

## **THE CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM TO POVERTY REDUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITIES LIVING ADJACENT TO AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK, KENYA**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates tourism's contribution to poverty reduction amongst communities living adjacent to Amboseli National Park in Kenya. The study mainly employed a qualitative research design and data were collected through a mixed method approach involving in-depth interviews with a wide range of community members and key informants and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with people directly involved with tourism. Some data was also gathered from secondary sources. The findings indicate that as at the time of this study tourism was making minimal contribution to poverty reduction. However, many people in Amboseli stated that even though the benefits from tourism were very limited they played an important role in improving the living conditions of the poor. The study also identified several problems that make it difficult for the people of Amboseli to draw maximum benefits from tourism. Some these barriers included: tour driver and guide exploitation, inequitable benefit sharing and lack of broad based management structures. The study concludes that tourism has the potential to contribute to poverty reduction in Amboseli, however, this can only happen if there is a unity of purpose and renewed cooperation amongst all tourism stakeholders, transparency and accountability in financial matters and popular participation in the decision-making processes.

*Key words:* Poverty reduction, pro-poor tourism, Amboseli, national park, local communities, Kenya

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Poverty reduction is a key agenda and priority area in many countries in the world, especially in the developing countries. To underscore the urgency of the matter, poverty reduction was identified as Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number 1 by the United Nations (UN) and the international community at the Millennium Summit in 2000. Member states undertook to reduce by halve the number of poor people in the world (i.e., those living on less than US\$1.25 per a day) by 2015 (UNWTO, 2002). Subsequently, governments across the world, the United Nations, the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as bilateral and multilateral donors started to mainstream poverty reduction in their development strategies. In the same vein, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) promptly adopted pro-poor tourism (PPT) an overarching strategy for achieving the MDGs and particularly goal number. The Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) Initiative and Foundation was launched and endorsed as a key driver for poverty reduction and sustainable development (UNWTO, 2007). While MDG I was not achieved by the end of 2015, some gains were made and positive developments recorded in many countries. Notwithstanding these gains, poverty remains a major problem in many countries including Kenya. That is why poverty reduction is Goal No. 1 in the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which replaced the MDGs.

Tourism can be a very powerful tool in the fight against poverty in many tourist destinations especially in the developing countries. In retrospect, many international development organizations such the United Nations Development Programme, multilateral agencies such as the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and governments across the world have increasingly embraced tourism as a catalyst to development and tool for poverty alleviation (UNWTO, 2007; Mitchel & Ashley, 2010). Tourism has great potential to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and poverty alleviation because of its wide geographical spread, labour intensive nature and the relative ease for many poor people to join (World Bank, 2009). The UNWTO (2002) further adds that tourism can be an effective catalyst for poverty reduction because it offers host communities' unlimited opportunities to sell goods and services, to diversify and supplement their sources of income, provide employment opportunities for local people especially women, promote gender equality and stimulate local economic growth. There is no doubt that with prudent planning and management, such benefits can make enormous contributions

to economic growth and poverty alleviation. Kenya represents one of the countries in the world that have embraced tourism as an important and integral part of its national efforts to address the problem of poverty.

Kenya is one of the leading tourist destinations in Africa attracting about 6% of total tourist arrivals to the continent. As such tourism is a major economic and social phenomenon which accounts for about 10% of GDP and accounts for 10-12% of total wage employment and 19.2% of export earnings (Kenya 2013: 478). The sector is also one of the largest sources of foreign exchange earnings and revenue generating in the country. The Kenyan tourism industry has experienced a steady growth in volume, revenues, and investments since independence. The number of arrivals has increased steadily from 65,000 in 1964 to over one million in 2010 with a corresponding increase in revenues. In 2012, Kenya earned US\$935 million from 1.6 million tourists, making tourism the third largest foreign exchange earner after tea and horticulture (Mburu, 2004; Ondicho, 2016). However, most of the benefits from the local tourism industry are appropriated by major investors and stakeholders including tour operators/agencies, travel companies, hoteliers, and the state (Ondicho, 2010). By contrast, a clear majority of poor people living in rural areas where the tourist attractions are located receive virtually no direct benefits from tourism and are often sidelined from tourism development.

This has proven to be the case for the Maasai people living adjacent to Amboseli Biosphere Reserve in the Amboseli region of Kajiado County. Even though wildlife tourism in Amboseli generates enormous amounts of revenue, the local Maasai communities continue to languish in poverty. Much of the money generated from ANP is often shipped directly into government's coffers and to other strategic tourism stakeholders such as global tour operators, travel agents and hotels for appropriate distribution (Ondicho, 2010). Generally, many people in Amboseli are not only poor but also exhibit high levels of illiteracy, unemployment and mortality. They also lack basic amenities such as adequate health services, piped water, telephone and electricity services and schools. Eking a living here, even at subsistence level, is difficult and most families face the real challenges of generating enough income to meet their basic needs including food, medicines, tools, and household necessities (Ondicho, 2012a).

The last two or so decades the Maasai have been at the forefront in the development of so-called Maasai cultural tourism. Maasai cultural tourism incorporates experiences that revolve around cultural bomas, most of which are located at the periphery of ANP and are run by the local people according to their priorities (Ondicho, 2010 & 2012b). A cultural *boma* is a purpose-built ‘model village’ intended to attract fee paying tourists. The villages are set up by Maasai entrepreneurs, who seek to display their culture and sell their artifacts to tourists directly without going through middlemen. Such villages give tourists the chance to meet the Maasai on their own terms and to learn more about their exotic culture, to photograph them in their traditional costumes and perhaps, to purchase some of their handicrafts. Cultural bomas are an indigenously home grown Maasai tourism initiative which not only puts control in local hands but also gets tourist spending directly into the hands of poor people. Mitchel and Ashley (2010) have argued that community based cultural tourism can play a critical role in stimulating economic development, complementing and diversifying local sources of livelihood, improving the welfare and well-being of host communities, and in alleviating poverty. However, there has been relatively little is known about how cultural bomas tourism can contribute to poverty alleviation.

The aim of this research is to determine the contribution of cultural bomas to poverty reduction in Amboseli, Kenya. Amboseli was considered to be the most appropriate location for this case study for three reasons: one, it is a relatively rural place with many poor people but one that has experienced a gradual increase in tourism activity; two, many local people have started to invest in tourism and assume an entrepreneurial role; and, three, the Kenyan government is promoting local participation in tourism development and benefits as an incentive for the Maasai people to undertake wildlife conservation in the group ranches that surround ANP. It is hope that this study will contribute towards the body of knowledge in this under-researched area of tourism impact analysis.

This paper is divided into three section 6 sections. The first section briefly reviews the literature on pro-poor tourism to provide the context for evaluating tourism’s contribution to poverty alleviation, the second section provides a description of the study site, followed by a presentation of the methodology that was used in the study in the third section. The fourth section presents the findings of the study that was undertaken to assess the contribution of tourism to poverty

alleviation and the fifty sections offers a brief discussion of the barriers to tourism development. The last section provides a conclusion that sums up the core arguments in paper is presented.

### **1.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK-PRO-POOR TOURISM**

Pro-poor tourism (PPT) has been defined as tourism that “increases net benefits for the poor and ensures that growth contributes to poverty reduction” (Ashley et al, 2001: viii) or rather “generates net benefits for the poor” (Department of International Development (DFID), 1999:7). DFID also makes it clear that benefits should not be viewed just as economic but also as cultural, social and environmental. Additionally, DFID clarifies that PPT is not a tourism product but rather an overall approach to tourism development and management whose main aim is to unlock opportunities for the poor to enjoy the benefits of tourism through creating linkages and businesses. The approach advocates for greater participation in tourism of previously disadvantaged groups and enabling them to derive direct benefits from tourism and tourist resources such as wildlife on their lands (Mburu, 2004; Rutten, 2004; Ondicho, 2010).

This framework has elicited a lot of curiosity amongst and received endorsement from researchers, policy makers, bilateral and multilateral donors. PPT was adopted by UNWTO as the overarching strategy for achieving MDG 1 (UNWTO, 2002 & 2007). The aim of PPT is to enable poor people in destination areas to draw direct benefits from community based tourism enterprises. Therefore, any form of tourism that generates social, economic, cultural and environmental is pro-poor if: One, it brings economic benefits including income and employment from business opportunities through better access to tourism markets for locally produced goods and artifacts; Secondly, if it brings livelihood benefits such as access to drinkable water, improved infrastructure and amenities such as roads, schools, and health facilities to poor people. And three, opportunities and capacity for the poor to participate in making decisions aimed at improving their livelihoods. Goodwin and Edmund (2004) have argued that, to make a sound case for the benefits of tourism to the poor and poor communities there is a need to move beyond the language of multipliers and ‘trickledown’ and to identify specific benefits to poor individuals and communities

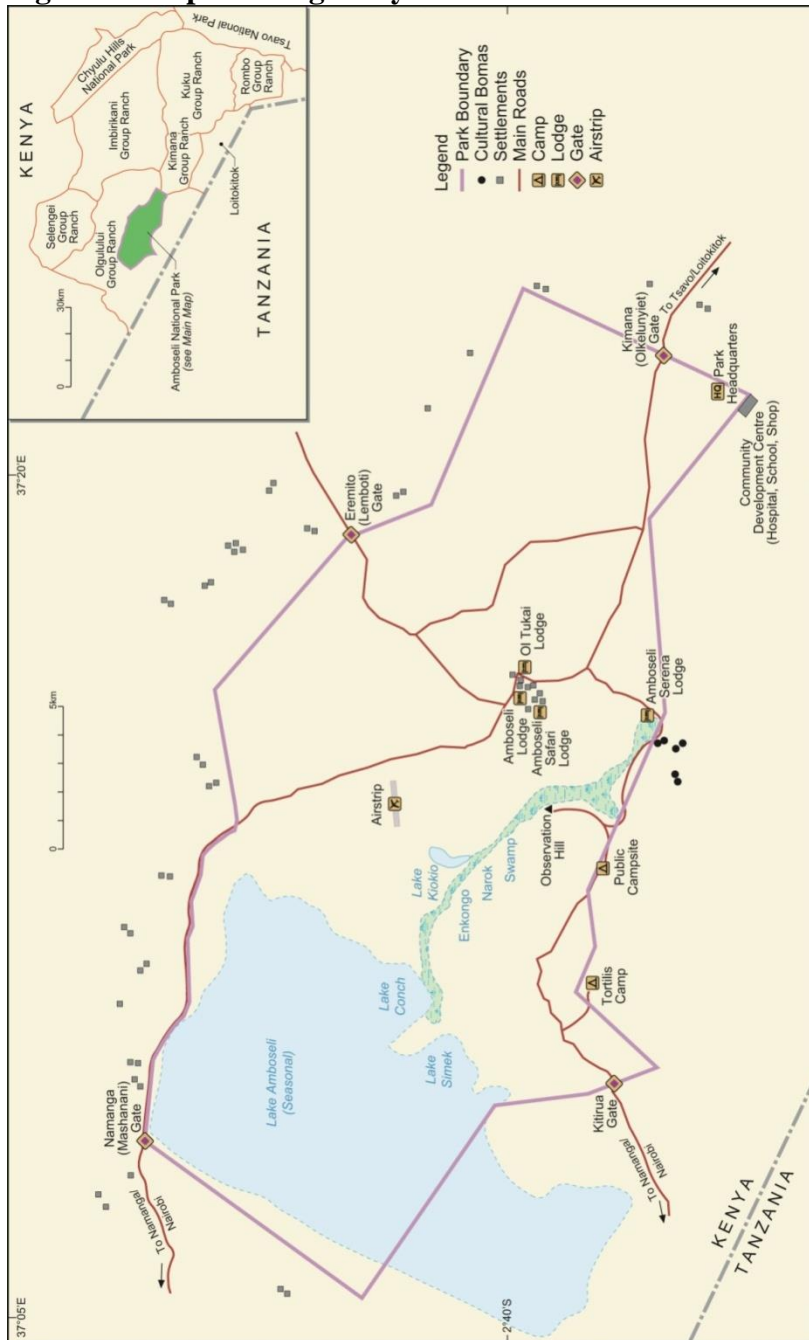
The main assumption is that tourism amongst marginalized indigenous communities in major tourism hotspots in the developing countries should provide opportunities for people to benefit directly and indirectly. Local participation in tourism benefits is arguably very instrumental in

reducing poverty through pro-poor tourism strategies (UNWTO, 2007 & 2010). When traditional activities such as music and dance, arts and crafts complement tourism, the host communities may benefit from economic diversification and increased income from sales of handcrafts and services. Involving host communities in benefit sharing, in the decision-making processes and management of tourism often provide an effective incentive for local people to conserve and preserve their natural and cultural resources that attract tourists to their locality (Scheyvens, 2007). However, it is important also to note that all the people within the community will not draw equal benefits from tourism (Stronza, 2007; Zhang, 2009). It is therefore imperative to identify which poor people benefit from tourism and by how much, and the actual contribution of these benefits to poverty alleviation and sustainable development. It has been argued that non-financial benefits need to be quantified in converted into financial terms so that they can also be measured. Goodwin and Edmund (2007) observe that such analysis will be particularly important in convincing the development agencies and banks that tourism really can contribute to poverty reduction.

## **1.2 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The Amboseli region (also known as ecosystem), which is famous for its abundant wildlife resources and culture of the local Maasai people, was selected as the site for this case study. The study focused on six cultural villages located on the southern edge of Amboseli national park (ANP). ANP, the core of a UNESCO man and Biosphere Reserve, covers an area of some 392 sq kilometers (or about 5% of the regions total land area). The park is located approximately 240 kms south of Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, along the northern Tanzanian border and across the lower northern foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro. The area referred to ask Amboseli region is congruent to Loitokitok Sub-County of Kajiado County. Loitokitok sub-county covers an area of 8,000sq km and is divided into 7 group ranches, one national park, several locations, sub locations and villages.

Figure 1: Map showing study site



Source: Ondicho, (2010)

The Amboseli region is home to Maasai pastoralists, who traditionally are semi-nomadic nomadic subsistence pastoralists. Amboseli is representative of the African arid and semi-arid rangelands which receive low and erratic rainfall ranging from 300 and 500mm per annum (Reid *et al.*, 1999). The Maasai and their livestock are well adapted to the arid and climatically hostile environment.

Their traditional land use patterns and decisions are critical for the abundance of wildlife in the ANP. There are also people from Kenya's agriculture communities in the sub-county, many of them recent migrants who have bought land on which they now cultivate vegetables, beans and corn for local consumption. A few Maasai have also started to cultivate especially on wet parts on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, Namelok and Kimana areas. Because of the arid and semi-arid climatic conditions, it is not uncommon for the indigenous Maasai pastoralists to roam around with their livestock herds in search of scarce range resources mainly water and pasture. This seasonal movement often coincides with the movement of wildlife within the Amboseli ecosystem. Competition for water and pasture is major source of conflict between Maasai herders and wildlife.

ANP is very important to Kenya's tourism industry, typically ranking second among the country's national parks in terms of annual gate fees collection which stood at US\$ 3.5 million in 2004. Despite its small size, ANP has a wide array of biodiversity and high concentrations of spectacular wildlife including large and small mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects, plants some of which are rare and threatened with extinction. There are also several community based wildlife sanctuaries established by the Maasai on their communal land. However, the Maasai receive little or direct benefits from wildlife tourism yet they are the ones who bear the cost of wildlife conservation including damage to crops, damage to livestock through spread of diseases and competition for pasture and water, damage to crops and property, injury and loss of human life to predators, and forgone cost of using land for traditional livelihood activities.

Despite tourism generating significant amounts of revenue, Amboseli is one of the poorest regions in Kenya. Many of the local Maasai people live below the poverty line, exhibit high levels of illiteracy, unemployment, and mortality as well as lack basic amenities including adequate health services, piped water, telephone and electricity services and schools. Furthermore, they face the challenges of having to cope with a rapidly increasing human and wildlife populations, hostile climatic conditions characterized by recurrent droughts, shrinking land sizes and dwindling natural resources, influx of immigrants, and declining livestock production (Ondicho, 2010). All these factors have increasingly driven the Maasai people into destitution and because of that they rank low in all indicators of social and economic development (Ondicho, 2005; Wako, 2007). The situation is accentuated by the fact that the Maasai people receive the least amount of the tourism benefits and very little of the money generated from tourism in their territory is invested in local



development yet they are the ones who suffer the opportunity costs of living with wildlife and restrictions imposed on natural resource exploitation by the ANP.

The prevailing poverty situation in Amboseli has prompted many responses from the local Maasai communities especially those living adjacent to Amboseli national park. One of such responses has been direct involvement and investment in tourism development. Since the late 1980s the Maasai people have increasingly turned to tourism development to diversify and supplement their sources of livelihood, alleviate extreme poverty and to spur sustainable economic development in their homelands. To tap tourism's potential, they have established their own small scale community based tourism enterprises revolving around nature and cultural tourism. The involvement of local communities in tourism development in Kenya is increasingly supported and encouraged by the government and conservation oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as a means of reconciling the otherwise intractable conflicts between conservation and development.

Cultural bomas are an indigenously homegrown Maasai tourism initiative. Cultural bomas are set up by Maasai entrepreneurs as tourist attractions and commercial enterprises (Charnley 2005; Ritsma & Ongaro 2000). Such villages give tourists the chance to meet the Maasai on their own terms and to learn more about their exotic culture, to photograph them in their traditional costumes and perhaps, purchase some of their carefully designed handicrafts (Ondicho, 2010 & 2012b). The entrepreneurs not only offer cultural entertainment in the form traditional song and dance but also willingly display themselves to be photographed and observed as an additional tourist attraction to the wildlife as well as sell their cultural artifacts to tourists. Interestingly, cultural bomas in Amboseli had been in existence for fewer twenty years, suggesting that the Maasai have only recently moved into direct ownership and entrepreneurship of tourism ventures. This form of tourism presents great potential for the local Maasai people to earn direct tourism income. It is therefore important to evaluate how this form of tourism contributes to poverty alleviation in the Amboseli region.

As far as the study methodology is concerned, it was considered important to canvass the views of a wide range of individuals and groups within the community, and to provide them with an opportunity to share their perspectives on tourism's contribution to poverty alleviation. A mixed

methods research design was adopted. The design used in this study was descriptive. The strategy incorporates a focus on generating data using qualitative methods with a supporting quantitative data collection element. Qualitative techniques included in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews. Participant observation was also undertaken to generate additional information and confirm qualitative findings. In this study, every effort was made to obtain data from as many local people in the research area to obtain a clear picture of how tourism had contributed to poverty alleviation.

The data used in this paper were collected from four main sources. The first set of data was collected through 8 focus group discussions (FGDS) with Maasai men and women in separate groups, aged between 20 years and 40 years from two group ranches that surround ANP. This was the age-group category that was involved in tourism. Four focus groups, two with men and two with women were conducted in each of the two group ranches. The two gender categories were adopted because the Maasai do not adhere to the same social constructions. The gender breakdown by which the focus groups were designed thus abides by Maasai social strata (divisions of power and authority) as well as local communication clusters. FGD participants were selected through purposive sampling and each group comprised 8-12 members. They were asked open ended questions using a semi-structured focus group guide with an emphasis on their involvement with the tourism industry at the local level. Discussions focused on the motivations for their involvement in tourism, the tourism activities that they were undertaking, and the benefits they accrued from the industry and how these benefited contributed to poverty reduction both at the household and community levels. Each FGD lasted for about two hours. The discussions were mainly conducted in Kiswahili and tape recorded.

The second set of data was collected through direct observations and informal discussions with 60 people (30 men and 30 women) directly and indirectly involved in tourism. They provide very useful supplementary information on Maasai participation in community based nature and cultural tourism and its economic impact and role in poverty alleviation. The information was later linked to the first set of data. The third set of data was collected from Key Informant interviews that included chiefs, head teachers, women leaders and various tourism stakeholders. KII participants were selected on the basis that they had expert knowledge on tourism in the study area and its

contribution to poverty alleviation. These interviews were meant to assess the perceptions of these officials towards tourism, local involvement, political relations and impacts of tourism in the sub-county. The fourth set of data were collected from different secondary sources including government policy documents, academic journals, published and unpublished reports, and other documents with literature on the economic impacts of tourism particularly in Loitokitok sub-county.

## **1.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study established that tourism was contributing to poverty reduction in Amboseli through the different socio-economic benefits that it generated for the local people. The benefits identified by the respondents in this study include the following:

### **1.3.1 Income and employment opportunities based on existing skills**

This study has revealed that tourism had generated a host of self-employment opportunities for poor people in Amboseli. It was not possible to obtain statistical information on the number of local people working in tourism partly because most entrepreneurs oscillated between tourism and livestock herding, and that their tourism related businesses were not formally registered. The study however established that a small but increasing number of villagers were self-employed in the informal tourism sector. Self-employment mainly in manufacture and sale of curios, washing tourist vehicles, tour guiding within the community, currency laundering and petty trade. In most tourism studies employment creation is often cited as one the sector's contributions to the economy of the destination area (cf. Scheyvens, 2007; Godwin & Edmund, 2007). The advantage of tackling poverty through home grown tourism initiatives such as the cultural bomas is that they present employment opportunities to poor people without any formal education which could ordinarily deny them employment in the formal sectors of the industry. Self-employment in cultural bomas tourism provided very useful opportunities through which poor people and households earned direct tourism income. The income earned from self-employment in tourism enabled the poor to sustain themselves and their families, to diversify and supplement their sources of livelihood, to improve their living conditions and contribute to local development. Many poor people in this study opined that that they were now able to spend more money on necessities, food, medicine, education of their children and clothing than they did before taking up self-employment in tourism.

The established that poor people were increasingly starting individually or family owned micro, small and medium sized income generating enterprises in tourism. These enterprises provided opportunities for poor people to sell their goods and services directly to tourists. Thus, tourism not only created a ready market for locally manufactured handicrafts and artifacts and but also boosted their production. Direct sales of goods and services to tourists, was one way of getting visitors to spend directly into the hands of the poor. through which poor people earned direct tourism income. minimized leakages and exploitation by middlemen. The advantage of this is that it enables poor people to develop business skills and to garner tourism benefits from their comfort of their homes for a longer period. The impact of the income from locally owned business enterprises was largely felt within the household level where it played a valuable role in enhancing the purchasing power of poor families by increasing expenditures on food and other necessities leading to improved living conditions.

The most important aspect of tourism's integration With Amboseli's economy is that it also extended business opportunities to poor who were not directly involved in tourism. People in non-tourism villages earned indirect tourism income by selling foodstuffs, firewood and charcoal, and handicrafts, and providing services such fetching water and offering transport services on bicycles and motorbikes to the people who were directly engaged in tourism as they had not time to tend livestock and grow their own food or do some of these things for themselves. Many individuals and households in Amboseli generally earned part or all their cash income directly or indirectly tourism from related and induced activities. The study revealed that this income was making very useful contributions in supplementing and diversifying the sources of livelihood at the household and community levels. Though the income earned from tourism was not particularly huge, its impact was felt by most members in the community. The income earned from tourism and spent within the community was thus creating multiplier effect in Amboseli. Generally, tourism provided vital extra income which enabled households to spend more on food and other necessities, livestock, purchases, school fees and medical care, thus improving the living conditions for poor families.

### **1.3.2 Greater opportunities for women**

Tourism has also generated new and greater employment and income earning opportunities for Maasai youngsters and women. While women were previously dependent on their husbands for

necessities and their role was limited to the domestic sphere, with their involvement with tourism they now play very important roles both in the public and private domains. Many women stated that they preferred to enjoy working in tourism because it offered flexible hours of work; enabled them to combine work with domestic chores, and required not formal education which ordinarily could make it hard for them to find employment in the formal tourism sector. Thus, women were running their own curio businesses without having to leave their homes. This was a good thing for women as they managed the income earned from their tourism businesses according to their wishes and without having to consult their husbands as custom dictates. This income had enabled women to take up wider public and family roles thereby increasing their capacities and reducing their vulnerabilities. Tourism had not only made it possible for women to develop entrepreneurial skills but also to achieve economic independence through their participation in the commercial economy. Female informants said that their self-esteem has increased with *boma* tourism. Previous studies have shown that direct participation in tourism supports women's empowerment and gradually increases their economic independence and autonomy (Ondicho, 2010; Scheyvens, 2007).

### **1.3.3 Provision of infrastructure and social services**

The study reveals that the people in Amboseli had also benefited from tourism through development of infrastructure financed by voluntary charitable donations from tourists. The donations had been invested in various community projects including schools, churches, and veterinary clinics, boreholes, and support for health care programmes on HIV and AIDs, and health care generally which benefited all residents in the area. The people also benefited indirectly from infrastructural developments within the community aimed at stimulating tourism. These donations and infrastructural developments were helping to alleviate poverty, albeit in a small measure, as they enabled residents to have access to clean drinking water, road network, electricity supply, and telecommunications. Roads and transport services had improved access to access services outside the community including external markets for locally produced goods, health care and education facilities to mention but a few. Although some of these infrastructures were set up exclusively for tourists, some of them such telephone and transport services were shared with the local people hence they were of conspicuous benefit to the community. In addition, these developed helped create form employment opportunities some of which were made available to the poor people in the area.

The provision of social services was another way in which the Maasai had drawn benefits from tourism. Some interviewees stated that the presence of tourists had contributed to the improvement of various social services that the locals also enjoyed. Using revenues from tourism the villagers have invested in educational facilities and some tourists and local NGOs now provide bursaries for children who otherwise would not be able to afford schooling. These services include the sponsoring of local students to high school, college and university for further education. Other services included provision of financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation and general development of schools, water boreholes, health and veterinary services. For instance, three boreholes within the study area were donated by tourists. These boreholes have not only reduced competition between livestock and wildlife for water but also reduced the community's vulnerability to drought-related disasters. The general levels of hygiene especially in the cultural *bomas* have improved because of tourism. In some cases, tourists had donated medicine for the treatment of common ailments such as malaria thus contributing to better health status for the local people, which is one of the key indicators of poverty (cf. Ondicho, 2010).

#### **1.3.4 Improving Livelihoods**

Tourism provides a diversification of livelihoods for households whose other sources of income are unreliable. Whilst earnings from the sale of curios are unpredictable, tourism fits well with the local people's established livelihood strategies. These advantages are particularly important for women and poor families, allowing them to spend more money on food, school fees, and health than they are otherwise normally able to afford. Tourism has provided a supplement and support to the pastoral economy, thus helping to support local livelihoods and to stem out-migration and nomadism. Many people are benefiting from livelihood impacts, in the form of increased food security, access to transport, improved medical care and access to education. The flexibility of the source of income (the activity is done at home, in their own time and with low inputs) was particularly attractive to participants. These non-cash livelihood impacts are not only important to communities but they are spread more widely within the community than direct financial impacts (cf. Scheyvens, 2007; Godwin & Edmund, 2007).

#### **1.3.4 Problems of Cultural Tourism in Poverty Alleviation**

The study established that while cultural bomas tourism in Amboseli has experienced substantial growth and generates many benefits for the local people, this form of tourism is also facing teething problems which threaten to derail tourism's contribution to poverty alleviation. Some the problems that have arisen in the process of developing cultural bomas tourism are due to inexperience and lack of proper planning. Lack of proper planning has resulted in mushrooming in an uncontrolled manner of cultural bomas as hitherto business partners disagree and initiate new projects. The oversupply of cultural *bomas* within a small geographical area (there six such bomas in the study area located radius of three kilometers from each) other offering the same products had generated increased competition to attract tourists and win business. Because of competition, more effort and resources are invested in marketing and publicizing boma tourism with some entrepreneurs engaging in unconventional business practices such as price-gouging which had negative impact on profitability and o the smooth running of cultural bomas tourism activities.

The difficulties of setting up a well-managed and successful tourism business also have also created various hurdles for cultural boma operations. Ondicho (2010) found that many cultural bomas were run by people who had political connections with group ranch officials and that these are people who were responsible for the the construction of new cultural bomas. Without any form of training and business management skills, these people were finding management of cultural bomas tourism an uphill task. The hard realities of serving tourists, satisfying the competing and divergent interests of the various stakeholders, the marketing and maintenance of the cultural bomas has often proved too demanding and some ventures have since become dormant. In retrospect, one or two cultural bomas should have been established and operated by all the group ranche members as cooperative.

Another problem which had emerged was the exploitation of the villagers by tour drivers and guides. The tour drivers/guides often demand to be paid delivering tourists to a specific cultural boma. If a boma declines to present all the entry fees to the driver, then he simply redirects business to a *boma* that will consent to his conditions. Competition has resulted in a situation in which each *boma* has agreed to take a lesser percentage of the entry fee from the drivers in the hope that members will benefit from the sale of curios to tourists. Thus, bribing and keeping the safari drivers/guides happy is vital for the sustained delivery of tourists to a boma. Inter and intra *boma* business competition has pushed commission rates up as drivers/guides search for more

cooperative *bomas* chairmen to provide them with the services they need more cheaply. By taking their clients to the highest bidder the drivers are taking advantage of the competitive edge between the existing *bomas* to rip off the Maasai.

*I wondered why villagers were pushing so hard to sell curios when they were supposedly making money from cultural tours. Then I found out that tour drivers were charging \$20 each for the tour and passing on as little as 1% to the villagers. The tours are largely popular and mean drivers are raking in more than 10 million a year at the expense of the Maasai (McGaret, 2007:1).*

Since villagers do not receive any share of the entry fees they are excessively dependent on income from handicraft sales to supplement their incomes and livelihoods (Ritsma and Ongaro, 2000). Whilst Maasai handicrafts are popular with tourists, the reality is that only a small number of tourists buy them. This is partly because the souvenirs sold in the cultural *bomas* are also available in game lodges/hotels and curio shops along tourist routes and in towns. This not only means that many tourists could have bought curios prior to visiting the cultural *bomas* but also, as already stated, that the Maasai have limited prospects to compete price wise with non-local dealers in the supply of their stuff to the lodges. As one female curio dealer lamented, “We are not satisfied with tourists. They don’t buy anything ... when the *mzungus* come they only want to see our culture and buy curios back at the lodge” (Nkayso, personal communication, 2005). Different respondents had similar opinions about the curio business as the quotes below suggest

The study also established that equitable distribution of tourism benefits has proven to be a challenging and painstaking problem, which affected Maasai involvement in *boma* tourism negatively. This is partly because those people directly involved in tourism have neither agreed on a transparent method of benefit sharing nor set up a proper broad based management structure to guide participation in cultural tourism development. The lack of a proper organizational structure and business orientation has led to a situation where a few people have taken advantage of the other *boma* members to gain more from tourism. For example, within the community the elites or rather those ‘in the know’ such as foreign language speakers were exploiting those who were less educated. “Many people had started to feel exploited by the chairman who single handedly controlled all the income” (Ole Mwangi, personal communication, 2005). “Trouble started due to the greed of the chairman who misappropriated group money for personal gain” (Eunice, personal



communication, 2005). “Many people were dissatisfied with the way our *boma* is run; there was lack of transparency and accountability” (Jedidah, personal communication, 2005).

The cultural *boma* committee members especially the chairmen who received payments on behalf of other residents were not transparent and accountable. Often, they do not keep any written records and no auditing is done on how the money collected is spent. Thus, the money generated is usually appropriated by the *boma* chairman and a few committee members. So, unless a resident sells a souvenir directly to a tourist, the chances are that they will not receive any money from the entrance fees, donation or any money from the *boma*. As one local civic leader stated, “I do not think tourism in the cultural *bomas* is benefiting the ordinary members at all ... cultural *bomas* as constituted now have only served to provide an opening for local elites and non Maasai people to exploit the Maasai”. Consequently, conflicts have often arisen over the inequitable sharing of the monies received from *boma* tourism especially donations and entry fees. Whilst tourism has expanded local incomes it has also increased social stratification and divisions within the wider community.

#### **1.4 CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of the study was to determine tourism’s contribution to poverty alleviation in Amboseli. The study has shown that even though now to benefits that accrue to the local people are meager, tourism holds great potential to make significant contributions to poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The study affirms that pro-poor tourism can contribute to poverty reduction through the generation of direct and indirect economic and non-economic benefits for local communities particularly the Maasai who live in an environment that offers nothing else in terms of economic opportunity. The direct benefits that have been discussed in the study include employment creation, income generation and provision of social services. The second benefit could be through the operation of community owned and operated SMES specializing in cultural performances, people presenting themselves and their culture as objects of the tourist gaze, and through selling curios and handicrafts/souvenirs. Indirect benefits would arise from the multiplier effects of tourism, whereby villagers would supply foodstuffs and other basic livelihood items and services to tourism businesses operating within the community. These dynamic benefits would greatly contribute to improved living conditions, sustainable livelihoods and sustainable rural development. However, the potential of cultural *bomas* tourism in Amboseli to contribute in any

meaningful way to poverty alleviation has been significantly reduced by barriers including exclusion of the poor people from the decision-making processes, from equitable participation benefit sharing and lack of transparency and accountability in money matters. In conclusion, experiences from elsewhere suggest that local benefits from tourism need to exceed the costs for the pro-potential of tourism to be realized and poverty defeated through direct benefits from tourism.

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