

Trouble in Paradise Tourism and Minorities: A Kenya Case Study

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Tourism is promoted worldwide as a key to development. It often constitutes one of the main foreign exchange earners in developing economies, and is routinely perceived as an important provider of employment and business opportunities for indigenous communities. In Kenya, for example, indirect and direct revenues from wildlife-related tourism alone have been estimated at 10 per cent of GDP. Its world-famous parks and coastline are among the top holiday destinations worldwide. Tourism creates jobs, and provides markets for suppliers of goods and services, most of which are domestic. It provides revenue to the state in the form of tax and visa fees, as well as other forms of income from land rent, rates and concession payments.

Economic measurements alone would confirm that tourism is beneficial; but economic activity and growth do not indicate development. In developing countries, goals include aspirations to social welfare, social justice and equitable use of natural resources, as well as a commitment, enshrined in international treaties, to protecting the human rights of all those affected by the development process.

Yet the tourist industry all too often leads to land loss, destruction of traditional livelihoods, impoverishment of indigenous communities and violations of human rights. Although 'promoting' local culture has become a standard aspect of tourism in developing countries – through local dances, artifacts and general 'showcasing' – the impact on traditional culture is in reality often detrimental.

But tourism is not without accountability. Trends in international opinion have influenced the tourist trade to be increasingly sensitive to the environment, which has encouraged 'high end' tourism to demand certain standards. Worldwide, the ecotourism concept aims at a healthy and mutually beneficial relationship between the tourist and the environment. More recently, this is supposed to include a beneficial and harmonious relationship between the tourist and the local community. But emphasis at present is more on the community as an *extension* of the environment – meaning how the local community functions within and contributes to the local environment – than as an informed concern for the rights of the indigenous communities themselves.

Attempts have been made to bridge the gap through programmes of 'community participation' as

part of an ethical ecotourism movement. But documentation widely available showing the impact of tourism on minority groups demonstrates the industry has a long way to go. Tokenism is rife. Participation is desultory. In this chapter we will explore these issues through the lens of the Kenyan experience. But in fact, much of what is written here is equally relevant to minorities affected by tourism around the world.

The Kenyan coast

Take *The Voyager*, a ship which has everything necessary for a luxury holiday on the Kenyan coast – restaurants, discos, massage parlours and hairdressers, dancers, gift shops and every imaginable entertainment under the sun – but it's not at sea. It's in the middle of Mombasa, surrounded by shacks and traffic, where tour buses battle for space with men pushing hand-carts on the pot-holed roads. *The Voyager*, a themed hotel offering the all-inclusive tourist package *par excellence*, is seen by indigenous coastal communities as a typical example of Kenya's inaccessible tourist industry.

'Tourists don't even step outside the hotel,' laments Isembwa, who sells paintings and curios in a small local market. Isembwa is a member of one of Kenya's coastal minorities, the Giriama, one of the largest of the nine ethnic groups that make up the Mikikenda, who occupy the Kenyan coastal strip. The Giriama, who have their own Bantu language dialect and distinctive cultural practices, are primarily subsistence farmers and fishermen.

'We live in different worlds.'

Traders like Isembwa say small businesses are being starved by the trend in package holidays, where earnings are monopolized by hotels. Hotel representatives counter that a fair quota of local workers from the area are employed inside the hotels, creating jobs in catering and service industries – but coastal communities point out these are typically poorly paid, low-grade jobs, without access to decision-making positions.

'Tourism itself is not bad, but it needs to be managed in a different way. If you are part of it, you support it; but when it is like an enemy, you start to fight it,' says Isembwa.

The traditional lifestyle of minority communities on the coast has been changed significantly by the growth of tourism and the legacy of colonial land policies. Isembwa's father used to be a fisherman, and the family owned a small market garden with

coconut, mango and lemon trees. Much of the family land had already been lost when colonial agreements with chiefs turned many local communities into squatters on their own land. Individual notions of ownership were introduced, which discriminated against indigenous communities whose social and economic systems were communally based. The notion of private, individual ownership was imported into Kenyan legislation at independence, making later claims to ancestral land legally vague and unenforceable. Tourism has fed off this exploitation: community land was vulnerable to being seized by officials and wealthy individuals and sold on to developers. Large swathes of beach and coastal land became privatized.

As hotels and holiday sites multiplied on the coastline, access to traditional fishing grounds became restricted. Isembwa said he was encouraged by his father to leave school and reap the benefits of tourism through petty trade and small business. It was good at first, he said, when there was plenty of access to foreign visitors.

But then trade around the hotels and on the beach became more strictly regulated, to control harassment of tourists. Tourists are now actively dissuaded from going out of the hotels and encouraged to buy either from the hotels, or from selected merchants confined to areas of hotel-owned beach. This has increased the revenue of hotels and boosted coastal tourism, but impoverished indigenous communities who are already relatively disadvantaged compared with other Kenyan groups, says Ole Taiko Lemayian, executive director of Kenya Community-Based Tourism (KECOBAT) network, which promotes community participation in the tourist industry. Statistics that show that the poorest, most underdeveloped communities are frequently in areas where tourist revenue is highest – like the coastal towns of Kilifi, Kwale and Malindi. In Kenya, official statistics demonstrate that poverty has increased in recent years, with some 70 per cent of the population below the poverty line, while tourist earnings have expanded by 14.9 per cent to 56.2 billion Kenyan shillings (KS) in 2006, which accounts for more than 10 per cent of Kenya's GDP.

Dispossessed

Uncontrolled development of the coast has dispossessed indigenous communities of much of their ancestral land.

Hamisi Omari, from the Digo community in Kwale, lost his ancestral land in what has become a prime tourist spot on the coastal strip north of Mombasa. His family cultivated sesame seed and cotton after Digo land was divided up between European settlers in 1914. The community was allowed to remain as squatters, continuing to plant and fish along the coast. The Digo are part of the greater Mikikenda Bantu group, and are a distinct linguistic and ethnic group on the Kenyan–Tanzania coastline, estimated at about 300,000 people. They suffered the same fate as the Giriama under the colonial government and lost ancestral land when land rights became based on individual ownership. As squatters, the Digo remained on their ancestral land, but without any legal entitlement or ownership.

Then a survey in the area carried out by the independent government in 1970s allocated 960 acres to build the Diani Beach Complex, offering 600 Kenyan shillings (now about US \$9) per acre as compensation to those residing on the land. Many refused, including Hamisi, but people were violently evicted by armed police. Hamisi was arrested and jailed for trespass.

In a ruling by Kwale District Magistrate's Court on 11 September 1978 Hamasi and others were released after they testified it was their ancestral land. They said they had planted lemon and mango trees, and farmed and lived on the land for generations without being challenged. The court dismissed the case on the grounds there was not sufficient evidence that the land belonged to someone else.

But Hamisi was never able to return to his home. His case demonstrates how difficult it is for non-dominant minorities – lacking education, resources and political influence – to seek justice through official and legal channels.

Holiday apartments, hotels and a shopping complex now stand where his lemon trees used to grow. Hamisi has diligently pursued his case over two decades through letters and appeals to police and government officials, copies of which were given to MRG. On 12 September 2007 he received a letter from the District Commissioner, Kwale, which said: 'your ancestral claim over this land is in order [but] it is your burden to legally prove legitimacy of the claim [and] demonstrate your ancestral rights over that specific land'. Since the eviction, Hamasi's land has been sold on, and now belongs to the current

owner through 'outright purchase through a valid process', said the letter.

He has been told by officials and lawyers there are no records in Kenya of the original agreement with the colonial government. 'Historical injustices' like this warrant a special section in the country's Draft Land policy, which calls for attention to 'land grievances which stretch back to colonial land policies and laws that resulted in mass disinheritance of communities of their land'.

Land and loss

In the Kenya Draft National Lands Policy, the coast is described as 'potentially explosive' in its widespread land exploitation. 'The abuse of [the] Land Titles Act has had a great negative impact on coastal land leading to the area having the largest single concentration of landless indigenous people.'

Kenya has not had a clear land policy since independence, and land is administered haphazardly under a mix of British, Indian and customary law, rural and urban. Colonial laws and legacies still shape the policies, laws and institutions charged with the management of public land in Kenya; and, in principle, the president enjoys similar powers over land to those held by the colonial governor when the country was a colony. Through the Government Lands Act, the president may make grants of public land to individuals and corporate entities – powers that have been taken advantage of by successive governments, resulting in a highly exploitative and undemocratic use of land.

There has been a pressing need for reform and, in 2007, the government published the Draft National Land Policy, aimed at overhauling the existing piecemeal structure and identifying key areas for reform. The document was the outcome of a long consultation, which has been linked to a constitutional review process, and it will need parliamentary approval, and legislative and possibly constitutional changes, if it is to be implemented. These might be hard to attain if the political elite perceive the policy's measures to go against their own vested interests. However, there are strong reasons why Kenya's minorities should be pressing for its implementation: in particular, because it explicitly recognizes the rights of minorities regarding communal, farm and individual land ownership. Moreover, it also acknowledges the long-standing difficulties created by tourism and

conservation – both on the coast and in the displacement and impoverishment of pastoralist communities through the creation of national reserves. For many minorities, the establishment of the latter has had a severe effect on their culture and economic existence.

National reserves: 'conservation refugees'

Pastoralist communities in Kenya like the Borana, Masai and Somalis have been among those most affected by the creation of national parks. National parks have been carved out of areas typically occupied by pastoralists, who graze free-range livestock on swathes of dry land important for both conservation and tourism. Fenced-off areas and animal corridors have put pressure on indigenous communities by reducing access to water and the size of areas available for grazing and firewood collection. Domestic animals found in game parks are impounded and fines imposed. Problems of 'illegal grazing' are especially acute during periods of stress and drought, when livestock are more likely to be taken into the park in desperation.

The Report of the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights said of the situation in Kenya in 2006 that:

'Most of the human rights violations experienced by pastoralists and hunter-gatherers are related to their access to and control over land and natural resources.... Historical injustices derived from colonial times, linked to conflicting laws and lack of clear policies, mismanagement and land-grabbing, have led to the present crisis of the country's land tenure system.'

The colonial authorities and European settlers seized agriculturally rich lands, displacing the original owners to 'native reserves' or leaving them as squatters on their own land, i.e. without ownership rights. Most of the worst land-related abuses after independence took place in former native reserves and Trust Land, which were administered by the county councils on behalf of communities.

The growth of the tourist industry has made this worse, the Special Rapporteur's report says, as the 'establishment of natural areas has created additional problems for these communities ... local indigenous communities do not participate in the management of the parks and reserves and do not benefit from the revenue'.



Left: Joshua Isembwa, a member of the Giriama, and a tourist in his shop. Photo by Noor Khamis

Some minorities, like the Masai, have as a consequence been evicted from large areas of ancestral land. Their grazing areas were split by the Kenya–Tanzania border, and an estimated one-third of their territory was lost through coercive treaties – for which they received no compensation. In Masai Mara, private tourist resorts and lodges have resulted in territory being fenced off, with loss of critical water sources and grazing areas.

Without access to these areas, periods of hardship mean that indigenous communities are more likely to resort to small-scale killing of game, like antelope. ‘And why not, when an antelope can feed your family for three days?’ said a local warden from one of the conservancies.

Consequently, game parks, designed to operate as

a protective exclusion zone, have effectively *provoked* survival poaching among minorities who have been deprived of their traditional livelihoods. Small-scale killing of game for survival and traditional purposes is very different from organized poaching for profit, and is one of the critical considerations in motivating indigenous communities to establish sustainable conservation.

The counter-productive nature of exclusion of indigenous communities is underlined by Professor Michael Cernea in his paper ‘National parks and poverty risks: is population resettlement the solution?’ He says the creation of national parks has inflicted systems of impoverishment on minority communities, and forced many to adapt or abandon their traditional livelihoods and economic systems,

creating ‘conservation refugees’. Cernea points out that the expansion of national parks and protected habitats has often been accompanied by a *decline* in wildlife as a result of human exclusion: because displacement from national parks can alienate indigenous communities from conservation objectives, and because eviction of resident minority communities has the effect of removing ‘the customary protector’.

Indigenous peoples often perceive that, when it comes to tourism, wildlife is valued more than human life. In Kenya, this is literally the case. Wildlife that attracts tourists also injures and kills local inhabitants and their livestock. Indigenous communities take up the costs but don’t get the benefits. People who try to adapt their restricted

pastoralist lifestyle to small-scale farming find they have to spend time and money guarding their crops from wild animals. The vast majority of people living on the boundaries of a national park or in a conservancy interviewed by MRG complained they faced delay or negligence when they attempted to get attention from the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) after animals had invaded homes and gardens, or had attacked members of the community.

‘If an animal gets killed, helicopters and vehicles appear immediately. If a person gets injured or killed, it takes days to get a response,’ confirmed one park warden.

If gaining adequate compensation for the loss of a life is hard in Kenya, it is even more difficult to seek restitution for a people’s loss of their traditional land. However, the Endorois community, evicted from their ancestral land round Lake Bogoria in the Rift Valley is attempting to do just that. Under colonial legislation, the Endorois land was asserted to be ‘vacant’ or ‘ownerless’. ‘Native areas’ with ethnic boundaries were held as a title by the Native Lands Trust Board in London. Kenya imported this notion of property law. At independence, it substituted county councils for the Native Lands Trust Board, making Baringo County Council trustees of the Endorois land. The county council was able to use constitutional powers to deprive the indigenous community of their land for the purposes of establishing a national park.

As a result, the Endorois – a distinct pastoralist minority – have been evicted and impoverished, cut off from access to vital grazing lands. Lack of access to the lake has serious cultural consequences for the community, who link many of their ancestral beliefs and social rituals to the lake. They face further displacement by mineral mining. The Endorois first sought legal redress under domestic law. However, the High Court of Kenya in Nakuru ruled in 2002 that all the necessary provisions of the law had been adhered to when the land was set aside as a game reserve. Attempts to appeal met with various obstacles, so the community has taken its case to the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights in the Gambia. Among other

things, the Endorois are arguing that indigenous peoples have a right to property in their ancestral lands – including collective ownership of such lands – and the mass eviction of a people, without adequate consultation or compensation, is a violation of the Charter.

The Commission's ruling will be important – partly because the Endorois' experience has been replicated across the continent. For example, in Uganda in 2007, the plight of the pastoralist Basongora people came to public attention. Historically, their land was in the area of the Queen Elizabeth National Park, but they were pushed out after the reserve was created. Attempts to re-occupy it this year were initially met with force by the wildlife authorities. The government said that domesticated animals were bringing disease to the wild animals and that tourists wanted to see wildlife, not cows, in the national park. Similar cases have been reported in Botswana, Ethiopia and Namibia.

Community-based tourism

Under international human rights law, the right of participation is extremely important (see pp. 41–3) in establishing the legitimacy of a state's actions, with regard to its treatment of minorities. However, outside the legal realm, the idea of community participation is also gaining ground as a component of ecotourism. Trends in international opinion have influenced the tourist trade, making it increasingly sensitive to the environment, and this concept is increasingly being stretched to embrace the idea of community involvement. For example, Skai International – the largest association for travel and tourism professionals – makes an annual award for ecotourism, based on criteria which indicate the 'conservation of nature and cultural heritage, community involvement, educational features, business viability and innovation'. Prestigious international awards like this have forced tour operators to address these issues; it promotes business, enabling tour operators to charge a premium for these specialist services.

However, the benefits are not simply on the side of the tour operator. Involving indigenous groups in the management and benefits of a conservation and tourist strategy is likely to improve its sustainability, activists argue. Noah Sitati, a conservation expert on the Mara ecosystem, believes that community-based tourism plays a positive role in development if

managed effectively and sensitively, and directly contributes to reducing people–animal conflict.

'The best way we can stop conflict is by encouraging these areas to become ecotourism destinations, where the community gets direct benefits.' Ecotourism returns 'could be very high if money is used properly', says Sitati. It needs to go hand in hand with development to motivate those living in and around the conservation areas. The Masai were actually 'natural conservers' of their own environment, points out Sitati. Traditionally they co-habited successfully with wildlife, and hunting was limited, confined to some specific clans or rituals.

What is effective participation?

The question is, what is effective community participation? And who is the community? 'We have to ask, who is benefiting? What does "community" mean? Who says this is "good practice"?' says Taiko Lemayian of KECOBAT regarding ecotourism schemes to improve participation.

The intrinsic assumption of community-based participation is that decisions have been made freely and fairly regarding consent over use and management of land and resources, and of revenues and benefits. However, involving 'the community' is not always what it seems; decision-making is often left to a handful of elders, and women and the youth may be traditionally excluded from active participation. The difficulties with establishing a fair and equitable community participation model are highlighted in the management of one of the world's most famous safari parks – Masai Mara.

Masai Mara: poor returns

Some 350 km north-west of Mombasa, the road to the Masai Mara runs through wilderness of magnetic beauty. Rutted and almost impassable, the road is one of the worst in Kenya. Yet this is the route to one of the most productive areas of tourist revenue, and home to one of the most romanticized and marketed cultures on the continent.

The image of the willowy frame of the Masai man wrapped in a red *shuka* cloak and silhouetted with his cattle against the orange sunset, is sold from one end of the country to the other. Difficult sometimes to separate fact from fantasy: the Masai have capitalized on marketing their tradition, but have enjoyed very few modern benefits in return. Although consisting of only about 2 per cent of the

total population, the Masai are probably the best-known ethnic group outside Kenya and have fiercely held on to much of their traditional culture. The absence of basic development is 'their greatest asset and their greatest curse', says Tiamaren Ole Riamit, a local human rights activist, who lives in the unattractive bustle and grime of the Masai town of Narok, seat of the district administration and local services. The nearest town to the national park, it has the highest rate of illiteracy in the area.

The Mara ecosystem is famous for its wildebeest and lions and there are over 60 lodges and camps within the reserve, and seven lodges inside the game park itself. Most of the tourist revenue is generated from inside the park, but there are also eight community-held, county council-funded, group ranches surrounding the park. Community-held ranches were established early 1990s when the government, with the support of the World Bank, attempted to address the rampant corruption and exploitation by county councils. Of the revenue from the park, 19 per cent goes back to the community through the county council, divided equally between the eight group ranches; committees in the group ranches decide what to do with the community revenue.

But the high tourist revenue plainly fails to bring development to the area – roads, schools and clinics are rudimentary; illiteracy is high; skills and market opportunities are few. What happens to the 19 per cent? Local corruption and exploitation are to blame, complained 9 out of 10 Masai interviewed in the area. Community benefits from tourism are seized by 'first among equals'. Poor management of resources means lack of accountability in a country notorious for corruption at all levels, including the county councils. 'The 19 per cent revenue adds up to a decent amount of money but it doesn't trickle down to the common person,' says Michael Koikai, senior warden in the Masai Mara reserve.

Without proper management and protection, earning money from tourists is more gamble than enterprise. In the Mara, 'cultural *bomas*' (show homesteads) have been established for tourists to visit, where the Masai showcase their culture and sell traditional artifacts. These traditional Masai compounds, seen from the tour bus window along the road to the entrance of the game park, are literally open house. Women and children sit around on dusty animal hides next to mud huts,

cooking on an open fire, surrounded by gourds and goats. Tourists can stop the bus and walk right into a Masai bedroom for just a few dollars. In the situation of impoverished and dispossessed minorities, this raises questions about choice, informed consent and basic human rights. One Kenyan tour guide explained how, when on a training course, his group of 20 trainee guides were taken into a Masai woman's bedroom early in the morning when two small children were still sleeping on the floor, and she dutifully showed them where she and her husband slept. 'It was an eye opener to me,' he told MRG. 'I felt like an intruder. What choice did that mother have?'

Cultural *bomas* bring direct cash benefits, but not always to the people who have to keep their door open. Tour drivers are known to charge up to \$30 per tourist, with only a nominal amount – about \$2 per tourist – paid to a select group of elders. Recent attempts to control exploitation by the tour drivers include making tourists pay the visiting fees through hotels and lodges, which are then paid directly to the *bomas*. But guides are in a unique position as 'middle men' to work with corrupt elders and opportunistic members of the community. Prostitution services, including young girls and boys from the *bomas*, are run out of the curio shops in the lodges, say human rights activists based in Nairobi.

'Tourism has impacted both negatively and positively on our culture. There are benefits, but the way the young embrace tourism is not good – they leave school and hang around to dance for the tourists. They take alcohol, lose respect for their parents, and issues of HIV come in because tourists romanticize our culture and actually seek sexual favours,' says local activist Tiamaren Ole Riamit. Employment opportunities counts as a positive, but the majority of Masai interviewed believed there should be more training opportunities and more commitment to promoting indigenous people to managerial positions. Rangers, clerical workers, wardens and tour guides are locally recruited, and about 20–30 per cent of workers in the lodges inside the park are Masai.

Asking the right questions

Johnson Ngila, a local guide from Lewa Downs conservancy in Northern Kenya, says donors and well-wishers who support community-based

Right: Ali Omar with documents claiming ownership of the developed piece of land in the background. He is the eldest brother of Hamisi Omari (see p. 30). Photo by Noor Khamis

tourist enterprises should be diligent in looking behind the marketing of 'community' as a fundraising strategy. 'Community participation' needs careful scrutiny, as it has become required terminology for eco-marketing and proposal writing. 'Community' becomes meaningless in huge swathes of territory inhabited by different ethnic groups and clans.

Ben Ole Koissaba, of the Indigenous Concerns Resource Centre, agrees. He says much depends on 'who is talking to who'. Policies can be put to uneducated and artless decision-makers who do not understand the impact on the community or the legal implications. 'Basically, these people do not discuss as equal parties and whoever has the idea has the upper hand, and presents himself as a saviour to a poor community. People accept unknowingly terms and conditions,' says Koissaba.

The process is replicated within the community itself – with elders effectively coercing members of the community who lack the social status to refuse. Ester Letorongos, from the Ngwesi clan of the Masai, said she was told to move from her family home to a cultural *boma* by elders who had made an agreement with a nearby lodge. She said she had no choice but to move.

'A senior elder came and told us to move here. He said we were coming for a job and me and my husband would be paid.... My duties are to show tourists how we build houses, how we live, clean gourds, and make beads.' Her husband demonstrates hunting and honey-gathering techniques, and dances for tourist groups. Ester said the work from tourism provides critical income and she would not go back to her old life. 'We used to have to sell goats one by one to get food; now we are saving our goats and not selling them.'

But her standard of living remains well below the poverty line, and she struggles to educate, feed and adequately clothe her five children. She shrugs off questions about privacy, only saying it is better to get advance notice when tourists are coming.

The overwhelming majority of indigenous people living in tourist destinations told MRG they didn't feel they were benefiting directly. Real benefits – as

opposed to the general assumption of general benefits – were seen to be, specifically, new business opportunities, improved protection from wildlife and displacement, visible community development and participation in critical decision-making.

Better practice: awards and indicators

One way forward is to revise the way ratings are awarded to ecotourism operators. Tourists who buy into these packages should be able to clearly see that not only are environmental concerns being addressed, but local social concerns are also taken into account. These ratings have been successfully devised in some countries, like South Africa, which demands acceptable standards in tourist destinations of education, health, employment, infrastructure and services, as well as improving on poverty indicators and respecting relevant human rights treaties. Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) encourages responsible business practice by South African tourism establishments, including fair wages, good working conditions, ethical business practices, and respect for human rights and the environment.

Taiko Lemayian of KECOBAT believes local ratings could play an important part in keeping check on international ratings. Acclaimed eco-destinations should be measured against a system of agreed local ratings, he says, 'as a way of controlling eco-ratings as a marketing tool, and show any disconnect between international and local assessments'.

In the long run, says Ben Ole Koissaba, of the Indigenous Resource Centre: 'Community participation requires "thinking outside the paradigm"'. It requires effort on the part of owners and managers to increase local training. This is a pragmatic business decision as well as an ethical one – it is more cost effective and reduces hostility. For example, most lodges in Kenya habitually bring in food and necessities from established supply lines in the capital, Nairobi, as managers consider it easier to tap into established supply lines and credit facilities. This practice of 'importing' makes for a costly process by road and air, instead of encouraging locally grown produce, and establishing local systems of slaughter and meat inspection. Most lodges also rely on a transitory and more costly pool of skilled and educated 'outsiders' from the more developed central and western provinces, instead of investing in training, educating and promoting local personnel.



Welcoming tourism

The Shompole group ranch, situated in southern Kenya on the Kenya–Tanzania border, has taken many of these steps and received international awards for ecotourism achievements. In an area inhabited by the Loodokilani clan of the Masai, Shompole is considered a model of community participation. It is a group ranch communally owned, with members holding the title and the right to use the land. Although some skilled personnel have been brought in from other areas, Shompole's aim is to be entirely community-run by local members trained to reach managerial level. The lodge has partnered where necessary with private investors to bring in technical and marketing skills, and has attracted high-profile clients like Bill Gates. Visitors to the luxury eco-lodge also pay an entrance fee for the larger conservation area, which goes directly to the community.

Shompole members 'make actual decisions on a daily basis', says Ole Petenya Shani, of Shompole Community Trust. 'If we raise KS1,000 or US \$1000 that all goes into our kitty and we disburse that money where we think the priority need is.' He says this is in contrast to the Mara, where the county council absorbs the bulk of the proceeds. Shompole also has a good record on local employment and training: 70 per cent of employees in Shompole are locally recruited, with about 30 per cent of skills brought in from outside the area to ensure effective running of the business. The community decides what facilities to build, like tented camps, and fences and land divisions have been removed to let wildlife move freely.

Over time, the intention is for the community to buy equity from private investors with the aim of full community ownership.

Shompole is by no means the only good practice example in Kenya. Further north, about 160 km north-east of the capital Nairobi, is Il Ngwesi Group Ranch. 'Il Ngwesi' means 'people of wildlife' in Masai – and it was built in 1996 after local Masai elders were persuaded to allocate a large area of pastoralist land to wildlife conservation. The idea was floated by Ian Craig of Lewa conservancy, originally a white settler ranch of some 64,000 acres. Craig worked through the local elders to turn the land into a conservancy, and tried to persuade as many neighbouring communities as possible to turn land over for conservation. Il Ngwesi elders gave 16,500 acres of community land, in the conviction that tourism was the only way to bring development and business opportunities to the community. Initially, the idea was greeted with much suspicion, particularly from the youth, that this was the scheme of a '*mzungu*' – white man – to steal more land.

'There is no Masai word for tourist, and we had no idea what tourism was all about at that time,' says Ochen Sakila Mayiani, the lodge manager. Representatives from all age groups went to see lodges in the Masai Mara to learn how tourism worked – and to develop a vision of how it could work better. People were successfully convinced that genuine community-based tourism could bring benefits and development, and would improve standards of living.

All revenue from the lodge is ploughed back into the community, in way of salaries, water points, road construction, bursaries, training and business ventures, says the manager. This is very different from the small percentage ploughed back through the county council in the Masai Mara.

A 5 sq km no-go zone was cleared around the lodge for use by the animals and tourists alone, and suitable areas of settlement and grazing identified for community use. Done with community agreement, this meant that, unlike in conventional game parks, the Masai could remain in the vast lands of the conservancy, apart from the relatively small exclusion zone. The balance between human habitation and conservation is managed through consensus. The Natural Resource Management and Community Development Committee controls grazing movements and access to land on the conservancy, allowing for grazing in certain prime areas in times of stress and drought.

Since Il Ngwesi was established, some 14 more conservancies have been set up using it as a model of good practice. Local Il Ngwesi elder Simpai says the decision to build the lodge was a good one and was done with the full participation of the community: 'I am happy with the decision because now I am personally earning money as a result.' One of the benefits to the community is that more children are being encouraged to go school by a generation of parents who are mostly illiterate, and medical treatment is available through local clinics. Masai interviewed in Il Ngwesi by MRG expressed confidence that the land and the benefits belonged to the community.

But there have been some disappointments, too. Although the Il Ngwesi system means the Masai remain on their land – unlike the Masai Mara model – and share benefits at a certain level, more ambitious development projects have yet to be achieved. Commercially there is insufficient independence, and the conservancy is still driven by donations. 'We have not managed to get enough for development projects. We still need to rely on funding and donations because the population is increasing and what we generate is not adequate enough to improve living standards,' says Ochen, the lodge manager.

Tensions: conservation and power

Even with this good practice example, there are tensions between those concerned with wildlife

conservation and community needs. The Ngwesi conservancy is under pressure to fence the land by the owners of Lewa Downs, despite opposition from the community, as the area includes endangered species like the black rhino, Grevy's zebra, elephant and sitatunga. Situated in a volatile part of Kenya, where banditry, poaching and illegal firearms are always a threat, Lewa states in its literature the need for an 'extremely effective security system to protect wildlife and people'. White settlers are a minority group with disproportionate access to land, wealth and influence, who are feeling pressure to establish good relationships with their pastoralist neighbours, in order to retain huge swathes of land originally acquired through the colonial system. Community-based ecotourism is one of the ways forward; but there is enormous imbalance between the two groups. The obvious vulnerability of indigenous communities within this relationship is their lack of political and economic standing, and the ease with which they can be exploited.

The Lewa conservation vision incorporates a huge area of land known as the Northern Rangeland Trust, and is a good example of how diverse the notion of 'community' can be. It includes the Mugokogodo and Laikipia Masai, the Borana, Rendile, Samburu and Turkana pastoralist minorities. It also includes small farming communities, like the Soboyga Meru – who were recently pushed out of land declared an animal corridor by local landowners.

'We ran without anything'

According to the Soboyga, the declaration was made when a local government official arrived in a government vehicle in the company of 'a white person'. The order to evict was given as a verbal declaration only. About 500 families now live in destitution on a road reserve outside the Lewa Downs electric fence. It is a sight that is not compatible with the expectations – or assumptions – of tourists visiting the lodge, who would likely be ignorant of the fact that the people living in misery around the electrified boundary had been brutally evicted in the name of conservation. Tourists who feel reassured by the impact of marketing of 'community participation' would not connect their enjoyment of the wildlife with the situation of the Soboyga.

'Government officials and *mzungus* [white people] came to tell us it was an animal corridor. Then a

group of armed guards came on 10 September 1999 and forced us out,' says a young woman, Karimi. The area of eviction is known as 'Bosnia' by the community because of the violence used.

'When the guards arrived in the morning in a vehicle with the District Officer they started burning our houses with paraffin, shouting at us to leave.' Muremi, an elderly man, says he had to flee without any possessions. 'We ran, without anything, and came here. Now we can't dig because this land belongs to someone else.'

They are able to use a water point next to the fence, and get access to the school and health clinic on the boundary of the conservancy. No longer able to cultivate, they survive on what casual labour they are able to get from the conservancy, like digging trenches or clearing bush. The women harvest reeds in a nearby swamp, and sell them by the bundle to the Lewa Downs lodge or for making furniture. They make about KS500 (about US \$6) in three days.

'We have to stand in water to collect the big reeds, and there is danger from the wild animals. The reeds cut our hands, and the water is very cold,' says Karimi. The community has long been landless: they lost family land in Meru immediately after independence, when they discovered they were not entitled to property rights. They were originally brought into the conservancy by a local politician who unilaterally promised the group government land as an election promise. Absence of legal rights to land does not justify eviction – the government has committed itself to this, through ratifying international treaties to protect an individual's security and right to life; the government also has to fulfil its obligations by providing for the basic needs of all its citizens, such as shelter and healthcare.

And, although the primary obligation rests with the government, Kenyan minority rights activists point out that it is also the responsibility of large landowners and tourist companies marketing 'community participation' to seek humane solutions for affected groups like the Soboyga rather than resorting to, or supporting, illegal evictions.

What future?

Increasing global concern about the environment and the growing awareness of development and poverty issues, especially among younger people, creates new and important opportunities for tourism

to set basic standards in observing the rights of minorities. New tourist markets in developing economies have an obligation to take into account historical injustices and to address them rather than exploit them. In much the same way, ecotourism has set minimum basic standards for good practice and positively markets schemes for improved and sustainable use of resources.

Community-based models should be improved to take into account the positive contribution of indigenous communities to their own environment – as protectors rather than detractors – and ensure that 'community' adequately addresses ethnic and socio-political differences in what are sometimes huge and diverse territories. There is a large variation in existing 'community-participation' schemes. Some are little more than cultural tokenism; some have established important approaches to genuine involvement. The development of social indicator ratings – taking account of fair wages, good working conditions, and provision of education, health and training opportunities – would raise awareness among tourists about the effectiveness of the participation schemes, while obviously also benefiting indigenous communities.

Governments should be held accountable by statistics as well as international treaties. Where tourist revenue is high, governments should be able to demonstrate an established level of development funds and projects in that area, and should be held accountable by donors and investors if they fail to do so.

'Ecotourism' has proved that tourists are not only willing to support models that aspire to contribute positively to 'the greater good', but actually demand it at the higher end of the market. Standards for indigenous communities should be an integral part of these demands – not simply viewing them as an extension of the environment; there should be an informed demand for the basic human rights of communities who are often the original inhabitants of the land.

If these steps are taken, minorities may begin to rightfully gain from an industry which all too often has failed to bring prosperity and opportunity to their communities, while actively contributing to cultural erosion, impoverishment and human rights abuses. Properly managed, ecotourism can benefit indigenous communities as well as visitors, from the land and resources being packaged as paradise. ■