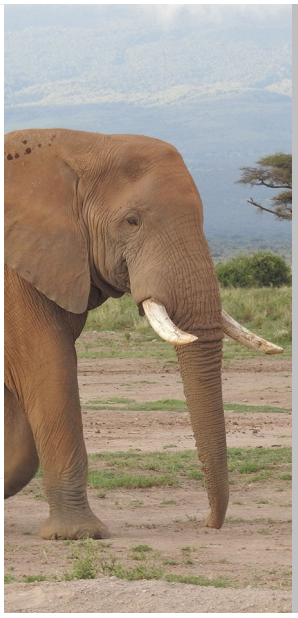

EXTENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS: A CASE STUDY OF MWALUGANJE CONSERVANCY

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ABSTRACT

The genesis and growth of Community Based Tourism Initiatives (CBTIs) in the 1990s was based on their perceived ability to augment community support for wildlife conservation, while ensuring that local communities can participate and gain from tourism development. However, a number of CBTIs in Kenya have failed to meet community and tourism industry expectations. This study examined the extent to which local communities participate in tourism development in the Mwaluganje Conservancy through a community survey and key informant interviews. Community participation was limited and largely confined to giving consent on land utilisation and benefit sharing, and providing views on tourism development to be undertaken. They lacked power to ensure that agreements were implemented. We recommend an alternative tourism development strategy that involves active participation of the key actors in the entire tourism development process

Key words: Community participation, conservation area, tourism, development

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Kenya's tourism industry focuses primarily on beach and safari tourism (Kibicho, 2008) with the latter contributing to approximately 60 per cent of tourism earnings in the period 2013-2015 (GoK, 2016). The attitudes of adjacent local communities towards wildlife living within protected areas has not been positive (Kibicho, 2008) because of human–wildlife conflict. The need to address this issue has led to the adoption of alternative approaches of wildlife conservation and tourism development. In the mid-1990s, the Kenyan government through Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) started community-based wildlife tourism programmes in areas adjacent to protected areas. This led to the emergence of Community Based Tourism Initiatives (CBTIs). The aim was to heighten community support for wildlife conservation (Manyara & Jones, 2007), as well as constitute a development strategy for local communities (Cater, 2006). From the very onset, this model used the 'benefit-based approach' with tourism development as the main source of income for these communities (Meguro & Inoue, 2011).

Various policy documents in Kenya for example, the Tourism Act 2011 (GoK, 2011), Vision 2030 (GoK, 2007) and the Wildlife Management and Conservation Act 2013 (GoK, 2013) support community participation in tourism development; however, there are no guidelines on how community participation should be implemented to ensure that tourism development in community-managed areas results in expected outcomes. CBTIs in general denote a high level of local community involvement in the planning and implementation of tourism projects with the aim of improving the social, cultural and economic well-being of the community, while ensuring conservation of the natural environment (Salazar, 2012).

More than two decades after the development of CBTIs in Kenya, it is important to critically assess the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives to conservation and tourism development. This paper therefore explores the extent of local landowners' involvement in tourism development. This is on the premise that ideal community participation and consistent positive impacts lead to more favourable

community attitudes and inputs towards tourism development which enhances sustainability (Mak et al., 2017).

Community participation in tourism development

Since the publication by Murphy (1985) on 'Tourism: A Community Approach', much has been written and documented on local communities and their participation or otherwise in tourism and conservation initiatives (Honey, 2008 and Simpson, 2008). However, according to Muganda et al. (2013), the role of the community and how their views are incorporated in the whole planning process remain unclear.

Community participation in tourism development has been studied from three perspectives, namely, participation of the host community in the decision-making process (Nsabimana, 2010), project execution and sharing of tourism revenues (Kihima, 2015; Nyagah, 2017). Further, evaluation of community participation programmes must consider the quality of the participatory process and the extent to which specific stakeholders have realised their own explicit goals/outcomes in participatory decision making (Mak et al., 2017 and Nsabimana, 2010). This study therefore endeavours to focus on the level of community involvement/participation and its impact on the sustainability of tourism development at such sites.

Indeed, proponents of CBTIs put emphasis on community participation in tourism destination areas (Muganda et al., 2013). Moreover, the United Nations 70th General Assembly designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism (IYST) for Development. The aim was to raise awareness of the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among public and private sector decision-makers and the public, while mobilising all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change. The International Year aimed to highlight the contribution of tourism to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the following key areas: inclusive and sustainable economic growth; social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction; resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change; cultural values, diversity and heritage; and mutual understanding, peace and security.

Through these initiatives, community involvement in tourism has been widely recognised to the highest level. Increasingly, terms including 'eco-development', 'inclusive tourism', 'sustainable tourism', 'ecotourism', 'Pro Poor tourism', 'empowerment' and 'indigenization' used in tourism circles point towards the involvement of local communities in the development agenda (Kihima, 2015). All these emphasise the importance of local decision makers who must take charge of tourism development.

Elephant (*Loxodonta africana),* Kenya © Marc Hockings

Participation can take different forms (Tosun, 2000). Pimbert and Pretty (1995) contextualise community participation as an absolute term that permits involvement of a host community in their own matters at diverse levels (local, regional or national) and several forms (induced, passive, spontaneous, etc.) under place-specific circumstances. Participation can vary from passive/coercive participation whereby the community has no input in project planning and is not involved in benefit sharing, through different levels, comprising consultation and other forms of minimal participation to the highest level of community participation which involves self-mobilisation/spontaneous participation (Tosun, 2006). At this level, host communities exercise complete control of the decision-making process, project execution and benefit sharing. These typologies are useful in identifying different levels of community participation from passive forms to those that are more genuine and collaborative.

Generally, it has been noted that community participation in tourism development is an essential factor in realising the sustainable development of the sector (Aref et al., 2010 and Mak et al., 2017). Through participation, negative impacts and perceptions associated with tourism development can be reduced, while the general quality of life, perceived and real, of all industry players can be improved (Byrd et al., 2009; Kihima, 2015). Community participation in tourism:
creates superior opportunities for the host community to access greater and more sustainable benefits from tourism development in their areas (Manyara & Jones, 2007; Tosun, 2006), enhances host community support for the sector (Okazaki, 2008; Kieti et al., 2013); and
leads to more favourable attitudes towards tourism development and conservation of indigenous resources (Lepp, 2007; Akama & Kieti, 2007).

Further, it increases the local community's tolerance to tourism development (Tosun, 2006). Considering that tourism is a multi-stakeholder industry, it can be argued that participation promotes cooperation or partnerships and the assurance required to guarantee the sustainability of Community Based Tourism development projects (Nsabimana, 2010).

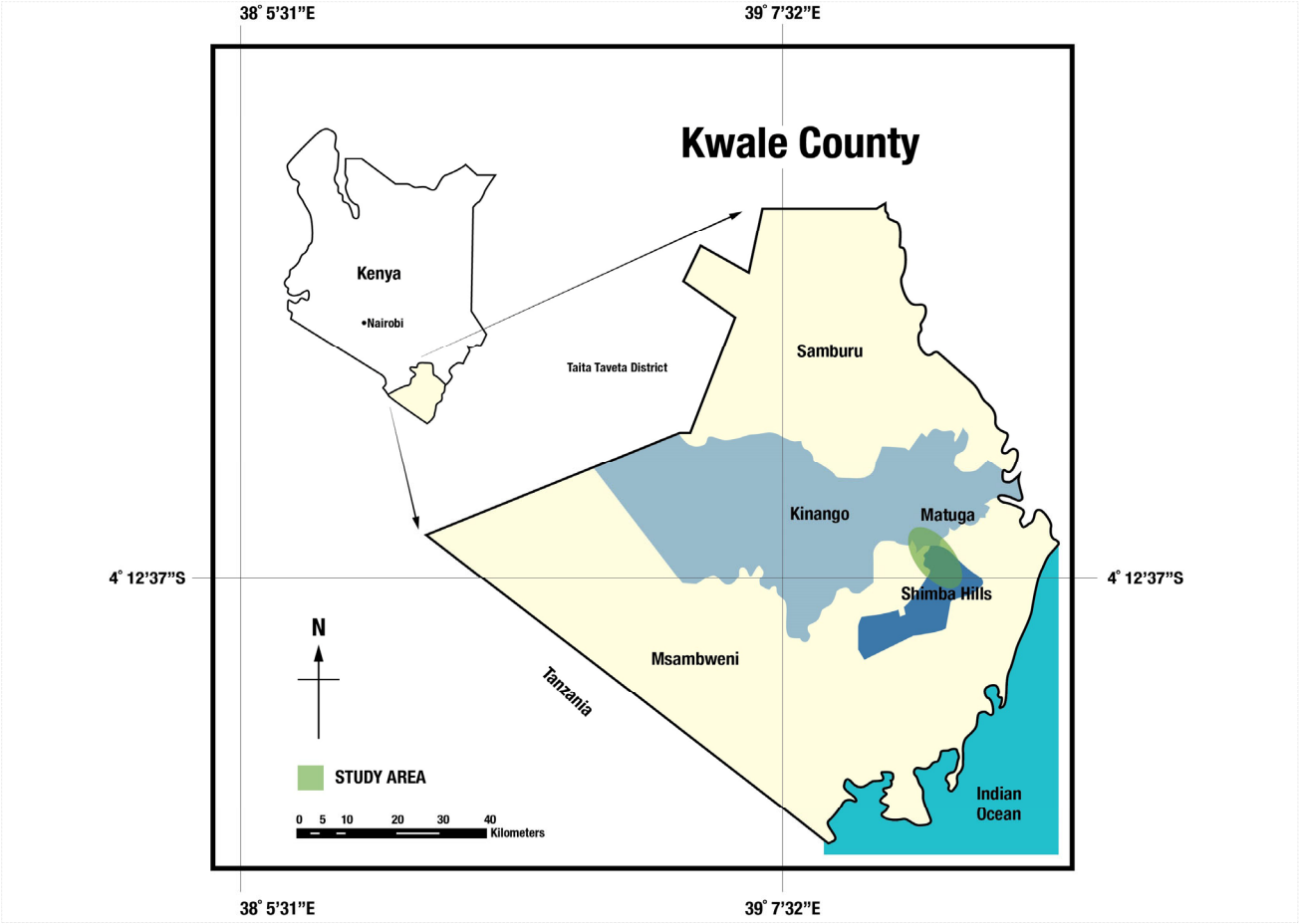

Figure 1: Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary

Study area

The study was conducted in Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (MES), located in Kwale County on the south coast of Kenya (Figure 1). The sanctuary is part of the Shimba Hills Ecosystem (259 km2) that encompasses Shimba Hills National Reserve (SHNR) (192.5 km2), Mkongani North Forest (11.1 km2), Mkongani West Forest (13.6 km2), Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (24.7 km2) and Mwaluganje Forest (17.15 km2) (Blackett, 1994). MES is among the first CBTIs to be established in Kenya, and has been recognised as exhibiting best practice (Manyara & Jones, 2007) and is hence considered 'successful'. The community members around this sanctuary have been participating in CBT for a period of more than 20 years. They therefore have had sufficient time to notice the effects of tourism development on their lives.

Shimba Hills National Reserve (SHNR), the main attraction in the area, lies on a coastal plateau that rises to an altitude of 450 m above sea level at a distance of approximately 15 km from the Indian Ocean (Schmidt, 1991), while the sanctuary lies below the plateau's escarpment on the northern side. Due to its location on the leeward side of the plateau, the sanctuary receives less rainfall than SHNR (Davis & Bennum, 1993). The sanctuary receives an average annual rainfall range of 450-800 mm (MES, 2012) while for SHNR it ranges between 900-1200 mm (KWS, 2013).

The southern half of MES is characterised by cliffs, rolling forested hills and bush-land with baobab trees (Adansonia digitata), all ideal for wildlife. To the north is Mwaluganje Forest Reserve characterised by a montage of evergreen dry lowland forest cover. Manolo River flows from the south to the north of the sanctuary lined by bush riverine forest. The African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) is the dominant large mammal species. According to a 2012 aerial elephant count by KWS, out of the approximately 400 elephants in the ecosystem, 160 individuals (i.e. 40 per cent) were in MES. Other animal species include buffalo, impala, warthog and a variety of birdlife, reptiles and invertebrates (KWS, 2013). Moreover, MES has a sacred groove 'Kitsanze Falls' and a small patch of sacred indigenous forest (popularly referred to as Kaya Mtae) that holds high cultural importance to the native Duruma people (Blackett, 1994).

Formation of MES

The formation of MES commenced in 1991 when KWS, the government agency in charge of conserving and managing wildlife resources in Kenya, proposed to Kwale County Council that the land between Mwaluganje Forest Reserve and Shimba Hills National Reserve be declared a conservation area (Kiiru, 1995). The move was prompted by increased cultivation along the Manolo River valley, resulting in intense human–elephant conflict as elephants moved between the two forests. Cultivation on the Godoni Cliff (east of Manolo River) also posed an environmental problem due to severe soil erosion and silting of the Pemba River. The issue of declaring Golini-Mwaluganje a conservation area was, however, complicated by the existing land tenure arrangements in the valley. While Mwaluganje area (west of Manolo River) was under the custody of Kwale County Council, Godoni (east of Manolo River) had been adjudicated and individual title deeds issued (Kiiru, 1995).

MES was eventually formed in 1993 after several meetings between KWS, landowners in the proposed corridor, local administrators, politicians and the Coast Development Authority. The objectives of the project were to mitigate serious human–elephant conflict in the area, generate benefits to the landowners through tourism development and maintain the sanctuary as a conservation area (MES, 1994). Kwale County Council initiated the land adjudication process in Mwaluganje area to issue title deeds to the landowners. Following the adjudication, MES comprised two main adjudication sections: Golini adjudication section with 107 landowners and Mwaluganje adjudication section with 175 landowners, all occupying approximately 7,000 acres. Golini section is predominantly inhabited by Digo, while Mwaluganje is predominantly occupied by the Duruma sub-ethnic group.

METHODS

A random sample consisting of 130 of the 282 landowners who ceded their land to establish MES was selected, stratified by the two settlement areas in the MES (Golini and Mwaluganje A/B). These respondents completed a questionnaire administered by the researchers. Five ex-officio and 19 staff including the directors of MES also completed the questionnaire and were interviewed as key informants for the study. They were selected because of their past and present involvement in tourism development in the community, hence deemed to have in-depth information about MES and CBTI development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent characteristics

A total of 130 respondents (50 Golini and 80 Mwaluganje) participated in the study. Characteristics of the respondents are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of community respondents

Attribute		Percentage
Gender	Male	69.2
	Female	30.8
Education	No formal education	54.6
	Primary	27.7
	Secondary and above	17.7
Sources of livelihood	Mixed farming	52.3
	Crop farming	32.3
	Livestock	1.5
	Employment	9
	Business	4.6

Half of the landowners practised mixed farming (subsistence farming and keeping of livestock) as their means of livelihood and a third were crop farmers. The main crops are maize interplanted with bananas, cassava and cowpeas. Respondents indicated that during the dry season (January-April) their livestock illegally graze in MES, reducing the attractiveness of the site, while during the rainy season their farms experience increased human–wildlife conflict, sometimes leading to loss of both wildlife and humans.

The results depict a community that is not formally well educated and with little business involvement and hence may face challenges in making informed decisions on matters relating to tourism development. This is in line with Hall et al.'s (2005) view that limited skills and knowledge of tourism can contribute to false expectations about the benefits of tourism and a lack of preparedness for the change associated with tourism.

Levels of involvement

The results indicated that most community members (95.4 per cent) were involved in tourism development. This suggests that the respondents understood the importance of community participation in Community Based Tourism (CBT) development in MES. The respondents indicated that they actively participated during annual general meetings and special general meetings, and were also free to visit the MES office to discuss matters they felt to be of concern to the community. Those who said that they "were not involved" indicated that it was the role of the directors and MES staff to do everything on behalf of the community as long as the community got "good money" at the end of the year.

The community in MES not only gave part of their land for conservation and tourism, but also wanted to be actively involved in tourism. At inception, MES was run by a manager appointed by Eden Wildlife Trust. However, the community called for greater involvement in the running of the sanctuary as they wanted active participation in the process.

The community opted for a process of community development by calling upon the donor to dismiss a manager employed at inception (who was not a local) and engage a local person. The donor felt that the proposed manager from the local community lacked capacity to manage the sanctuary. However, overwhelmed by the community's persistence, the donor dismissed the non-local manager but stopped providing money to pay for the new manager and fuel for car transport. The community welcomed the decision, as

Woodland kingfisher (*Halcyon senegalensis*) © Marc Hockings

they thought that they could manage the project without donor support, an illustration of the community's lack of awareness and information on the complex nature of tourism development and conservation.

As part of the questionnaire, the roles of community members in tourism development were then investigated using seven statements (Table 2) rated on a five-point Likert scale from "1 = Strongly agree" to "5 = Strongly disagree" (Dahles, 2000).

Most respondents agreed that they were involved in benefit sharing, were involved from the inception of MES and were involved in decision making, while few were involved in project implementation in the area (Table 2).

Involvement at inception

Active involvement at the inception of a project helps win the support of the community at an early stage, identify major concerns and plan for mitigation measures for any anticipated negative impacts. Results indicate that community members were extensively involved at the inception of MES (Table 2).

Respondents commented that during inception they attended many meetings called by the conservation agency in conjunction with a local conservation NGO (Eden Wildlife Trust). During such meetings, members gave consent for their land to be utilised for the project; modalities of establishing the sanctuary were agreed upon; various community committees were formed to ensure community interests, especially on matters relating to land ownership, and fence construction and tourism development were adequately addressed. Manyara and Jones (2007) and Akama et al. (2011) similarly noted in their studies, that although external intervention was vital in the mobilisation process of CBTI formation, the extensive involvement of local communities at inception helped to ensure wide acceptance of these projects. Three community members who were not living on their land at the time of inception mentioned that they joined MES because all their neighbours had joined, and they could not continue to live in the area because of high incidences of human–elephant conflict.

Involvement in decision making

Involvement in decision making is important because projects should not be imposed on the community. Further, communities have valuable information that can contribute towards the success of tourism ventures. Respondents expressed the view that the extent of community involvement in decision making regarding tourism development in MES was high (Table 2). They mentioned that the directors consulted them when evaluating the performance of an investor in the sanctuary, in road maintenance, on matters relating to human–wildlife conflict, fence management, staff recruitment, and annual compensation payment among others. These findings concur with those of Muganda et al. (2013) who established that communities want their views and opinion considered when decisions on tourism development in their localities are made.

Involvement in benefits sharing

One of the expected outputs of local community participation in tourism development is benefits sharing. It was therefore important to establish whether the community benefited from tourism development. All respondents affirmed either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they benefited from tourism development (Table 2).

Table 2: Respondent role in tourism development (n=130; SA – strongly agree, A – agree, N – neutral, D – disagree, SD – strongly disagree)

Roles in tourism development	SA	A	N	D	SD
I was actively involved at the inception of MES	35	95	-	-	-
I am involved in decision making in MES	14	116	-	-	-
I am involved in benefit sharing in MES	110	20	-	-	-
I am actively involved in conservation of the natural and cultural resources in MES	-	41	13	72	4
I report unsustainable practices within MES to the conservation agency	-	36	-	82	12
I am an ambassador of MES in promoting it	-	15	10	99	6
I am involved in implementation of various projects in MES	-	4	4	108	14

The benefits derived included annual compensation, employment, construction of schools and dispensaries, improved water supply and provision of a bursary to needy students. Similar results were observed by Kibicho (2008) in Kimana wildlife sanctuary in Kenya, and by Manyara and Jones (2007) in various CBTIs in Kenya. High levels of participation in benefits sharing in this study were attributed to the tangible nature of the benefits (especially the annual compensation) and minimal cost of accessing such benefits (once the amount for compensation is declared, individuals walk into the office to collect their dues). However, findings that the community benefited from tourism development must be approached with caution since such benefits could be below the expectations of the community. Compensation to landowners in MES has been less than USD 5 per acre per annum for the last 5 years, though some community projects and a bursary programme have been initiated (MES, 2012).

Involvement in conservation

Involvement of the local community in resource conservation guarantees their sustainability and that of the tourism development they support. A majority of respondents indicated that they were not involved in any way in conservation activities, while around one third mentioned that they had only attended some public forums (*barazas*) where conservation issues were discussed.

Unsustainable practices and failure to promote CBTIs by local communities can derail tourism development. Respondents were asked if they reported unsustainable practices observed in MES to the conservation agency and if they were ambassadors of MES in promoting it. Reporting unsustainable practices to conservation agencies and promoting the CBTI by the local community are indications of 'ownership' and satisfaction with the tourism development taking place. The majority of respondents neither reported unsustainable practices to the conservation agency, nor promoted the sanctuary as a tourism site (Table 2).

Respondents who did not report unsustainable practices indicated that they occasionally benefited from collecting a few resources (e.g. poles, firewood, fish and herbs) from the sanctuary, and therefore reporting such activities would make it difficult to access them. On promoting MES, respondents indicated that they lacked capacity to do so and furthermore it was the duty of the management.

Involvement in project implementation

Almost all respondents (93.9 per cent) indicated that they were not involved in the implementation of various activities in MES. Respondents were content with implementation being carried out by employees. Past experience had shown that implementation of activities through various community committees had led to conflicts.

In this regard, one respondent reported that "initially when there were many committees from the community handling implementation of various projects (e.g. fence clearing, road maintenance and compensation payment), there were very many conflicts amongst community members due to corruption and embezzlement of funds, but now that all matters are handled by the manager's office in conjunction with the board these conflicts are no more". Fear of conflicts within the local community discouraged community members from participating in implementing various projects unless they were contracted to carry out such projects.

Key informant interviews

Interviews with the directors and staff indicated that apart from the annual general meeting (AGM) during which members were informed of the performance of the sanctuary and discussions took place on future plans, 'special general meetings' were held whenever the need arose to discuss upcoming issues, projects and for education. At least one 'special general meeting' was held every year. Landowners were free to raise any issues arising with both the MES and Senior Warden's office.

Directors (both elected and ex-officio, who constitute the board) were the key decision makers. However, they consulted the local community before implementing major decisions. One director said "when we found it necessary to get another investor, we called a special AGM to discuss the matter with the community; after approval and in conjunction with KWS we identified suitable sites and advertised the expression of interest". Probed on whether the community had confidence in the leadership and management structure, the directors replied in the affirmative, and added that "both Golini and Mwaluganje villages are equally represented (3 directors each) on the board, if the landowners were unhappy with any of us they would vote him/her out when their term expires". Further, the ex-officio members were on the board to ensure that decisions made are in line with the government policy on Wildlife Conservation and Management. The interviews confirmed that all landowners benefited from the annual compensation, very few landowners/siblings were employed, while elected directors received

Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), Kenya © Marc Hockings

allowances for attending management and board meetings.

Even though the community members were involved in decision making, they had no power to ensure that whatever had been agreed upon was implemented. This was well expressed by the comments of one director; "we were selected to be members of a project implementation committee for fence rehabilitation and construction of a new gate in the sanctuary by the conservation agency, but after the first introductory meeting the agency implemented both projects without involving us. Some of the issues we agreed on during the meeting were not implemented – for example, the employment of locals. We were only invited at the opening of both projects." Failure to involve the community in the implementation phase is a major issue that needs to be adequately addressed if the local community is to remain committed to tourism development in CBTIs.

CONCLUSIONS

We examined the roles played by the local community in MES. These included giving/providing consent on the utilisation of their land for tourism and conservation purposes, providing views and opinions on the nature of tourism development to be undertaken, and sharing benefits of tourism development. Kihima (2014) notes that, in addition to aesthetic and scenic quality, the quality of a tourism destination resides also in the local actors who deliver and benefit from tourism. This underscores the importance of local participation in destination areas. Manyara and Jones (2007) describe Community Based Enterprises as projects where the local communities are true owners, are directly involved in managing, and derive direct benefits from them.

Community involvement in tourism development in MES was found to be of a low to moderate extent. This represents "induced community participation" in Tosun's (2006) typology and "functional participation,

participation for material gains and participation by consultation" in Pimbert and Pretty's (1995) typology, both of which are regarded as degrees of tokenism by Tosun (2006). These rungs of participation were below the expected level of participation for sustainable tourism development as they are more passive and less authentic and interactive.

The local community is allowed to hear and be heard, and have a voice in the tourism development process, but they do not have the power to ensure that their views will be taken into account by other powerful interest groups such as government bodies (Tosun, 2006). Community participation in tourism development aims to achieve ideal participation levels, self-mobilisation (Pimbert & Pretty, 1995) and spontaneous participation (Tosun, 2006) for the sustainability of the industry. However, this seems not to have been achieved in MES despite being in existence for 20 years.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bonface Odiara Kihima holds a PhD and MSc in Tourism from the University of Lyon 2 in France. His areas of research interest include: Ecotourism, Community Based Tourism, Beach Tourism and Destination Marketing. He is actively engaged in tourism research and consultancy. He is a member of the eco-rating committee of Ecotourism Kenya as well as the Tourism Professional Association. For 10 years, he has been responsible for University teaching and supervision of post graduate students in the area of Tourism. Currently, he is a Senior Lecturer and Chair of Tourism and Travel Management at the Technical University of Kenya.

Paul Makau Musila is the Director of Tourism Promotions, Kwale County Government in Kenya. He holds a Master of Science degree in International Tourism Management from Kenyatta University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Wildlife Management from Moi University. His research interests include Tourism Product Development, tourism marketing, Community Based Tourism and Conservancy management.

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RESUMEN

El desarrollo y el crecimiento de las Iniciativas de turismo comunitario (CBTI, por sus siglas en inglés) en la década de 1990 partió de la necesidad de aumentar el apoyo comunitario para la conservación de la vida silvestre, asegurando al mismo tiempo que las comunidades locales pudieran participar y beneficiarse del desarrollo turístico. Sin embargo, varias CBTI en Kenia han incumplido las expectativas de la comunidad y la industria turística. Este estudio examinó la medida en que las comunidades locales participan en el desarrollo del turismo en Mwaluganje Conservancy a través de una encuesta comunitaria y entrevistas con informantes clave. La participación de la comunidad fue limitada y se circunscribió en gran parte a dar su consentimiento sobre la utilización de la tierra y la distribución de beneficios, y ofrecer sus puntos de vista acerca del desarrollo turístico que se debería emprender. Carecían de poder para garantizar la implementación de los acuerdos. Recomendamos una estrategia alternativa de desarrollo turístico que implique la participación activa de los actores clave en todo el proceso de desarrollo del turismo.

RÉSUMÉ

La genèse et la croissance des initiatives de tourisme communautaire dans les années 1990 étaient fondées sur leur capacité perçue d'accroître le soutien communautaire à la conservation de la faune, tout en veillant à ce que les communautés locales puissent participer et tirer profit du développement du tourisme. Cependant, certaines initiatives au Kenya n'ont répondu ni aux attentes de l'industrie du tourisme ni à celles des communautés. Cette étude a examiné dans quelle mesure les communautés locales participent au développement du tourisme dans la réserve de Mwaluganje au moyen d'un sondage communautaire et des entretiens avec des intervenants clés. Il s'avère que la participation communautaire est limitée et se cantonne en grande partie à donner un consentement sur l'utilisation des terres et le partage des avantages, et à donner des points de vue sur le développement du tourisme à entreprendre. Le pouvoir leur manque pour faire appliquer les accords. Nous recommandons une stratégie alternative de développement du tourisme qui implique une participation active des acteurs clés dans l'ensemble du processus de développement du tourisme.