

# **Contributions of Partnerships to Conservation and Development: Insights from Amboseli**

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## **Abstract**

For several decades, both academics and practitioners have fiercely debated how to reconcile conservation and development objectives. In Sub-Saharan Africa, efforts to align biodiversity conservation and livelihood goals have triggered a shift from pure protected area approaches to a hybrid scenario, including diverse partnership arrangements that consider livelihood needs of communities neighboring protected areas. These partnerships often include tourism to provide income and jobs. The future of the Amboseli landscape in Kenya has been an integral part of these debates, since it has faced long-lasting conservation and development challenges. Many initiatives, often in the form of partnership arrangements, have tried to address these challenges. By using the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) and a set of indicators to measure the contributions to conservation, we examine two of these partnerships—the Amboseli Ecosystem Trust (AET) and Big Life Foundation (BLF)—with the aim of understanding the extent to which they contribute to addressing these challenges. Data were collected using document analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, nonparticipant observation, and informal conversations. Findings show that both AET and BLF have been able to address direct drivers of biodiversity loss (such as human wildlife conflicts, poaching, unplanned infrastructural developments) and—to a much lesser extent—the indirect drivers, such as poverty and land subdivision. Through the workings of both partnerships, more community members have gained access to specific community capital assets, through employment opportunities and other monetary incentives and education. However, it is not clear if and how the livelihood benefits transfer to real and long-term support for wildlife conservation.

**Keywords:** Amboseli; Biodiversity Conservation; Development; Kenya; Partnerships

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