OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT IN KIMANA COMMUNAL RANCH, KAJIADO DISTRICT, KENYA.

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A Thesis Submitted in partial Fulfillment for the Award of the Degree of Master of Environmental Science

In the School of Environmental Studies and Human Sciences

Kenyatta University

April 2006
DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work, and has not been presented for a Degree or any other award in any other university.

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This work is dedicated to Anne Kamau, Faith Waithira, Dan Mwangi, Charity Wandia, Steve Weru and Joy Kirathimo. Your prayers, encouragement, understanding and unwavering support made it possible to complete this study.
I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Godfrey A. Olukoye and Dr. Abraham G. Ndung'u for their guidance throughout the study. I specifically thank Dr. Olukoye for his assistance and guidance in the initial conceptualization of the project, and his encouragement all through.

I would also like to thank my employer, Kenya Utalii College for the financial support that made it possible to complete the study.

My gratitude go to Mr. Daniel Akunga, of the Department of Community Health, Kenyatta University, for his assistance; to my able field assistants, Messrs. George N. Mbiyu, Christopher Lesisa ole Kipoy, and John Kapoito ole Kaseenchi, who helped in data gathering; the management of both Kimana Communal Ranch, Kimana Wildlife Sanctuary, and the local administration.

Finally, I thank the hospitable people of Kimana, and all those who in one way or another contributed either directly or otherwise to the completion of the study. To all of them I say, May God bless you!
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ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

ACC: African Conservation Center


ASAL: Arid and Semi Arid Lands

COBRA: Conservation of Biodiverse Resource Areas.

CWS: Community Wildlife Service

DDC: District Development Committee

DDP: District Development Programme

GoK: Government of Kenya

KFWG: Kenya Forests Working Group

KWS: Kenya Wildlife Service

MENR: Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources

NEAP: National Environmental Action Plan

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

REDSO: Regional Economic Development Services Office for Eastern and Southern Africa (under USAID)

RoK: Republic of Kenya

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WWF: World Wide Fund for Nature

WTO: World Tourism Organization

WCED: World Commission on Environment and Development
ABSTRACT

Tourism, the temporary movement of people from their areas of domicile and back, has brought many socio-economic benefits in many developing countries with limited options for development. The Kenyan Government Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of 2001 recognized the tourism industry as one of the best means of poverty reduction due to the high multiplier effect of tourism on every facet of the economy. Unfortunately, these benefits are often accompanied by negative social and environmental impacts, degrading the very resource base on which the tourism industry depends for sustainability. Ecotourism, being environmental friendly, emphasizes the institution of mechanisms to minimize the negative impacts, through the involvement of local communities, in the tourism area. This is important as these people determine the long-term future and profitability of the ecotourism industry.

The study focused on Kimana Communal Ranch, in Kajiado District, Kenya, where a wildlife sanctuary was established in 1992, officially opened in 1996, as the first ever community wildlife sanctuary in Africa. The study sought to investigate the extent of local community participation; the opportunities and challenges to the effective community participation; and how the nature of benefits and their distribution affects the motivation for the local community to participate in ecotourism management. Primary data was collected over a nine months period (April to December 2003), through questionnaires, interviews; site visits and focused group discussions. Secondary data was obtained from academic journals, relevant publications and the Internet. The study investigated the aforementioned opportunities and challenges and made recommendations on possible mitigation measures.
The results are presented using frequencies, and percentages in form of tables, graphs, and pie charts. The research findings indicate that, despite the existence of opportunities for effective community participation in the management of ecotourism in the study area, this is hindered by numerous challenges. These include inequitable distribution of benefits, unsupportive legal frameworks, policy impediments, land tenure system and changing land use patterns, resource use conflicts, and unfavorable political and institutional frameworks. Although some of these barriers have been noted in several government documents, a study to analyze the said opportunities and challenges in the Kimana area has been lacking.

The findings further indicate that, the level of involvement was not adequate to empower the community for effective participation in ecotourism management. Although the majority of the local community respondents (97.8%) indicated employment was an important potential benefit of ecotourism activities, at present this is a challenge to their participation due to the low employment levels. The findings further indicated that the nature and distribution of benefits accruing from ecotourism in Kimana was another major challenge to the local community participation in ecotourism, as well as lack of alternative livelihoods in the study area.

If the said challenges are mitigated, the local community will effectively participate in the management of ecotourism enterprises. This is in line with the stated Kenyan government policy of the promotion of sustainable community-based programs in the vicinity of national parks and other protected areas, which are geared to popularizing ecotourism as a viable economic activity. This will contribute positively to poverty alleviation, while at the same time motivating the local communities to conserve the ecotourism resources.
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

Tourism has brought many socio-economic benefits in both developing and developed countries. This is evident in Kenya, where the tourist arrivals have grown from 70,000 at independence in 1963 (Okungu, 2001) to 1,146,000 in 2003 (GoK, 2005). However, this growth in numbers has often been associated with many negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts, which have led to the degradation of the tourism resource base.

Ecotourism, which is environmental friendly tourism, has been adopted to minimize the negative and maximize on the positive impacts on the environment. The term ecotourism was coined out of the concerns to save some Latin American forests, which were rich in biodiversity, from destruction through logging, settlement and ranching (Gakahu et al, 1992). It was envisaged that income from nature lovers could provide an alternative sustainable livelihood to the local people, since they destroyed the forests, not out of choice, but rather necessity. Ecotourism has been implemented with limited success in many parts of Africa, mainly due to the existence of challenges that hinder the local communities from benefiting from the opportunities in ecotourism enterprises.

East Africa has a wide variety and combination of ecotourism attractions, ranging from wildlife to physical scenery, culture, and conducive climate, unrivalled anywhere else in the world. When the first national parks and reserves were established by the colonial government, the local communities were neither consulted nor included in the decision making process. In addition, the local communities, who were the actual custodians of the resources (GoK, 2002), received little or no benefits. This resulted in the development of
negative attitudes towards wildlife conservation and ecotourism. The perennial poaching problem experienced in East Africa may have been as a direct result of the negative attitudes.

Wildlife based tourism has been important in the Kimana area since the early part of the twentieth century. However, the local community has not fully benefited from ecotourism enterprises due to the existence of numerous challenges. This is the subject of the study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
Kajiado District is occupied mainly by the Maasai people. When the British settlers came to Kenya, they found Maasai land suitable for occupation. The latter were persuaded into signing treaties surrendering their ancestral land for occupation and conservation (Cheeseman, 2002). This enabled the colonial government to establish the Southern Game Reserve in Maasailand (Nyeki, 1992), which cost the Maasai their best dry season pasture lands in Kajiado District. The community, which borders some of the most important conservation areas (in terms of visitor numbers), was thus marginalized by the introduction of agriculture and conservation leaving them with the poorest quality rangelands, which could no longer sustain their large herds especially in the dry season, leading to environmental degradation and severe livestock losses. The Maasai, therefore, developed severe antagonism due to the uncompensated establishment of national parks and human-wildlife conflicts around the conservation areas. This failure to incorporate the local people in conservation areas such as Amboseli resulted in repeated spearing of wildlife and direct conflict with the national parks management (Cheeseman, 2002).
The Amboseli National Park covers about 6.5% of the vast 6,000km² Amboseli ecosystem, which includes Kimana and the other surrounding communal ranches. The latter, being in the Tsavo - Amboseli wildlife migratory corridor, are the parks’ dispersal areas. Thus, for the successful wildlife conservation and ecotourism, the goodwill of the local people, who own the surrounding land, is vital. However, opportunities for the effective participation of the local community in ecotourism enterprises have been hindered by the existence of several challenges.

Although these challenges have been noted in several government policy documents (MENR, 1994; GoK, 2005), these issues have not been addressed and appropriate mitigation measures instituted to find solutions to the said challenges and optimize on the opportunities. The study analyzed the said challenges, and suggested mitigation measures, which if instituted, would enhance community participation, and hence contribute positively to the conservation of the ecotourism resource base. This would enhance effective community participation, which is the key to sustainable ecotourism, ultimately leading to the long-term profitability as the same communities determine the future of the ecotourism enterprises.

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

i. To what extent is the local community involved in the management of ecotourism resources in Kimana?

ii. What constraints hinder effective participation of the local people in ecotourism enterprises in Kimana Communal Ranch?
iii. What is the nature of ecotourism related benefits that accrue to the local people from Kimana sanctuary and how are these distributed?

1.4 Hypotheses

The study endeavored to test the following hypotheses:

i. The extent of local community participation in the management of ecotourism in Kimana Communal Ranch and the sanctuary is low.

ii. There are no constraints hindering the participation of local communities in ecotourism management.

iii. The nature and distribution of benefits accruing from the Kimana Sanctuary does not hinder effective community participation in ecotourism management.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to analyze the opportunities and challenges to the effective local community participation in ecotourism management, and suggest possible mitigation measures.

Specific Objectives

1) Establish the extent of local community participation in the management of the ecotourism resources in Kimana Communal Ranch.

2) Investigate the opportunities and challenges to effective community participation in ecotourism management in Kimana Sanctuary.

3) Investigate the nature of benefits, and their distribution to the local community and how this affects their motivation to participate in ecotourism management in Kimana Sanctuary and the communal ranch.
1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

The Kimana Communal Ranch is located in the ASAL region of Kajiado district, Kenya. Being adjacent to the Amboseli National Park, there is free movement of wildlife to and from Kimana. This not only forms part of the park's dispersal area, but also the dry season refuge of wildlife migrating between Tsavo West, Chyulu and Amboseli National parks. The local ecology favors wild game and livestock cohabitation and sparse human settlement (GoK, 1994). In the past, the livelihood of the local communities was based on the livestock industry, mainly nomadic pastoralism. The recent influx of agricultural communities, mainly the Kikuyu and Kamba into the area has been encouraged by the change in land tenure from communal to private ownership.

To date, the local communities have not realized the full benefits of wildlife-based tourism, a fact that was highlighted in the 1994-1996 Kajiado District Development Plan (D D P) (GoK, 1994). The document thus recognized the existence of barriers to effective community participation to ecotourism and indicated that the local community ought to benefit from ecotourism. However, the DDP did not suggest the mode of benefits sharing, as greater focus on community-wildlife issues has been shifted towards Amboseli National Park, and the Magadi and Shombole areas, in the same district.

The KWS Community Wildlife Program encourages the conservation of biodiversity by communities living on land essential to wildlife, which include wildlife migration corridors and dispersal areas such as Kimana, which are found outside parks and reserves. If these people benefit from wildlife and natural resources, it motivates them to protect and sustainably utilize the natural resources therein. The KWS policy is that wildlife cannot be
conserved outside protected areas by imposition of law and order while ignoring the local peoples’ needs and without human wildlife conflicts resolution (KWS, 1996).

Since the environment is the backbone of the tourism industry, biodiversity conservation is the key to sustainable tourism development. This is only attainable through the involvement of the local community. Lack of community involvement has often contributed to conflicts between the host communities and the tourism custodians, thereby hampering sustainable tourism development (Okwemba, 2003). Indeed the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of 2001, acknowledged the importance of sensitizing the residents of the wildlife-rich areas to the importance of ecotourism as a means of poverty alleviation (GoK, 2001).

The promotion of community based tourism approaches would enable the local community to participate in the management of the enterprises through the receipt of direct benefits, while at the same time encouraging their support for local conservation initiatives (WTO, 2002b). This fact was also emphasized in the new Kenyan Draft Constitution, which recommended that the government should ensure the participation of the local communities in the decision making process pertaining to the sustainable utilization of natural resources and the conservation of the environment (Okwemba, 2003). Although the existence of opportunities and challenges to the effective community participation has been noted in the past, an analysis of the same has been lacking. This, therefore, was the subject of the study.

There are several ranches in Kajiado district that have the potential to benefit from wildlife-based ecotourism. These are located in the same agro-ecological zone, with similar socio-economic aspects, and the wildlife move freely between these ranches and Amboseli. It is
assumed that the findings from the Kimana area will be representative of other ranches in the
district, and the other ASAL regions in general, especially in Rumuruti (Laikipia), and Eburu
(Nakuru), where the local people are interested in eco-ventures (KFWG, 2000), and Samburu. The said communities have not been able to implement eco-ventures due to the
existence of numerous challenges. This will provide motivation to the communities for
biodiversity conservation, through tourism, which has played a key role in poverty
alleviation in several other group ranches (GoK, 2001).

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Scope

Although there are several such projects in Kenya, the study focused on Kimana, which was
selected on the basis that there has been wildlife - based tourism since the early part of the
20th Century, which increased in importance after the establishment of Cottar's Camp in the
1920's. The Kimana area is, therefore, most suitable for the investigation of the multiple
factors that influence attitude of local communities towards conservation, because of the
long-standing importance in wildlife-based tourism. Most of the previous research had
focused mainly on wildlife conservation in the national parks and reserves.

Limitations of the Study

The high mobility of the local population due to the nomadic lifestyle posed a challenge in
information gathering and verification. At times, key respondents had to be followed outside
the Kimana Communal Ranch. In addition, there is limited information available on the
opportunities for the effective community participation in Kimana area, since most research
in Kajiado district, as earlier mentioned, has concentrated on the national parks. Further,
there were fewer female than male respondents, because, due to cultural barriers; women could not express themselves freely in the presence of men. The researcher was, however, able to interview the women through introductions by opinion leaders, who were residents of the communal ranch.

1.3 Definitions of Operational Terms

**Animal migration**- The seasonal movements of wild animals from the area of domicile, usually a protected area, to a dispersal area, and back at a later date.

**ASAL**: Arid and Semi Arid Lands; these fall in Agro-ecological zones IV and V (semi-humid to semi-Arid) and VI and VII (arid to very arid). The ASALs occupy approximately 80% of Kenya's total land area.

**Community Based Ecotourism**- Type of environmental friendly tourism that contributes to the conservation of nature and natural resources and local economic development, has high level of participation by the members of the local community, and provides a socially and environmentally responsible product to visitors. Ecotourism therefore contributes to environmental conservation while improving local livelihoods (JORKOE Ecotrek, 2002; Nelson, 2004).

**Community Based Tourism**: Refers more specifically to tourism activities or enterprises that involve local communities, occur on their lands and are based on their cultural and natural assets and attractions. It focuses on travel to areas with natural attractions, and contributes to environmental conservation and local livelihoods. (Nelson, 2004)
Community Participation - The involvement of the local people in the identification, planning and implementation of ecotourism projects and programmes. This entails commitment by the community to contribute towards the evolution and development of ecotourism activities. The community, therefore, derives benefits while controlling impacts of tourism (Gakahu, *et al.*, 1992; Mwakima, 2005).

Donors - Funding agencies that assist the local communities in terms of technical expertise and funding. In the study area, these include USAID, World Vision, AWF and others, which are active in the study area.

Eco-products - This refers to the range of goods, attractions, values, and other activities that encourage ecotourism in an area (Bottril, *et al.*, 1995). These include natural attractions, such as the wildlife sanctuary, Mt. Kilimanjaro, cultural products of the local people.

Ecotourism - There are various definitions of ecotourism. The study defines ecotourism according to Goodwin (1996) as low impact nature tourism, which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either through contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for the people to value, and therefore protect their wildlife heritage area as a source of income. It therefore entails responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, as well as improving the well being of the local people (The Ecotourism Society, 2004).
**Group Ranch/Communal Ranch** - A large tract of land that is communally owned by a group of people recorded and registered as the legal owners through membership of the particular ranch (Ruten, 1992).

**Human-Wildlife Conflicts** - All inconveniences posed by man to wildlife and vice-versa. This may include loss of human life, crop and property destruction and wildlife and livestock deaths.

**Local Community** - The local people living within, and around Kimana communal ranch, especially those who are in contact with the sanctuary ecosystem

**Sustainable Development** - The type of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987).

**Sustainable Tourism** - Any type of tourism that meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions, while at the same time enhancing and protecting opportunities for the future. The term may also be applied to any travel including mass tourism that attempts to reduce its adverse environmental and socio-cultural impacts (WTO, 2002a).

**Stakeholders** - All individuals, groups and organizations participating in ecotourism activities and whose income and welfare solely or partly depends directly and indirectly on them (Borrini-Feyerbend, *et al.*, 2000). In the study area, this includes all the people with a vested