



Community-based Tourism in Northern Tanzania: Increasing Opportunities, Escalating Conflicts and an Uncertain Future

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Abstract

Community-based tourism (CBT) and ecotourism activities in northern Tanzania have grown rapidly over the past decade. CBT is strategically important to the national tourism industry, now valued at approximately \$725 million annually, in terms of diversifying tourism products and relieving pressure on over-crowded protected areas. Locally controlled and managed ecotourism activities are also essential for providing economic opportunities to relieve rural poverty and create incentives for sustainable natural resource stewardship. Because of these complementary opportunities, CBT has assumed a focal role in Tanzania's tourism development strategies and policies, as well as those for wildlife conservation and rural development. CBT thus provides important opportunities to take advantage of the increasing demand for Tanzania's ecotourism products in order to create environmental and socioeconomic benefits at national, regional, and local levels. Achieving this depends principally on ensuring that benefits from resource-based enterprises are generated and captured by rural communities possessing secure rights to natural resources. The realization of this potential is threatened, however, by escalating conflicts among stakeholders over control of and access to the lands and natural resources that are used as tourism products. Such conflicts in northern Tanzania are centered on contests amongst the private sector, local communities, and district and national government bodies. These conflicts undermine the potential of CBT by creating an uncertain enabling environment for community and private sector investments in resource management and tourism development, and lead to short-term perspectives among key stakeholders. The conflicts over CBT in northern Tanzania are fundamentally about competing claims to valuable resources and the benefits they generate through tourism activities. The development of CBT, when viewed within the context of these conflicts over lands and natural resources, is at root a governance issue characterized by power struggles between local communities and outside interests. Finding ways to address these political economy factors and secure local rights to the lands and natural resources that underpin CBT is critical for effective tourism development, conservation, and rural livelihoods in northern Tanzania.

Introduction

Tourism is currently among the most important industries in Tanzania, accounting for 40% of total exports in 1998/99 and 12% of GDP in 2001 (World Bank/MIGA, 2002). In the northern part of the country, where the principle tourism attractions such as Mount Kilimanjaro and the Serengeti are found, the industry plays a particularly focal role in the local and regional economy.

Community-based tourism (CBT) refers to tourism that involves local communities, occurs on their lands, and is based on their cultural attractions and the natural assets found in their areas. CBT requires some form of partnership or joint venture with these villagers whereby locals receive payment in exchange for access to their lands. Although tourism in northern Tanzania remains primarily focused on conventional destinations within state-managed National Parks, as the industry grows and pressures to diversify increase there is a growing demand for CBT in collaboration with local communities.

CBT is now widely practiced throughout northern Tanzania in areas such as Loliondo Division of Ngorongoro District, and Monduli, Simanjiro, Babati, Mbulu, and Kiteto Districts. In many cases these activities occur on community lands adjacent to National Parks, but in others they occur in more remote areas far from protected area boundaries. Dozens of villages in the northern zone are now involved in tourism as an economic activity and form of land use. The importance of tourism in these local economies as a source of communal income through joint ventures, as well as employment and purchaser of local goods has increased rapidly. Ololosokwan village in Loliondo Division, for example, now earns over \$55,000 annually from several ecotourism joint ventures carried out on its land, income that has increased from virtually nothing only five years ago.

These developments hold important implications for rural development and poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, and national economic growth. The income from tourism represents a growing source of economic diversification for rural communities and an actual or potentially important tool in poverty alleviation efforts. At the same time, the continued growth of the overall tourism industry requires product diversification in order to increase the northern circuit's capacity and improve visitor experience. CBT provides important opportunities to broaden the spatial distribution of tourism, by expanding into community lands and relieving pressure on protected areas, as well as by creating new products integrating cultural and nature-based tourism. Finally, and perhaps most importantly to the future of Tanzania's tourism industry, locally managed CBT ventures can provide economic incentives for community stewardship of natural resources such as wildlife populations. Such local incentives are essential to the future of important wildlife populations found on village lands outside National Parks.

CBT's potential as a rural development and conservation tool in northern Tanzania is currently constrained by a variety of conflicts over its operation and implementation. Conflicts exist between tourism in village lands and other forms of resource use, such as tourist and resident hunting. The legal environment for communities to engage in tourism activities on their lands is confused and limiting, with most existing CBT ventures illegal according to Ministerial regulations. The main form of legal tourism activities in northern Tanzanian village lands at present, tourist hunting, is centrally controlled, realizes benefits chiefly at the national level, and cannot be managed according to local agreements.

Despite the manifold importance of CBT and its frequent mention in government policy documents as a priority area for growth, at present community opportunities are limited and CBT's future viability in northern Tanzania is in doubt. The essential element in developing CBT is ensuring land and resource rights are clearly and securely allocated to local institutions. Without such legal clarity communities have limited incentives to safeguard the local resource base, and investments by the private sector will not be secure. In northern Tanzania achieving such prerequisite conditions requires strengthening local land tenure and devolving authority over other natural resources such as wildlife. It also requires resolving existing conflicts and contests for resource control in ways that support local stewardship. Whether or not such resolution occurs will go a

long way towards determining if CBT can realize its potential in terms of economic growth, rural development, and conservation in northern Tanzania.

Increasing Opportunities from Community-based Tourism

There is little question that tourism has been the main source of economic growth in northern Tanzania over the past decade and despite recent problems due to international terrorism, war, and related external shocks, the growth prospects for the industry remain promising. National tourism earnings have grown by over 10% annually for more than a decade, from \$65 million in 1990 to \$725 million in 2001 (World Bank/MIRG, 2002). Most of this growth has resulted from visitors to protected areas such as National Parks and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. However, over the past five years the tourism industry in northern Tanzania has increasingly diversified into areas owned and managed by rural communities as clients and operators search for original experiences and creative products.

CBT's growth has been driven by a number of factors related to the development and evolution of the regional tourism industry. Foremost of these is that National Parks are increasingly crowded and operators under increasing pressure to diversify their product. Visitors to Tarangire National Park increased from 7,290 in 1987/88 to 54,454 by 1996/97 (Otto et al., 1998). With so many more people using limited space, the quality of experience for many tourists decreases. This is particularly true for high-end foreign tourists from the United States and Europe, the principle segment of the market that Tanzania is targeting. As a result of this congestion and a resultant moratorium on new developments within the northern circuit's parks, tourism activities have rapidly spread out of Tarangire and other parks and into neighboring village lands where an exclusive experience remains more available. CBT thus affords the tourism industry opportunities for continued growth and diversification, opportunities which are increasingly limited within the boundaries of National Parks.

The importance of CBT to the overall development of the national tourism industry is reflected in its prominence within various planning and policy documents. Tanzania's Integrated Tourism Master Plan advocates diversification of the tourism product in the northern part of the country onto community lands in areas such as Lake Natron (TDP, 2002). The Wildlife Policy of Tanzania advocates "Locating future major tourist developments outside PAs [protected areas] in order to reduce negative impacts and enhance benefit sharing with local communities" (MNRT, 1998).

While CBT's recent growth has been largely driven by national and regional market trends and product demands, the local context is equally if not more important. CBT arrangements between communities and private sector bodies generally provide tourism companies with access to village lands in exchange for contractual payments by the operator. The benefits from such arrangements can be financially significant for rural communities. Ololosokwan village in Loliondo Division has two major tourism venture arrangements, one a permanent lodge within an exclusive 15,000 acre concession area and the other a campsite used by luxury operators. Together these enterprises earn the

village over \$55,000 annually, which is in turn invested in community schools, health facilities, village government offices, and other social infrastructure (Alcorn et al., 2002). Sinya village in Monduli District has a contract which guarantees it a minimum of 30,000,000 Tsh per year for use of its lands by a tourism company. Loiborsoit village in Simanjiro District earned \$43,000 from a tourism joint venture between 1994 and 1998 (AWF, 2001). As CBT has grown and spread away from areas adjacent to National Parks, so have the amount and distribution of benefits accessible to local communities in the region increased. For example, Longido village in Monduli District participates in the Cultural Tourism Programme previously sponsored and developed by SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) and the Tanzania Tourist Board. The number of tourists visiting Longido annually through this programme grew from only 25 in 1995 to nearly 600 in 2000, when the village earned over \$10,000 from fees paid by visiting companies and individual tourists (Matungwe, 2000). Besides payments to villages, benefits to CBT accrue to individuals within the community. In Loliondo's Oloipiri village, wages paid by luxury camping operators to local guides and watchmen amounted to \$8,938.50 in 2002, over a five-fold increase from \$1,760 in 1997.

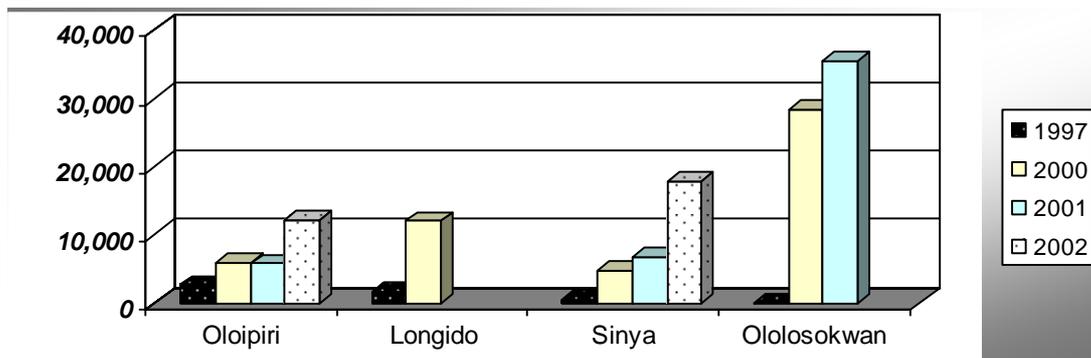


Figure 1: Annual revenues in recent years to select CBT villages in northern Tanzania. Earnings are given in US\$. The figures given for Ololosokwan represent only one of two tourism ventures in the village and thus do not include a large proportion of that village's tourism income.

The economic benefits villages realize from CBT ventures are increasingly looked at as an important tool in the nation's battle against poverty. The Tanzanian Tourism Development Programme states that "Community based tourism is now considered as key by many development organisations in the implementation of poverty eradication" (TDP, 2002). The draft Rural Development Strategy identifies tourism as a key tool in rural poverty alleviation, advocating that "the rural economy is linked to the new engines of economic growth, particularly tourism" (URT, 2001). This document states that "reducing poverty requires pro-poor growth," and therefore a "pro-poor tourism strategy will aim to unlock opportunities for economic gains and other livelihood benefits" (URT, 2001). At a recent tourism investment conference, Tanzania's President reinforced such statements in his keynote speech, calling for "a new focus on cultural tourism" and "a heightened onslaught on poverty, using the weapon of tourism" (URT, 2002).

The third major opportunity that CBT provides, in addition to rural poverty reduction and strengthening the national tourism industry, is as a source of incentives for local conservation measures. One of the central principles of ecotourism is that by earning income from biological resources such as forests, coral reefs, or wildlife, local communities will place value on them and work to conserve rather than deplete those resources. In northern Tanzania such incentives for community-based conservation are essential for sustainable resource management at the landscape level. With respect to wildlife, for example, critical corridors and dispersal areas lie on village lands outside protected areas. Tarangire National Park contains less than 20% of the overall range and dispersal areas for tens of thousands of zebra, wildebeest, elephants, and buffalo within the greater Tarangire ecosystem (Borner, 1985, TCP, 1997).

Because of the importance of unprotected areas to wildlife, the Ministerial Wildlife Sector Review Task Force formed in the mid-1990's concluded that "it is essential to the future of wildlife conservation in Tanzania that local communities who live amongst the wildlife should derive direct benefit from it, otherwise all future conservation efforts will be condemned to failure" (WSRTF, 1995). Consequently, the Wildlife Policy of Tanzania, passed by Parliament three years after the issuing of the task force report, advocates empowering "rural communities and private land holders to manage wildlife on their land for their own benefit" and "to ensure that wildlife conservation competes with other forms of land use" (MNRT, 1998).

The existing CBT ventures in northern Tanzania have to date gone farthest in transforming the aspirations of these documents to tangible on-the-ground economic realities and conservation gains. In Ololosokwan an estimated 38% of the village land has now been set aside by the community for purposes of wildlife conservation and tourism (Ndoinyo, 2002). The village has also invested in conservation by passing its own by-laws to strengthen protection and management of lands and natural resources, and employed village game scouts. Lolkisale village in Monduli District, adjacent to Tarangire National Park, has also entered into joint ventures with private safari companies for use of village lands. In order to provide for tourism activities the village has set aside over 32,000 acres of land bordering the park for exclusive wildlife and tourism uses, and a total of 162,000 acres as integrated wildlife and livestock grazing (Wildlife Working Group, unpublished data). Occurring in an area where wildlife habitat is rapidly being displaced by agriculture, such local measures are essential to the maintenance of the ecosystem.

Thus the increase in CBT in northern Tanzania that has occurred over the past five years as a result of the rapidly expanding overall national tourism industry holds critical opportunities in a variety of contexts. If CBT's development is supported and promoted, community-private sector ventures can produce a synergy among macroeconomic gains, local level poverty reduction, and biodiversity conservation (see Figure 2 below). This is obviously an idealized conceptualization and one that glosses over the many practical obstacles to achieving these conditions, but the limited evidence from CBT's brief history in the region in places like Ololosokwan suggest such manifold gains are already developing.

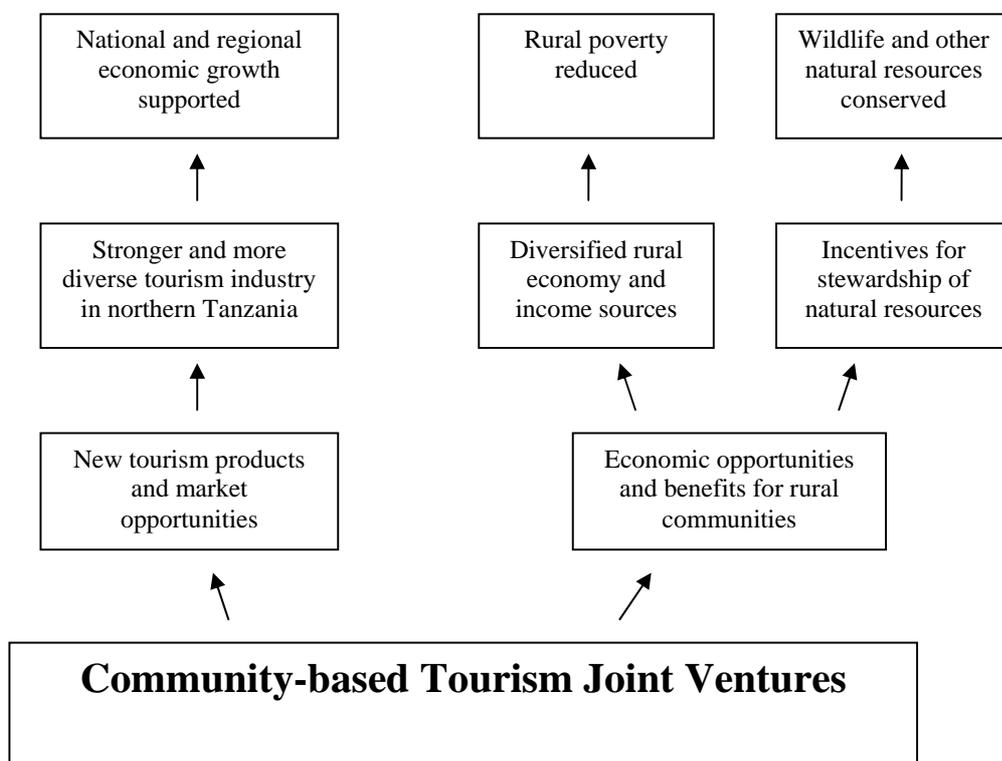


Figure 2: Multiple benefits in terms of tourism development, rural poverty reduction, and wildlife conservation that may result from community-based tourism ventures.

Escalating Conflicts

While CBT's prospects are bright based on recent levels of growth and increasing local benefits, its short and long term future is clouded by fundamental conflicts between different actors with different interests attempting to control tourism products and benefits in northern Tanzania. In particular, the growing use of village lands in the region for non-consumptive tourism ventures has created conflicts with the centrally managed tourist hunting system.

Tourist hunting is currently most widespread form of tourism and wildlife-based land use in northern Tanzania. Tourist hunting's value in direct revenues from hunting block concessions is estimated at \$6-8 million annually, although existing estimates vary widely (Alcorn et al., 2002). The block for Loliondo Game Controlled Area earned an estimated \$1.27 million in tourist hunting fees from 1988-1992, and returns from that area have most likely increased considerably since then (PAWM, 1996). Virtually all the village lands in northern Tanzanian savannah areas with remaining large mammal

populations are contained within the boundaries of hunting blocks administered by the Wildlife Division.

Thus all of the areas where CBT is currently expanding are already allocated to tourist hunting uses producing large amounts of income at the central level. Districts share in these revenues as well; 43% of Monduli District's annual budget comes from its portion of hunting revenues redistributed to the districts where hunting takes place (Robford Tourism, 1999). As CBT ventures grow through arrangements with village governments, which do not have secure claims to or shares of hunting revenues, conflicts have arisen between these activities and the established hunting blocks (Masara, 2000; Jones, 2001).

The Wildlife Conservation (Tourist Hunting) Regulations were issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism in September, 2000, partly to address the growing conflicts between tourism and tourist hunting in village land hunting blocks (MNRT, 2000). This subsidiary legislation to the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974 prohibits "game viewing, photographic safari, walking safari or any wildlife based tourist safari within a hunting block or within any wildlife protected area" except National Parks and Ngorongoro Conservation Area without the written permission of the Director of Wildlife (MNRT, 2000). Because of the overlap of hunting blocks with village lands where CBT ventures have been developed, this statute essentially prohibits tourism throughout the region's communal areas. Consequently numerous tour operators engaged in joint ventures with local communities have been informed that their activities are illegal (Masara, 2000). At least one operator has been charged under the provisions of the Tourist Hunting Regulations and taken to court. Dozens of villages stand to lose large sources of income as a result of these conflicts.

Just as Ololosokwan village in Loliondo Division has demonstrated the high potential for CBT ventures in terms of financial benefits and economic incentives for conservation, its experiences embody the conflicts that characterize these activities. Conflicts between tourism and tourist hunting have been endemic in that area for the past ten years, and have caused controversy, protests, and recriminations among parties throughout this period (see Masara, 2000; Anon., 2002; MNRT, 2002a; Ndoinyo, 2002; Thomlinson, 2002). Several of the tour operators using the village lands have received letters from the government informing them to cease operations and remove themselves from the area because of the conflict with tourist hunting activities and the prohibitions on tourism under the Tourist Hunting Regulations. The district council has also entered the fray, claiming that Ololosokwan's ventures are illegal and that payments from tour operators should in fact be made to the district (Masara, 2000; Ndoinyo, 2002).

Similar conflicts and contests for control of tourism activities have occurred elsewhere in key CBT areas, such as Lolkisale (Jones, 2001), Sinya village in northern Monduli District (Mbaria, 2002), and the Simanjiro area. The Cultural Tourism Programme's module at Longido village in Monduli District is reportedly illegal as well because it falls within the hunting block in Longido Game Controlled Area (SCFT, 2002). Thus virtually all of the CBT ventures in northern Tanzania are illegal, and existing income to local communities from such ventures inherently endangered and insecure.

An Uncertain Future for Community-based Tourism in Northern Tanzania

The conflicts over CBT in northern Tanzania are a product of the large and growing amounts of money involved in tourism ventures in the region and the valuable resources these enterprises use and depend upon. As the tourism pie has grown, the competition between different parties for access to and control of the resources feeding the industry is intensifying. Local communities, the essential participants in CBT, strive to control their lands and access to the resources therein. At the same time, district governments often try to capture a greater slice of the revenues and assert their authority, while central bodies claim jurisdiction through the management of tourist hunting activities at the exclusion of CBT ventures. The private sector itself is riddled with similar conflicts, as individual tourism operators negotiate for position at the local level and the non-consumptive wildlife and cultural tourism industry challenges tourist hunting for access.

These conflicts fuel uncertainty among all stakeholders- local communities, district and national government bodies, development agencies and ngo's, foreign donors, and especially the private sector- as to the current direction and future viability of CBT.

Policies and legislation are inconsistent and at present tend to further contribute to confusion and uncertainty among stakeholders. Although the Wildlife Policy advocates CBT ventures, the Tourist Hunting Regulations attempt to strongly centralize control over such activities. Recently new regulations have been released providing for the implementation of community-managed Wildlife Management Areas, but it is unclear if these will effectively enable local communities to develop and manage CBT enterprises in village lands (MNRT, 2002b). Rather than enabling pro-poor tourism investments as advocated by the draft Rural Development Strategy, recent years have seen new restrictions on CBT opportunities and increasing challenges to established ventures which are already producing local benefits.

If CBT is to develop in Tanzania as a viable tourism product, source of local economic opportunities, and means of creating community conservation incentives, then these conflicts will have to be resolved in a way which enables and empowers local institutions. Tourism cannot be 'community-based' unless communities are the proprietors of the resources being used and are able to determine the enterprises carried out on their lands. In the case of northern Tanzania this means strengthening local tenure over land, forests, and wildlife and supporting the ability of villages to engage with the private sector in order to develop and access business opportunities.

Because CBT depends on ensuring secure resource rights are held by local institutions, it is fundamentally a governance issue tied to the allocation of power and responsibility among different bodies. CBT must therefore be viewed within the broader context of socio-political change and democratization processes in Tanzania. As one contemporary review of natural resource management issues in sub-Saharan Africa states, "Access and control over resources is the major governance issue, especially for rural people, and it is the bread and butter issue on which democracy must deliver" (USAID, 2002). In the case

of CBT, the democratization of resource rights will enable local involvement in tourism enterprises and ventures, while concentration of authority and market access in central hands restricts or even eliminates CBT as an option. In northern Tanzania such issues are complex and governance trends are unclear, but it is a likely prediction that as goes democratization, so will the development of CBT.

Conclusion

Wildlife and land resources as exploited through tourism activities are among the most valuable economic opportunities being exploited in northern Tanzania, and, together with mining, tourism is likely to be the main stimulus for investment in the region for some time. Such valuable activities inevitably generate conflicts over land access, policy implementation, and resource use which, while far less destructive than conflicts over resource control elsewhere, have critical implications for local communities, the nation, and an array of outside interests. CBT is an essential tool in diversifying rural economies in northern Tanzania, particularly in semi-arid rangelands where land uses and livelihood opportunities are limited. Expanding tourism into communal areas where cultural elements form a more varied and authentic product is equally important to the tourism industry if its growth is to continue at the high rates recorded during the 1990's. And biodiversity conservation, particularly of wildlife populations in dispersal areas outside National Parks, depends upon secure benefit flows and devolution to local landholders. Accomplishing these key objectives is currently being hindered, if not undermined, by conflicts and an unclear policy environment with respect to CBT activities.

Is there a commitment to CBT in Tanzania and the devolutionary reforms necessary to enable it economically and institutionally? To date the evidence is mixed. Some important developments have occurred, such as the incorporation of CBT into many key policy documents and apparently wide recognition among government officials of the opportunities CBT presents. In practice, however, CBT has become limited during the past several years by conflicts among stakeholders and different institutions with contrasting interests and powers. Most CBT in northern Tanzania is currently deemed illegal due to conflicts with tourist hunting blocks; the Longido Cultural Tourism Programme module and important ecotourism ventures in Ololosokwan are but two examples. If current trends continue or are reinforced, CBT is unlikely to develop in a significant way in the near term. Such an outcome is bound to have profound implications for rural development, national tourism growth, and conservation efforts in the region.

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