

Abstract

This paper presents the impact of ecotourism[†] on livelihood and natural resource management in the periphery of Amboseli Biosphere Reserve in Kenya. Ecotourism initiatives that have been introduced by Porini Ecotourism, a private investor, are benefiting Eselenkei Group Ranch in terms of income, improved infrastructure, employment opportunities and exposure. Over US\$5000 is received annually as land rent, gate fee and bed charges. Twenty-six Maasai men are employed for the upkeep of project facilities. The community's capacity to facilitate resource-related conflicts has improved following support from development institutions. An expanding livelihood base is reducing local vulnerability to disaster and people-wildlife conflicts. The numbers of resident wildlife species in the conservation area have increased due to regeneration of woody species and reduced frequency of livestock.

Despite the achievements, ecotourism is threatened by cultivation. The latter is jeopardizing conservation efforts, as the area frequented by wildlife is being lost and people-wildlife conflicts intensified. Another dilemma is that the Eselenkei community is not effectively participating in ecotourism a situation that is associated with inadequate management and negotiation skills in the group ranch committee. The latter requires leadership and microenterprise management skills if earnings from ecotourism are to be effectively invested in alternative sources of livelihood, to reduce current and potential conflicts. There is also need to build the community's capacity for the promotion of activities that compliment ecotourism. Frequent breakdown of community boreholes lead to dependence on the conservation area for water during prolonged drought, intensifying conflicts between livestock and wildlife. Copyright © 2002 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.