

Research Paper

Unlocking Opportunities for Displaced Communities: Can Tourism Offset Conservation Costs?

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Abstract: This paper emanates from the research on the Usangu Plains in Tanzania to illustrate community benefits from nature-based tourism enterprises as a link between income generation and conservation. Following park expansions which left the majority of communities landless and short of livelihood activities, communities are now seeking new avenues for sustaining their lives. We seek to enrich our understanding on the impacts of protected area creation on displaced communities by looking at alternatives that would help to offset the negative impact brought about by these management operations. This research identified several investment opportunities for tourism business in the area to include boat safaris, eco-tourism activities, fresh water sport fishing activities, and home stays which can be developed and managed in collaboration with local communities. However, the majority of communities in the area rely heavily on agricultural activities and do not see benefits that can be obtained from other land uses. Since the park expansion, agriculture and livestock activities have been reduced and there is no tourism activities in the extended area so far. Hence, it is the right timing for interested actors to capitalise on the tourism potential that the area possesses to educate these communities and let them benefit from tourism activities.

Keywords: Tourism enterprises, income generation, protected areas, local communities, Tanzania

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Background to Study

Protected Area Conservation and Displacement

Since the 1970s, conservation agencies and donors have shaped environmental conservation agendas worldwide (Zimmerer, 2000). Nations have increasingly responded to these global actions by facilitating environmental protection through the establishment of protected areas. This change has a direct impact on local land use, and is often associated with the displacement of human communities. Exclusion of humans for protected area creation has caught the attention of many researchers (Andrew-Essien & Bisong, 2009; Brockington, 2002; Brockington & Igoe, 2006; Buscher & Dietz, 2005) with most of them describing the negative impact associated with the process. In Africa, for example, protected areas creation has involved forced relocation and denial of resource access to communities who once lived in these areas (Turner, 2004).

Worldwide, conservation has led to the displacement of people who formerly lived, farmed, fished, and/or hunted in areas which are now protected for wildlife, watershed or because it is a rare ecosystem (Agrawal & Redford, 2009). Most of the time, force has been used to dislocate these communities. Agrawal & Redford (2009) further argue that there have been no studies to analyse whether setting aside a network of protected areas has actually contributed to conservation of biodiversity; and only a few studies have examined the effect of these protected area expansions on the livelihood of the displaced people (Schmidt-Soltau & Brockington, 2004). This micro-level approach is critical to understanding the scale at which decisions are made in protected areas (Zimmerer, 2000) and its impact in a wider sense. Furthermore, little is known about the potential activities that could be initiated to offset the costs incurred by these communities who continue to be replaced for protected area creation and/or expansion. This research will fill the gap by analysing possible tourism activities that can be developed in the area that was recently annexed to Ruaha National Park, located in Central Tanzania, 128 km (80 miles) west of Iringa Town.

Currently, over 24% of the total land surface in Tanzania is devoted to protected areas such as national parks (NP), game reserves (GR), Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) and game controlled areas (GCA). Of this 4% is covered by 15 national parks, 1% by Ngorongoro Conservation Area, 13% by 34 game reserves and 6% by 38 game controlled areas (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2007). Human settlement is not allowed in 17% of the protected areas (NP and GR) while 7% include areas where people co-exist with wild animals (GCA and NCA) (Vogt, Ritter, Iwanowski, Estreguil, Kozak & Soille 2007). Protected areas in Tanzania, like in other countries, are designated primarily for nature conservation purposes restricting utilisation of resources by communities who once lived or are currently living adjacent to these

areas. As communities have been excluded, tourists are granted access and investors are allowed to build hotels, lodges and other facilities catering for tourists.

Prior to the expansion of the Ruaha National Park (RNP) communities surrounding the park depended on Ihefu Wetland, Usangu Game Reserve and other annexed areas for traditional medicine, honey collection, grazing areas, building poles, hunting, fishing and agricultural farms. The Sangu people and other migrants used the area until 2006 when the proposal to expand the park was initiated. After the expansion of RNP, communities were barred from removing forest products and other resources, some of which played a crucial role in their livelihoods. For example, the majority of communities depended on firewood. Firewood to majority of local communities, still serves as an important source of energy used for cooking and making bricks for sale as a source of income

This paper focuses on five villages from the Usangu Plains in Mbarali District, Tanzania, to illustrate community benefits from nature-based tourism enterprises. Many studies have been conducted to analyse the effects of protected areas creation on communities (Agrawal & Redford, 2009; Brockington, 2002; 2006; Cernea, 2006; West & Brockington, 2006; West, Igoe & Brockington, 2006) without taking further steps of unlocking the opportunities that these areas might offer displaced communities.¹ This is a crucial phase as it will not only provide alternative sources of income and livelihood support to these communities, but it could act as catalyst to minimize tension among the communities, government and conservation managers. This is because the communities' interactions with conservation managers, donors, government's officials and private entrepreneurs are structured by their relative poverty, tourism market structure and a secure title to a valued conservation area, which often place communities at a disadvantaged position. Nature tourism may have substantial opportunities and rewards to local people when they have secure tenure to an area valued by private entrepreneurs (Turner, 2004). It is the aim of this research to identify viable small-scale tourism enterprises that can be established and managed in collaboration with communities living close to Ruaha National Park in support of their livelihood. This will not only serve the short term livelihood needs for communities but also provide them with a long-term business if well planned and managed.

Protected Areas and Tourism

Many protected areas in the world were created starting from 19th century, funded and maintained as assets by governments (Font, Cochrane & Tapper, 2004) and they served as a major tourism product for many countries (Buckley & Sommer, 2001).

¹ The majority of displaced communities lives in the nearby villages

Tourism in Tanzania is largely dependent on protected areas, including national parks, game reserves, marine parks and wildlife management areas. According to World Conservation Union (IUCN) a protected area is clearly defined as “a geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (IUCN, 2008). Most of the protected areas vary from ‘strict protection’ to ‘public access’ in terms of their use (Buckley & Sommer, 2001) and are mostly owned by governments. In Tanzania, for example, most protected areas are managed by the state (URT, 2007). Eagles, McCool & Haynes (2002) pointed out that being able to integrate tourism activities within the conservation goal of most protected areas will serve as a foundation for strengthening relationships with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry.

According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2010) tourism is widely recognised as a major sector of an economy since the latter part of the twenty-first century not only to Tanzania but the world at large. Tourist demand is becoming more refined, seeking for more ‘authentic’ experience from contacts with the communities as opposed to normal mainstream mass market. Eagles, McCool & Haynes (2002) hence calling for a need to have collaborative planning in tourism activities which not only aim at getting communities’ opinions, but also to involve them in providing tourism services to visitors. However, the subject of authenticity in tourism is highly debated (Goulding, 2000; McCannell, 1973; Taylor, 2001; Wang, 1999) with regard to whether the toured objects or places are really authentic. However, Cohen (1998) pointed that things seem to be authentic not because they are innately authentic but because they are built as such depending on power, beliefs or point of view. Furthermore, the concept of authenticity is context bound (Wang, 1999); it is relative to tourist typology who may have different definitions, experience and interpretation of authenticity (Pearce & Moscardo, 1985). What is more important is not whether the toured objects are real or not, rather the perception of the tourist that those objects symbolise authenticity (Culler, 1981). As there is no single tourist gaze, authenticity can be seen as a de-differentiated and anti-elitist, which is particularly suitable for tourists (as well as locals) as it combines ‘the visual, the aesthetic and the commercial and the popular’ (Urry, 2002: p. 78).

Although to a large extent, most tourism development in connection with protected areas is expensive at the beginning (Eagles et al., 2002), there is a possibility of generating a significant amount of revenue in the future (a good example for this case as well). As described by Brandon, Redford & Sanderson(1998), protected areas, if well planned and managed, could provide rural communities living in and around protected areas with opportunities to develop sustainable businesses (e.g. Peru, Guatemala and Oyacachi in Ecuador). Font, Cochrane & Tapper(2004) reported that it may be possible for protected areas to enhance their relationships with various

stakeholders, especially communities through tourism activities. By so doing, the continued investment in the protection of these areas may be guaranteed through the economic benefits that may help as stimuli for general support of conservation.

Methods

The Case Study

This paper is part of a larger case study that examine and analyses environmental problems and land use conflicts in Usangu plains. The case provides an insightful understanding of the factors that led to the relocation of local communities and later expansion of Ruaha National Park. The study considers the discussion from the perspectives of local communities, local farmers associations, and government officials at the district and national park management level. As per Yin (2009), the use of the case method as a research strategy is beneficial when investigating social and contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. In order to clearly understand the eviction process, the interrelation of historical, social, economic as well as the role of different actors and their influence towards the decision making process was analysed. In this particular paper, results from different stakeholders pertaining to future tourism opportunities in the area as opposed to traditional land (farming and grazing) use are presented. Data was collected using purposive and snow ball sampling methods. The five villages were selected using purposive sampling method based on whether they faced relocation, are close to the national park after its expansion or have received relocated communities in their area. Respondents for the study were selected using snow ball sampling as most of them knew each other especially those who faced relocation. The following section describes the study site, instrument used for data collection and the analysis procedure.

Political and Economic Context of Mbarali

Mbarali District Council is one of the eight councils in Mbeya Region (7° and 9° South of the equator between longitude 33.8° and 35° East of the Greenwich Meridian). The district is easily accessed. It is situated along the Dar es Salaam-Mbeya Highway and the Tanzania-Zambia Railway –TAZARA. Major ethnic groups found in the area are the Sangu, Hehe and Bena with minor representation of Sukuma, Wanji, Barbeiq, Maasai, Kinga, Nyakuysa, Baluchi and Gogo (Mbarali District Council, 2009). The district altitude varies between 1000 to 1800 meters above the sea level (Mbarali District Council, 2009). Before the expansion of Ruaha National Park, the district had a total land area of 15,560km². Half of the total land area is covered by forest and savanna woodlands while the rest is covered by floodplains mainly used for rice paddy production and areas surrounding the wetlands which were previously used for grazing. Currently most of these areas cannot be accessed by the communities

due to the restriction imposed on them. After the expansion of Ruaha National Park, the remaining district area for administrative issues, economic activities as well as residential area is estimated to be 5,000 square kilometers (Mbarali District Council, 2009).

According to the 2002 census, Mbarali District has a population of 234,101 with a growth rate of 2.8% (Mbarali District Council, 2009). The district largely depends on agricultural activities. Mbarali is widely known for its large rice farms owned by the government, cooperatives and individuals. Approximately 83% of the population is engaged in agriculture (Mbarali District Council, 2009). The district has several rivers that pass through the Usangu plains and flow into the Great Ruaha River (GRR). The priority crops are rice, maize, beans, potatoes and vegetables. Possession of paddy land, for example, is considered as the most important factor determining the well-being of a household. Livestock keeping is also another important indicator of household affluence. The higher income level households are those with access to key agricultural land (i.e. land or plots located in the upstream parts of the modernised irrigation schemes, e.g. in Kapunga village) or small holder/cooperative farms e.g. in Madibira scheme. The district has several rivers and wetland which play a vital role in the communities' livelihood. Most of these rivers have potential for irrigation uses apart from fishing. Ihefu wetland was fished, but is now annexed to Ruaha National Park. According to National Park policy, consumptive utilisation is not allowed inside the park boundaries, hence fishing activities are banned. Other economic activities conducted in the area include livestock keeping and firewood collection (Mbarali District Council, 2009). All these activities are now difficult to be pursued by the majority of the communities as there is no sufficient grazing land for livestock and forest areas with most potential for firewood collection and fishing are currently inside the national park.

Ruaha National Park

Located in central Tanzania, 128 km west of Iringa town, Ruaha National Park (RNP) covers an area of 20,226 square kilometers (Tanzania National Parks [TANAPA], 2008). Before expansion, the park covered 10,300 square kilometers of land area. The major reason for its expansion was to secure the Usangu Basin as the main catchment areas for Mtera and Kidatu power houses for hydroelectric system in the country (pers. comm., 2010). The wetland also harbors a unique and diverse bird species population (Mtahiko et al., 2006). Increased human population in the area has led to the disappearance of natural vegetation cover of the area, leading to secondary growth bush land as well as a large part being converted into cultivation areas. The once-large wildlife herds on the area have now disappeared and a large part of the wetland is now used for grazing (Mtahiko et al., 2006). However, several studies

conducted before and after park expansion (cf. Brockington, 2001; Hazlewood & Livingstone, 1978; Kikula, Charnley, & Yanda, 1996; Zia et al., 2011) showed that the communities were blamed due to the long interest vested on the area by many people as well as the continual shift of the management system (Zia et al., 2011). The main reason for water shortage is presented to be the excessive increase in rice farms in the areas (which are not solely managed by communities), and to some extent high drought levels during the early 1990s also contributed to the problem.

After the annexation of Ihefu wetland, Usangu Game Reserve and other areas nearby, the size of Ruaha National Park doubled making it the largest national park in Tanzania, the second largest national park in Africa, after Kafue National Park in Zambia (TANAPA, 2008). Ruaha derived its name from the Great Ruaha River which flows along its extreme border creating spectacular gorges (TANAPA, 2008). Ruaha National Park, like other national parks, is a protected area where consumptive utilisation of resources within the park boundaries is prohibited. Working under TANAPA guidelines and policies, the park needs to generate sufficient income to run on its own. Currently, most parks in the southern circuit cannot achieve that management goal due to a low number of visitors received annually. Located in the country's southern tourist circuit, RNP has not attracted many tourists due to its poor accessibility and competition from the northern tourist circuit. For example, in the last five years, Ruaha National Park has managed to attract a total of 94,616 visitors as compared to the northern circuit's parks like Manyara and Arusha which attracted 699,419 and 257,218 respectively (URT, 2011). Due to the park's recent expansion, management still has unresolved issues with communities bordering the park, which have hampered tourism development in the expanded area. Hence the contribution of tourism to the livelihood of communities of Mbarali District is yet to be realised. Poor accessibility to the newly expanded area, lack of clearly defined tourist investment and activities have also hindered developing tourism in the expanded portion of the park.

This paper is based on interviews conducted in 2010.² It focuses on the exclusion of communities that lived in and around Usangu Plains before its annexation to Ruaha National Park. Most of these communities lost their land (farming and grazing), houses, livestock, ritual places, and social facilities like schools and hospitals. Currently, communities in Mbarali District are finding themselves in a difficult process of change, having been confronted with park expansion and the grim prospects of earning substantial income from inherent conservation initiatives and other nature-based enterprises. Having turned down most of the livelihood activities, they now seek new avenues to sustain their lives, particularly given the potential opportunity for tourism

² Data collection was during January and February, 2010

development in Mbarali District. The district has identified several investment opportunities for tourism business in the area such as boat safaris in Usangu wetlands, hunting tourism in the proposed WMA and eco-tourism activities based on the region's growing archaeological and historical importance including the human footprint and chiefdom premises (Mbarali District Council, 2009).

Study Approach

A qualitative case study approach was used for this research, that is, relying on communities' views on the possibility of developing tourism enterprises in their area following the expansion of Ruaha National Park. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on 79 members of villages from Ikoga Mpya, Nyeregere, Mahango, Igomelo and Luhango. Four focus group discussions which comprised of village leaders, forest and Mali asili leaders and a few committee members, as well as local cooperative union members were also held during the data collection period. Villages were purposively chosen based on whether they had received displaced people in their area or whether the village borders Ruaha National Park or whether the members faced eviction themselves. Government officials in the area were also interviewed to get their opinion on the subject matter. Information collected from the interviewees was associated with their opinion on the newly expanded park, tourism activities in the area and the benefits associated with future tourism activities. All the interviews were tape recorded. Data was transcribed, translated and exported to NVIVO for analysis. Themes and codes were then generated to present recurring themes and relationship of information gathered. Using NVIVO for data analysis helped to speed up and systematise the coding process and provided a more complex but standard way of looking at the relationships in the information. It also helped to develop more conceptual and theoretical thinking of the data (Welsh, 2002).

Findings

Tourism in Mbarali District

Conservation initiatives or tourism activities cannot be well developed if those who are found in the vicinity of the protected area are not involved in the planning and management of such ventures (Baldus, Kibonde & Siege, 2003; Murphy, 1985). Communities do not see the contribution of tourism activities toward their livelihood when they are not involved in planning and management of these activities. However, there is a potential for community benefit from tourism activities if well planned and developed in areas surrounding the parks. Involvement of communities in the tourism industry improves the tourism product and enhances popular support for the industry (Brandon, Redford & Sanderson, 1998). Income that will be earned and controlled

by the communities from tourism activities is probably more significant at boosting local development and conservation if it can be shared more equitably.

However, it might be easy to overestimate the economic potential of tourism activities to communities. As Baldus, Kibonde & Siege (2003) argued, most of the protected areas in Africa are not utilised fully for tourism activities hence their economic potential is underutilised. These activities may bring economic benefits to the communities, which may act as a strong motivator towards conservation of natural resources. However, to other communities such as those in Mbarali, the target for tourism initiatives has been disadvantaged by the displacement process. This makes it more difficult for some of the community actors to collaborate with the park officials or other investors on an equal basis due to their resentment towards them. Second, it is not clear to the majority if these tourism activities to be developed will generate revenue in amounts equal or greater than revenues generated from the previous land-based activities. Their claims may be partially true due to the relative newness of tourism activities in the area. Furthermore, the majority of community members have little knowledge concerning tourism activities; most of them claim not to understand what tourism is and how it could benefit them. Before expansion of the National Park in 2008, some community members claimed to have seen tourists passing through their villages entering the National Park or Usangu Game Reserve without knowing how they could be engaged in delivering services to the visitors trespassing through their land.

Potential Tourism Enterprises

The focus of more recent tourism projects is to support communities in their own efforts to create business-oriented ventures with greater emphasis on developing sound business plans among the community members themselves. Although tourism may not be the priority aim to most communities (Brandon et al., 1998), Mbarali people included, when tourism businesses contribute towards their well-being, most community members will be satisfied and engage in more such activities (Brandon et al., 1998). Profitable tourism requires substantial investment. Although tourists pay access fees, the larger share of revenue is gathered through housing, transport, and tour management (Clancy, 1998). In Mbarali, particularly in the expanded area that borders the Ruaha National Park, local communities could generate revenue through development of homestay accommodation. As argued by Koch & de Beer (2000), protected areas limit construction within the park, hence accommodation ventures outside the park borders are feasible and add income to communities in several ways. For instance, in Makuleke region where Kruger National Park is located, 5-6 lodges which are located near the park area generate USD360,000 to 540,000 per year (Turner, 2004).

However, in Mbarali District, accommodation is not the only opportunity that communities can participate in. Other potential tourism activities include bird watching at Ihefu Wetland and cultural attractions in Ruiwa, Mawindi and Msangaji Ward. Additional activities which could be developed in these areas include boat safaris in Ihefu Wetland cultural tourism (a village cultural walk, traditional art) and sport fishing. Community campsites which offer accommodation to tourists during their visits are another potential option. These activities would diversify the tourism products in the area, and if well managed add an income source to the communities. However, it is important to assess the long term financial viability of these enterprises as opposed to other economic activities such as agriculture and livestock which are now vanishing.

Furthermore, it is argued that involving communities in tourism activities near protected areas provide two-fold benefits to communities and park managers: first, it will lead to increased support for conservation activities; and second, communities will be developing skills to work with national park managers as well as other business people in the field to assure that tourism activities create value for themselves and protected areas (Brandon et al., 1998). With careful planning and management, the tourism industry in the country has the potential to develop a diverse and sustainable tourism product (Wade, Mwasaga & Eagles, 2001). These ideas are further developed in the following section. Communities believe that, if they are well educated and involved in tourism activities, they would benefit. “Everything new to an area needs to be preceded with awareness, to let people know benefits and costs; even with the rice farms, they started with agricultural awareness before people got involved” one of the community members commented. Table 1 provides some of the quotes and further information linked to the elaboration of tourism activities.

Boat Safaris in Ihefu Wetlands

Ihefu Wetland contains a wide variety of wildlife including birds and fish. This wetland stores water from the Great Ruaha River, which stretches about 776 km². The total size of the catchment is approximately 20,800 km² with the permanent swamp (Ihefu wetland) occupying about 80 km² (Franks, Lankford & Mdemu, 2004). The wetland, which is now inside the national park, has good potential for water related activities as explained by one TANAPA official at Ruaha national park : “We need to identify tourism related activities in the area, may be to have water related tourism activities like canoeing, boat activities, bird watching, board walking etc. When tourists come, local communities will also benefit ...” This would serve a dual purpose: it could provide access for tourists to areas which otherwise cannot be accessed by road and could also provide an income source to communities who will be pioneering the activity. Boating safaris using local boats and local guides would provide economic opportunities to communities as well as provide ‘authentic’

experience to tourists. This area is also one of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Tanzania and boats would provide access to tourists desiring to watch water birds.

Cultural Tourism/Ecotourism

Table 1

Summary of Selected Results

Tourism has lots of opportunities. When tourists start to come to our area, we will be given directives on how to get involved. I believe that when you are close to the park, you will benefit.

There are benefits from tourism activities for example – a certain per cent of benefit is returned to communities for different development activities.

If tourism activities will grow in our area, there will be lots of opportunities. Currently there is little agricultural and livestock activities.

The park, through community conservation service programmes, has helped to renovate our schools (secondary and primary) and some of the classes have been built by them. We have also got water projects; we believe more are to come when tourism activities start in our area.

Tourists might come and teach us good things; also, they might help make our place known to other districts and countries.

I have heard that when tourism activities start in an area, investors will come and communities might get employment.

Tourism activities add alternative income to communities.

Tourism activities will grow and help us in the future.

Business in the area will grow; they will be interested in knowing our traditional life, traditional clothes, and we can make traditional artifacts and get money.

We are planning to provide tenders for lodges, tented camps and things related to that.

If this is going to be the route to the park, we will get lots of money through small business. If investors come, we will also benefit through different development projects and employment.

If tourism activities grow in our area, the road will be improved as it is now, it is not passable throughout the year.

Tourism will grow that much we believe, but we are afraid that if it does not grow, it will result in taking other areas used for other livelihood activities.

Continued next page

Table 1 *Continued.*

<p>I think tourism has lots of benefits; as of current TANAPA built four classes as part of tourism benefits to us.</p> <p>Because we are expecting many tourists to come from Mbeya, we also need to build staff houses so that they may be available to provide service all the time.</p> <p>We will start small businesses because as tourists visit new places, they would want to buy local stuff.</p> <p>Previously there were people destroying the environment, cutting down trees in the forest, poaching animals but now the trend is decreasing.</p> <p>The proposed WMA – UMEMARUHA will involve communities in different activities.</p> <p>We are proposing to have water related activities because the area has plenty of water but also to have alternative sources of income.</p> <p>Access to the area is still very difficult; we are planning to build permanent roads in the area and place the access gate in Mbarali district.</p>
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Cultural heritage tourism is prevalent in many local traditions (Eagles et al., 2002). According to UNWTO (2004) cultural heritage tourism refers to “movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and pilgrimage. Developing and expanding cultural tourism by building community capacity to handle these activities provides them with an alternative source of livelihood hence providing perhaps a reliable tool for reducing the poverty level – a top priority among the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Mbarali District has historical sites like human foot print and chiefdom premises. The human footprint is located on top of rocks at Luwango Village, Mawindi Ward. It also has stalactite and stalagmite minerals in Idunda village resulting from heavy erosive activities which used to occur in the area. The area has also a hot water springs in Msangaji Ward along the Great Ruaha River and a hot water river at Ruiwa Ward. Most of these areas currently are inactive in so far as tourism activities are concerned but the potential exists to develop ‘less impact’ tourism activities in collaboration with communities. Communities are positive about organising village tours to areas where these attractions are found, knowing that they will also accrue some economic benefit from the activity (refer to Table 1).

Furthermore, villages with typical homestead and traditional activities can be promoted and some of the local community members trained to serve as tour guides. Eagles et al. (2002) argue that well managed tourism in the local setting will act as a

positive trigger to protect or restore the community's diminishing cultural heritage. This is because tourism will provide financial benefits to help in maintaining existing important landscape features. This may be possible through direct fee collection as entry fees or through local taxes. Some tourists may seek 'authentic' experience, and it may therefore be possible to encourage communities to maintain their cultural practices and traditions. This will not only enrich tourists' experience, but also make tourists extend their visits and spend more (Eagles et al., 2002). On the other side, communities will benefit through maintaining their practices and cultural heritage. Tourists are interested in watching artisans work, thus developing art and craft shops would be economically feasible. As most of these activities are done by women, this might give women a place to network and earn income. The local government is also optimistic about the opportunities that might be brought by tourism activities since most of the income generating activities in the area are currently not operational. This was explained by one government leader:

"District income sources have been decreasing because all the potential income source areas like fishing and honey collection points are now inside the national park. If tourist activities are going to start in the area, we might have an increase in the revenue share from the current one which is about 20%. But even now, TANAPA is doing a lot to help our communities...they have built schools, dispensary and water wells in some villages. We hope all such help will increase when tourism starts in our area (pers. comm., 2010).

Community Campsites/Accommodation

Mbarali District does not have sufficient and standard accommodation catering for tourists. This was also acknowledged by one TANAPA official who claimed to have included that in the RNP management plan "...another plan is to announce tenders for investors to come and invest in the area. We are planning to provide tenders for lodges, tented camps and things related to that." This is an opportunity for potential investors in the accommodation sector but also for communities to invest in accommodation sector by starting rest camps. These rest campsites would have the capacity to offer tents and other accommodation facilities for tourists and provide income in return. It will provide communities in the area as well as other investors involved in the activity with reliable income sources. On the other hand, communities themselves see tourism as an opportunity to excel in their business and life (refer to Table 1). They see tourism as a means to improve infrastructure services including roads; hence an influx of people in the area throughout the year is seen as resulting in increased incomes for them. Money circulation will also increase and most people will manage to open small business and others get employment from different tourism sectors that are to be proposed in their area.

Agro-tourism

The main economic activity in Usangu plains is agriculture. The majority of the communities in the area are engaged in cultivating food crops such as rice, maize, beans, okra, onions, tomatoes, vegetables, coffee, oranges, bananas, potatoes, cassava, and groundnuts, among others. All these can be supplied to tourism ventures if tourism is developed in Mbarali District. This will provide not only fresh local food products to tourists but also direct market access to communities. Currently most of their agricultural products are sold locally and some transported to nearby regions. However, the market is not reliable and the prices are not as rewarding. Having tourism activities in their area will allow for the majority of communities to look for better livelihood opportunities that could be provided by the market.

Farm tourism is not a new phenomenon in developing countries (Busby & Rendle, 2000). Historically, people from cities have turned to the countryside as a place for recreation and leisure holiday. In Mbarali District, for example, apart from supplying fresh agricultural products to tourism ventures, communities could also develop farm visits, where tourists could have an opportunity to visit farms or processing areas to see how rice production is conducted. This would give the opportunity for tourists to visit typical rice farms where they become familiar with the whole process of rice production from *mpunga* to a plate of rice on the table. The product could be developed further for visitors to enjoy lunch or dinner with the farmer family. In Norway, for example, rural tourism is becoming very important in contributing to the livelihood of the rural communities with farm tourism being part of the shift in the economic base of rural communities. Farm tourism represents a counter trend to homogenisation and mass tourism (Blekesaune, Brandth & Haugen, 2010).

Sport Fishing

Mbarali District hosts one of the important areas for fresh water fishing activities in Tanzania. Currently all the potential fishing areas are included in the Ruaha National Park. This leaves communities with very few fishing areas. Instead of perceiving that as a loss on their side, given that they have been fishing for ages, communities think that it would be appropriate if TANAPA would allow them to continue with the business under certain agreed rules. This could be turned into an income opportunity if TANAPA would capitalise on developing spot fishing activities in all areas earlier utilised by communities as fishing points. However, to enhance the utility of the tourists and in order to make sure that communities are involved, the use of local boats and local guides need to be emphasised. If well managed and planned, this activity will create revenue to both communities and TANAPA. A similar practice prevails at Mahakam River in Kalimantan whereby communities take visitors on dolphin

and other wildlife watching tours in their area (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari & Oviedo, 2004) whereby both the community and government benefit in return. The same initiative could be promoted for people in Mbarali area to help communities with an alternative income source.

Discussion

Assessing the local situation before any tourism development, building capacity among the community members, defining what the expected benefits are, determining how much income could really be developed from tourism and estimating how many people can make a living out of it are essential steps to be carried out before starting any community based tourism initiative. This was the case when the Buhoma community decided to develop the community based tourism activities in their area, after gazzeting Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (FAO, 2005). Tourism activities need to be designed in consultation with local community members in order to avoid conflict and to ensure there are less negative impacts on local cultures. As planning is not only about determining what is to be done, where and when (Hall, 2008), emphasis needs to be placed on how to enhance community integration, visitor satisfaction, and resource protection (Gunn & Var, 2002). Although planning is not a panacea for successful tourism development (Hall, 2008), it may be able to minimise negative impacts and maximise economic returns to destinations (Benckendorff & Pearce, 2003). Planning helps to set bounds of tourism development if planners can understand the entire scope and wide-ranging effects on the destination it operates (Ryan, Page & Aicken, 2005). Therefore, tourism planners need to have a broader understanding of the differences in economic and social status as well as environmental dynamics within the communities (Harrill, 2004) for their decision to be holistic. Similarly, benefit sharing mechanisms need to be put in place so that both parties receive an agreeable share.

However, communities in Mbarali district feel that tourism business will not serve their needs due to several reasons. First, they have been introduced and have been used to agricultural activities for ages. They have seen their fathers and forefathers farming, keeping cattle and developing their lives based on such activities. Agriculture is the economic activity which gives them sufficient food and income to manage their lives. Communities are still doubtful if tourism activities would be able to compete with other land uses. This makes it even harder for proponents of tourism investment in the area to locate the window of opportunity. Second, as the majority of communities in the area lack formal education, they fear their involvement in tourism business will not be successful. The majority of communities have little knowledge of tourism activities and do not perceive how they could benefit from tourism.

Communities believed that tourism development would only serve those who are educated and who know and control what is happening on the ground. Third, the majority of the communities do not see the direct benefits of tourism as compared to agriculture and livestock keeping. Their resentment is partially true due to the fact that tourism activities in Tanzania are mostly held and controlled by middle income and wealthy people including external investors and less by local people. The mechanisms for benefit sharing put in place by the government and the relevant authorities are also not clear for the majority of the communities. Laws, regulations and policies are still not clear in terms of benefit sharing as well as guidelines pertaining to business ownership in tourism.

Adding on to the challenges faced by communities, at the management level there are also challenges when it comes to introducing tourism activities in the area. Until the time this research was completed, Ruaha National Park did not have a General Management Plan (GMP), hence it was difficult to define what the park's priorities are in terms of tourism activities that are to be initiated in the expanded area. Moreover, there is a need to identify tourism related activities, mostly those which will suit the terrain of the place. Accessibility in the area is also a challenge. Most of the roads are not passable throughout the year. Lastly, in order to be able to conduct some of the activities in the area, there is a need to obtain authorisation from responsible government organisations. This is because most of the activities will be conducted on village land which is located outside the protected area. Training of guides and other communities to participate in tourism activities takes a long time. Perseverance is needed in order to have viable tourism activities in the area.

Conclusion

Protected areas are one of the assets for the tourism industry (Eagles et al., 2002). Tourism development in these areas is regarded as a good strategy to ensure conservation while at the same time generating high end revenue which could be channeled back to communities. Likewise, the majority of the poor communities are located in the rural areas and are highly dependant on agriculture. Tourism can offer direct benefits to the poor by providing an additional source of income. This could also offer opportunities to support agricultural craftsmanship. One of the main economic benefits of tourism in rural areas is employment opportunities. Communities either find work in tourism related business, or start tourism business themselves. This also helps them to earn income by supplying goods and services to visitors. The community as a whole could as well benefit through increased tax revenues in their district. Furthermore, tourism stimulates investments in local infrastructure and social amenities. These are just a few among many benefits that Mbarali communities can gain from if tourism is well planned.

Tanzania is currently aggressively promoting its tourism industry and most of its efforts are in the Southern Circuit Tourist Zone. As the main focus, Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB) is striving for high quality tourism that generates high income per visit, with less cultural and environmental effect. Ruaha National Park is regarded as one of the ideal places to accomplish that. Unfortunately, due to poor infrastructure, Ruaha National Park has attracted very few visitors so far. There are also only a few support facilities for tourists; hence more investment in the area is required to increase the returns. Furthermore, analysis at the district level shows that tourism business would add additional income sources, thus contributing to development of economic activities in the area at large.

Mbarali District is well known for agriculture and livestock keeping activities. However, there is also a potential to develop tourism in the area. As noted above, the main challenge is infrastructure facilities. The geographical terrain in the area makes some of the regions inaccessible especially during the rainy season. Likewise, the majority of communities in the area rely heavily on agricultural activities and do not see that other land use could also benefit them. Tourism is a relatively new activity in the area. Before annexation into Ruaha National Park, little evidence of tourism activity was present in Mbarali area. Similarly communities have little knowledge of what tourism entails or even how they can benefit from it. The role of tourism activities in the local economy is significant, especially in an area like Mbarali where agriculture for the majority of families is mainly for local consumption; livestock farming is also diminishing in importance. Despite the readiness of the communities to capitalise on the tourism activities as an alternative source of income, market analysis is needed to investigate if the tourism potential that Mbarali communities have could be used as unique selling points to attract visitors to their area.

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