

The Impact of Parks-Based Tourism on Communities Bordering the Northern Safari Circuit in Tanzania

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Parks and Peoples
Sophomore College, 2011
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October 11, 2011



CONTEXT

The tourism trade in Tanzania has only begun to flourish in the last ten years. Independence from colonial powers ushered in a socialist regime that controlled the Tanzania's economic development with a wary eye and a controlling hand. During this period, foreign economic influence and investment was discouraged and highly regulated. Starting in 1985, governmental reform began to open up the economy to foreign markets. Fewer regulations allowed for private businesses to replace state-owned enterprises and a booming tourist industry was born.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism brought USD1,000 million into the Tanzanian economy in 2008 (representing 32% of total exports (WITC, 2008)). Tourism is currently encouraged both by the international community and by the Tanzanian government. Parks-based tourism is cited as an ally to diverse conservation schemes and increasingly touted as being simultaneously a development tool. Tourism's potential to create jobs, increase education and expertise, and increase access to global markets are well reported. If tourism can sustain economic growth over time, it has the potential to raise the standard of living and reduce poverty in Tanzania.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Is ecotourism in the Northern Safari Circuit working for the poor?

Given the impact of tourism and its status in the public sphere, the international community and the government, and especially given Tanzania's continued economic vulnerability, the efficacy of tourism as a force of poverty reduction is important to address.

HYPOTHESES

- 1) Tanzania's ecotourism sector is a success story, generating Substantial benefits for the poor.
- 2) Ecotourism's benefits to the poor are minimal, barely offsetting wildlife-induced damage while denying alternative income sources.

This paper will focus on the latter of the two hypotheses, making the assumption that Krystal has already expounded upon the first in her paper (also see "Making Success Work for the Poor: Package Tourism in Northern Tanzania" by the Overseas Development Institute).

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the second of a two-part series and will focus exclusively on testing the second hypothesis. Although this suite of papers is meant to give a holistic view of the impacts of the ecotourism on locals to the Northern Safari Circuit, due to brevity, I will focus on analyzing and extrapolating from the traditional critiques given to the conventional parks-based ecotourism model in Tanzania. Notwithstanding (and not disregarding) the preceding paper and its mention of successful case studies, this paper will focus on funds channeled through TANAPA and the inequitable distribution of benefits to communities bordering national parks that results. That the vast majority of income from tourism is channeled through the parks motivates this tunnel vision. Further, this paper will restrict its analysis to the Serengeti National Park and the communities that border it.



IMPLICATIONS

The prevalence of poverty across Tanzania is of paramount importance in understanding the impact of tourism in the Northern Safari Circuit. In Tanzania, average annual earnings are US\$280, placing Tanzania 183rd in the world ranking. The average Tanzanian can expect to live for 46 years. 44% of children in Tanzania under the age of five are malnourished (ODI). Given the economic vulnerability of the people at risk (members of border communities are typically additionally economically disadvantaged compared to the national average), **the use of Tanzania's resources for luxury and leisure can only be justified if these avenues can be proven to provide for the basic needs of the Tanzanian people.**

In the socio-economic environment illustrated by the above statistics, GDP and total foreign earnings are inappropriate metrics by which to gauge success of tourism in Tanzania. Analysis of this fragile economic environment should consider not only total foreign revenue but the direct economic benefits of tourism to Tanzania's most vulnerable constituents. Broadly, the industry must ensure that those paying the costs (border communities) are receiving the benefits in equal or greater share. Despite other important aspects of tourist

infrastructure (most notably its conservation value) the above statistics illustrate why no conservation goal can or should be met before the subsistence needs of the local people. Given circumstances, the primary goal of the tourism industry at the present should be to function as a poverty elimination tool.

METHODS

This paper will treat the populations bordering the parks (Serengeti NP specifically) as a dependent variable. This approach will attempt to isolate the actual economic effects, in terms of USD, of parks-based tourism on these communities. Due to the complexity of the system, a multiplicity of metrics is used to gauge success in the industry. I'll further focus my analysis by taking wealth as an indicator for overall system health, as opposed to satisfaction or other development ratings. Essentially, this methodology will further narrow the research question to: How much are boarder communities *paying for* and *earning from* parks-based ecotourism?

The assumption underlying this cost-benefit analysis is that if the former (the costs) exceeds the latter (the benefits), the implications for infrastructure change are weighty. Given the high stakes for both donors making large investments and for recipients living below the poverty line, confirming that tourism in Tanzania is producing the results that the government and international community expect and assume is imperative.

PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF BENEFIT DISTRIBUTION

Even within the confines of these three case studies, a true cacophony of conflicts presents itself. Increased clarity can be achieved by separating these issues into two distinct categories. I will describe them here in brief and explore them in further detail in the following sections.

The first is that trickle-down benefits from parks to local communities are simply too small. This is such a common problem of trickle-down economics and top-down benefit schemes that it seems to approach a tautology, yet it describes the quandary wherein Tanzania's tour industry finds itself. The benefits that reach local communities are too few to balance the costs (especially wildlife-induced) of maintaining tourist attractions.

The second problem is that said benefits fail to address pressing, immediate, short-term needs. Instead, funding goes to secondary forms of assistance (clinics, classrooms, roads) which are able to attract funding and capture the imagination of the international development sphere, but are not suitable replacements for the means of subsistence restricted by the park.



PROBLEM 1) INSUFFICIENT BENEFITS

The insufficiency of quantifiable benefits from parks to local peoples is illustrated in the graph below. In the ten years between 1991 and 2001, TANAPA returned approximately 1% of their earnings (and the number has been decreasing with time) to local people through various development projects (Kideghesho). This study calculated the per capita amount donated by TANAPA (essentially the value of distributed benefits divided by the population in each of seven districts bordering the Serengeti National Park).

Table 6: Indirect benefits donated to local people by TANAPA through development projects in seven districts bordering Serengeti National Park***

District	Population in rural areas**	Total donation in 5 years USD*	Average per year (USD)	Amount per person per year (USD)
Serengeti	161,024	248,000	49,600	0.31
Tarime	417,609	84,000	16,800	0.04
Bunda	207,124	98,000	19,600	0.09
Ngorongoro	122,838	49,000	9,800	0.08
Bariadi	572,929	67,000	13,400	0.02
Magu	377,202	25,000	5,000	0.01
Meatu	241,389	97,000	19,400	0.08

*Uhuru (2006); **URT (2002)

*** It is assumed that all villages in rural areas access the benefits

In the table (from Kideghesho), the far right column represents the amount, in USD, that each person living on the park border receives in benefits from TANAPA. It's important to note that these figures do not reflect benefits to the average Tanzanian; benefits to the very communities who share a border with the park, many of whom were forcefully evicted from park lands. These numbers are harrowingly small.

PROBLEM 2) INEFFECTIVE FORMS OF DELIVERED BENEFITS

That local communities are often shortchanged is a commonly lamented and well-known shortcoming of tourist industries globally. While the movement to make tourism more equitable has a strong footing in Tanzania, many benefit sharing problems fail to meet people's immediate, short-term needs and thus render themselves less effective. This is the second major weakness of Serengeti NP's benefit-sharing scheme as it exists today.

The table below shows the costs and benefits of parks-based tourism to local communities in the Western Serengeti corridor. Quantifiable costs to the community include reported crop damage by wildlife and agricultural opportunity costs. Benefits to locals include a minimal amount of permitted community hunting, plus the value of development projects funded by the park (these benefits take the form of roads, classrooms, clinics, etc).

Table 5: Estimates of Western Serengeti economic benefits and costs for landholders

Benefits/costs	Value (USD/year)
TANAPA Support to Community Initiated Projects (SCIP)	+ 15 400
SWCP/WD community hunting	+ 3 500
Wildlife crop damage	-484 000
Agricultural opportunity costs of Grumeti and Ikorongo Game Reserve	-540 000
Total	-1 005 100

Source: Emerton & Mfunda 1999.

This graph not only highlights that local communities come out in the red, it also shows that they sacrifice means of subsistence (agricultural rights and crop yield) for more superficial forms of assistance (provided by SCIP). SCIP (Support to Community Initiated Projects) is a program that provides support to communities bordering the parks in various forms. In the past, SCIP has funded,

The construction of schools, student dormitories, teachers' facilities, laboratories, medical dispensaries, health centers, youth centers, training centers, roads, libraries, water projects, the purchase of text books and school furnishings, the support of childrens' rights, and many other community development projects. (Source 16).



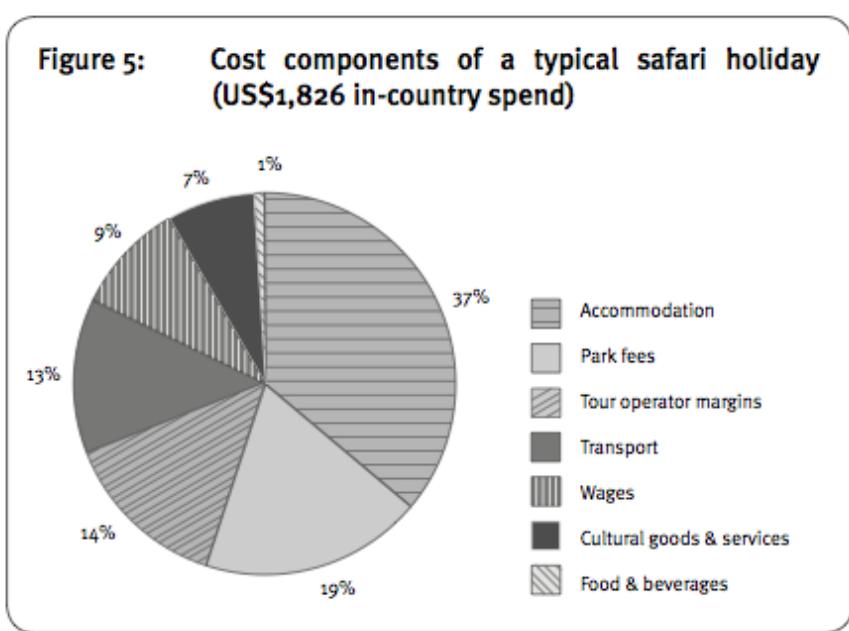
While these projects are hugely beneficial and worthwhile, the impact of infrastructure, educational and even health improvements can be rendered null if these communities don't have access to the means of survival. To return to the second barrier that prevents parks-based tourism from benefitting local communities, current forms of assistance don't address immediate needs. This sentiment is eloquently expressed in the quote below:

You have built that school for our village. Yes, a good idea. My son asked for breakfast this morning before he left for school. I heard his mother replying, "There is no food – nothing! Didn't you see the animals eat the last bananas? We are both angry and hungry. Is this what you call good neighborliness?" (Mzee Joseph Sangito of Ngurdoto village 10th February, 1999).

Negative local perception, combined with statistics confirming widespread poverty and malnutrition, is a good indicator of the inefficacy of current benefit programs. But what room is there for the current infrastructure to become more efficient in delivering economic gains from tourism to the poor?

PRO-POOR POTENTIAL IN THE NORTHERN SAFARI CIRCUIT

Millions of dollars per annum are flowing into the Tanzanian economy. Currently, many external actors capture these funds in lieu of the communities that sacrifice to maintain the tourist infrastructure. These persons and groups include foreign hunting (companies with licenses to lucrative hunting areas), the state (which benefits from the resulting hunting fees), local authorities, and wealthy Tanzanians who can afford to hunt wildlife rendered legally inaccessible to locals. But the most substantial leakage of funds occurs in within the tourist infrastructure itself.



As seen in the graph above (ODI), the top three tourist expenditures (together capturing 70% of tourists' spending) are: 1) accommodation, 2) park fees and 3) tour operator margins. According to ODI, money spent in these three sectors has a far lower percentage of "pro-poor impact (Source 2)" than does money concentrated in the four remaining sectors. Compared to "wages" (considered 100% pro-poor), accommodation and park fees (12 and 5% pro-poor, respectively) are shockingly inefficient at distributing benefits to the poor. In effect, 70% of tourist spending is concentrated in sectors with relatively little pro-poor impact (ODI). Unfortunately, this isn't easy to change.

Many independent operators are making efforts to strengthen relationships with and increase benefits to local communities. One successful example is The Cultural Tourism Program, which has generated up US\$0.5million annually for poor communities (Source 17). While this figure is significant and this and similar efforts cannot be discounted, US\$ 0.5million is a mere third of the benefits distributed annually by TANAPA. Table six showed that benefits from TANAPA were hugely inadequate, reduced to cents per person when dispersed to communities.

The US1.4 million funneled by TANAPA in 2007 into community development projects is recontextualized when we consider the amount of money that TANAPA earns in gross. TANAPA earns by far the largest share of foreign income and, in 2002, donated a mere 1% of their income to development projects in rural communities bordering the park (Kdieghesho). So while the efforts of smaller operators in the Northern Serengeti circuit are delivering increased benefits to the poor, tourism in the Northern Safari Circuit cannot significantly alter its pro-poor profile through these operators alone.



THE COSTS OF PARKS-BASED TOURISM TO BORDER COMMUNITIES

Making tourism work for the poor in the Northern Safari circuit is not just a philanthropic goal, but an issue of honest returns: of replacing costs with benefits. Inadequate benefit distribution is exacerbated by the extremely high costs paid by communities bordering the parks. The costs of tourism to locals are in some cases well known, but worth reviewing here to contextualize the benefits received in compensation.

Land resource opportunity costs are of chief importance, primarily the forgone ability to graze livestock and cultivate on park land. Because most of the communities in question practice pastoralism, subsistence agriculture, or both, the restriction of land resources doesn't just decrease standard of living; in many cases it usurps completely the communities' ability to subsist.

Conflicts between people, cattle and wildlife are exacerbated by the severe limitations of land necessitated by parks. These conflicts include, crop damage (crop damage can mean starvation for communities with limited land access), disease transmission from wildlife to livestock (traditional techniques for preventing the spread of disease require vast swathes of land), deaths and injuries caused by wildlife (aggravate by the enforced proximity of border communities and park wildlife).

Livestock depredation is also a huge concern—both economically and socially. Livestock are the primary measure of wealth and source of dietary protein for the majority of the communities bordering the Serengeti NP. Livestock have additional social value to the Maasai (in Maasai culture, livestock are integral to marriage, status, and inter-tribal relations). Wildlife-related death and injury of livestock thus significantly impact socio-economic status, health, social capital and relations between parks and neighboring peoples.



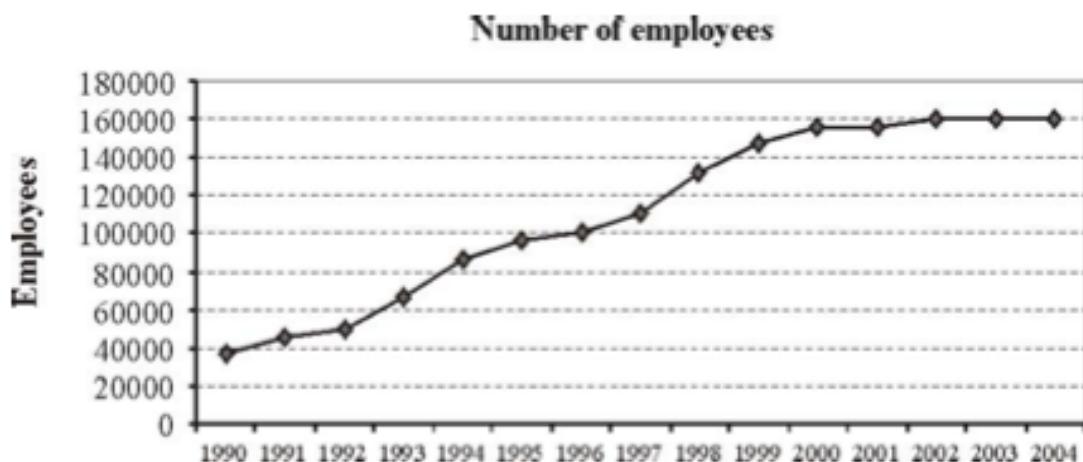
POTENTIAL OF PARKS-BASED TOURISM TO BRING FUTURE BENEFITS

Many of the manifold tragedies discussed here were visited on communities in the past. Most are associated with evictions, which are irreversible for many reasons. But what promise does the future hold? Tourism revenue in Tanzania continues to increase and some suggest that the issues discussed above were necessary sacrifices for a tourism infrastructure that will eventually bring widespread economic prosperity.

Before analyzing the plausibility of such claims, it should be noted that dependency on tourism has its own demerits. Switching from land dependency to market dependency is not a transition without repercussions. Most communities that border the tourism circuit are accustomed to pastoralism or subsistence. Although adept at dealing with drought, seasonal change and tsetse flies, there is no reason to assume that these communities have the means to cope with market cycles and price shocks. Pastoral societies have systems for coping with dramatic change, but these coping mechanisms and safety nets don't include savings and retirement funds.

Additionally, few locals have the skills or access to the training that would qualify them for jobs in the tourist industry and in many cases tenuous or resentful relationships form a barrier between local communities and the tourist industry. On top of the aforementioned challenges, National Parks often refrain from hiring locals, for fear of their facilitating poaching along park boundaries.

All these challenges form barriers to locals successfully permeating the industry. Further, the assumption that tourism creates jobs is a problematic one for two reasons. First, the tourist industry has limited capacity. The graph below (Source 3) shows that jobs in the industry are leveling off despite increasing foreign revenue. The second complication, mentioned above, is that few jobs in tourism go to those who pay the cost for tourist infrastructure.



CONCLUSION

The costs of Tanzania's ecotourism industry currently far outweigh the benefits to communities bordering the Serengeti National Park. This inequitable distribution of benefits effects persons with both traditional and economically active livelihoods.

Locals to the Northern Safari Circuit would be better served by new, pragmatics strategies that meet their immediate needs.

While Tanzania's tourism industry has been an economic success for the country at large and continues to grow (in revenue), at present it is taking an economic toll on communities. The benefits of parks-based tourism to locals fail to balance the costs of tourism-related restricted resource access, wildlife-induced damage, and economic vulnerability that parks-based tourism inflicts on local communities. A number of inefficient systems are implicated in the inequity of the market value chain and the blame shouldn't be placed on tourists, government officials or TANAPA. However, the rough cost-benefit analysis of this system reveals the sheer force of tourism's economic impact on local people. The impact of influence, community-focused operators striving to equitably distribute benefits to communities should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, the economic force of bodies like TANAPA dwarfs small operators, and additionally, often these increased benefits to communities come in inappropriate forms. This leads to the second part of the conclusion, which implies the importance of ensuring that funds earmarked for community projects are spent effectively.



STATUS OF HYPOTHESIS AND MOVING FORWARD

The hypothesis that parks-based tourism is not working for the poor in the Northern Safari Circuit seems to be supported, but with a hopeful caveat: while this hypothesis accurately describes the current infrastructure, it doesn't adequately consider successful efforts at equitable benefit distribution nor the significant potential for increased economic participation in tourism by local communities. Because tourism does contribute so significantly to GDP, its potential to promote economic growth is substantial. Maximizing pro-poor gains from tourism will require more than support for small community-based projects. Wide scale equitable wealth distribution will require high-level policy change and rigorous measures ensuring that tourist infrastructure prioritizes the participation and benefit of the poor (starting with surrounding communities). This infrastructure change will require streamlining government bureaucracy, limiting the percentage of funds channeled through the state, increased foreign support, increased local ownership and decreased monopolies of western, market driven business practices. The industry should be regulated to require local sourcing in goods, services and mentality in order to preserve the resources, skills, and knowledge of local communities.

To date, the development of tourism in Tanzania does not consider poverty elimination a primary objective (Source 3). Tourism remains driven by economic, environmental and cultural perspectives at national and international levels. Given the massive impact that tourism has on many of the world's poor, improving benefit sharing and effectiveness needs to become a primary concern. The impact of tourism on livelihoods of the poor manifests itself in a myriad of ways. The extent to which the poor can benefit from tourism will depend not only on the size of the industry, but on the type of tourism, the way the sector is regulated, the devolvement of ownership and responsibility over land, regulations in the market, and access to capital and training.

While this array of factors complicates the notion that tourism creates jobs for the poor, it also shows the various possible avenues for change. Many of these factors can be influenced by policy change or external support. While the current system for benefit dispersal is

markedly inequitable, there is plenty of unexploited scope for the industry itself (and outside intervention) to enhance benefits to the poor from tourism.

As mentioned, many small operators are working to solve the first problem by increasing benefits to the poor. If these benefits aren't tailored to meet the peoples' immediate needs, tourism won't be an effective force of poverty eradication. While there is room to further increase pro-poor revenue in the tourist sector, these revenues won't provide sustained economic growth without first providing these communities with the means to subsist.

In order for tourism to continue to flourish in Tanzania, requisite improvements in both policy and infrastructure need to be made. These changes should implement pro-poor strategies whenever possible (including when this means sourcing above market value). Examples of policy reform include taxation, licensing, and labor laws. Increased physical infrastructure includes roads, bridges, water supply and transportation. The construction and organization of these added systems should make local sourcing and equitable benefit distribution top priorities.



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