6.1 The Future of Community Conservation

There is need for community conservation outside wildlife protected areas. This is particularly due to the fact that, during dry seasons wildlife usually disperses to communal lands and hence communities should benefit through establishing wildlife conservancies. In Kenya, community conservation has been encouraged by the government, indeed, it has been realized that wildlife conservation lies with land owners. As a result, there are more than 50 community conservancies and others are coming up. This is in line with government decentralization and devolution to local communities of responsibility for natural resources held in common within community land.

Further, based on the current threat facing wildlife conservation in national parks there is need for the communities, who have not only been living with wildlife from time immemorial but also have repertoire knowledge on sustainable wildlife utilization and management be supported in their conservation initiatives. This is based on the premise that the future of wildlife conservation in Kenya rest on the goodwill of people on whose land are located wildlife dispersal corridors. Moreover, if community conservation is done appropriately it will integrate economic benefits, natural resource conservation and grassroots democracy. This will definitely lead to development of wildlife based tourism in communal areas and the involvement of local people in tourism. Under this several important national objectives can be enhanced. These include: faster economic growth in the rural regions, improved welfare and equity, empowerment of local people, improved resource conservation by local people and diversification of the county's tourism products (Ashley and Garland, 1994).

It is therefore, worthwhile to note that the evolution of community conservation in developing countries has important implications for rural economies, through promotion of wildlife based tourism and regional natural resource management, particularly with regard to wildlife outside protected areas in savannah rangelands. In Kenya, more particularly, Amboseli and Maasai Mara regions, community group ranches have spread into rural pastoral communities including many with limited livelihood options. This development is highly significant in line with Millennium Development Goals, and the realization that biodiversity conservation must involve a high degree of local management of natural resources for real environmental sustainability.

But what is critical for the success of community conservation is the aspect of participatory approach to conservation and development of wildlife based tourism. Thus, how a community defines 'participation' is important in determining conservation project's goals. Equally important is the aspect of equity. When designing a community conservation project, failure to allow for open and equitable access to participation from the onset can limit the

success of a project or programme. On the same note, issue of fairness, jealousy and exclusions have in the past confronted many community based conservation ventures. This puts into perspective the notion that sustainable community conservation project can only thrive when it is participatory, acceptable and appreciated by the host communities, who should be empowered to take active as opposed to a passive role (Okungu, 2001).

7. Conclusion

Kenya's wildlife resources are the pillar of the country's tourism. According to Edwards (2010), 70 percent of all Kenya's wildlife is found on private or community land thus the need to allow landowners the opportunity to manage the wild animals on their land. This explains why governments across post colonial Africa have recognized the benefits of introducing tourism on community lands as a strategy to wildlife conservation and rural poverty reduction. Poverty reduction in particular is a key objective for developing nations of the world to accomplish as stipulated in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (Wishitemi, 2008). Wildlife is one of Africa's greatest natural assets and is an important economic resource for the tourism industry (Rutten, 2002). In particular, Wishitemi (2008) notes that the Kenya government recognised in session paper No. 3 of 1975 "Statement of future wildlife management in Kenya", the need to manage and conserve the country's natural resources. Community-based conservation then emerged as an innovative institutional response for meeting the seemingly conflicting goals of poverty reduction and biodiversity education (Shukla, 2004). It is also recognized that an important component of community based conservation is drawing on the traditional ecological knowledge held by the local people that are already proving themselves in the management of local resources. This justifies why sustainable conservation demands a social component (Rutten, 2002) and why community based conservation scholars consider the use of local knowledge system such as traditional ecological knowledge as one of the enabling conditions that leads to the success and durability of community Based- conservation (Berkes, 1998).

Traditional ecological knowledge denotes a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief that has evolved through adaptive processes and been handed down through generations by cultural transmission. It is unique, traditional, local knowledge and learning systems existing in and developed by groups of people who are indigenous to a specific socio-geographical and cultural area or region, it follows therefore that sustainable community-based conservation initiative can only originate from within the community rather than outside. The returns from such conservation habitats and the wildlife they contain can be broadly defined to include aesthetic, cultural, scientific and economic gains (Mwanjala, 2005).

According to Kiringe and Okello (2007) the current biodiversity conservation problems and largely unviable protected areas in Kenya are partly precipitated by the government's seemingly external protectionist approach while the local communities suffer alienations since before and after independence (Kiringe and Okello, 2007). It is important to recognise that wildlife needs space outside the park as well as inside hence putting in place adequate policy and structures for its planned sustainability. This space can only be secured as a result of land owners' willingness to accommodate wildlife in their properties. Such an accommodation would arise from visionary policies that would encourage land owners to incorporate wildlife with other forms of land use thus reaping diversified benefits that include tourism.

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