Beyond Philanthropy: Community Nature-based Enterprises as a Basis for Wildlife Conservation

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Introduction

Kenya's wildlife is increasingly under threat and consequently opportunities are being lost for it to positively contribute to economic growth, wealth creation, and increased employment. Much of this wildlife occurs outside protected areas on privately owned land. So far, many communities consider the presence of wildlife on their land as a burden rather than an opportunity for gaining benefits.

Kenya's population has increased five-fold since 1963 and is still growing fast. With this, human settlement, farming, industrial development, and fencing of open areas have encroached on age-old wildlife territory, ringed national parks and reserves, as well as blocked migratory routes and dispersal areas.

Some statistics estimate that 70% of Kenya's wildlife lives outside national parks and reserves, resulting in two major difficulties. First, the protected areas are not big enough to sustain the country's wildlife. Second, human–wildlife conflict in migratory corridors and dispersal areas is a recurrent problem.

Besides human-wildlife conflict mitigation measures and community education, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has over the years been supporting community projects in health, water, and education as part of its corporate social responsibility and community outreach program. However, with the establishment of the KWS Community Enterprise Department in 2009, the main thrust of engaging communities is gradually shifting away from philanthropic donations towards support for sustainable and profit-making nature-based enterprises. This is a paradigm shift away from a paternalistic approach and toward building communities' capacity for empowerment and sustainability.

Parks beyond parks

Whereas protected areas in Kenya have been set aside for purposes of wildlife conservation, areas outside protected areas that serve as dispersal areas and migratory routes are communally or individually owned.

Most of the protected areas were established without due regard to the surrounding landscapes (Republic of Kenya 2011). Consequently, boundaries between protected areas

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and the wider landscapes and communities are becoming distinct through the erection of fences and other barriers. Besides, currently there are inadequate incentives to motivate communities and land owners to adopt land use practices that are compatible with wildlife conservation and management. Indeed, the situation is aggravated by the existence of incentives in other sectoral policies that distort land use decisions (Republic of Kenya 2011).

Thus, most national parks and reserves are heavily dependent on surrounding community and privately owned lands for their ecological integrity. Much of the wildlife rely on such nonprotected lands for migration and dispersion in search of food, water, security, and breeding grounds.

The protected areas are threatened with significant loss of biodiversity due to competing and conflicting land uses. These threats have been attributed to lack of systematic land use planning and incompatible human activities. They have resulted in loss of critical wildlife habitats, land fragmentation, blockage of migratory corridors, and an upsurge in human–wildlife conflicts.

Thus, the cooperation and participation of private landowners and communities is essential to the success of conservation activities since most of these lands are used for activities that are injurious to wildlife conservation (Republic of Kenya 2007).

One particularly innovative method of adapting land for wildlife is the notion of a "voluntary land easement," in which the landowner agrees to restrict its use to be compatible with wildlife conservation for an agreed-upon period. This has been done with land adjacent to Nairobi National Park, and KWS plans to extend this model to other wildlife areas in Kenya.

Unresolved issues

Such cooperation and participation are key to resolving issues that affect conservation outside protected areas, including shrinking space for wildlife, insecurity, human–wildlife conflicts, representation in wildlife management and governance structures and user rights. Other outstanding issues include incentives and benefits-sharing, technical and financial capacity to manage wildlife, limited wildlife education and research, as well as lack of security of land tenure (Baskin 1994; Republic of Kenya 2007).

The lack of implementation of a land use policy has put people and wildlife at cross-purposes where both are competing for food and water. There is also pressure on Kenya's national parks and reserves from encroachment by people and livestock in search of pasture and water. People have also built different types of barriers in lands surrounding national parks and reserves to try to keep animals away from their property.

A good example is Kitengela within the Nairobi National Park ecosystem, which has attracted heavy settlement over the last three decades. Extensive fencing has been done by individual landowners, but predation of livestock by lions and hyenas and other property damage are still serious problems. The fencing has drastically affected seasonal wildlife migrations and reduced the area available to wildlife. In this and other areas, wildlife populations are bound to dwindle and their habitats to shrink when they are in persistent conflict with people (Baskin 1994). Persuading communities to protect wildlife when it deprives

them of their means of livelihood and endangers their lives and property remains a challenge (Baskin 1994).

In such areas, KWS looks for ways and means of formulating workable compromises that promote wildlife conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

To minimize conflicts, appropriate measures—which include fencing, wildlife translocation, elimination of problem animals, land use zoning and maintenance of wildlife corridors and dispersal areas—are assessed, and implemented whenever possible.

Mapping out human-wildlife conflict areas

KWS has mapped out the high-conflict areas, namely, the Laikipia ecosystem, which has a large number of both private and community wildlife/livestock ranches; the Tsavo ecosystem, which is densely populated; Narok within the Maasai Mara ecosystem, which has huge tracts of wheat farms that have sprung up in what had been predominantly wildlife dispersal areas; Mpeketoni in Lamu on the Kenyan Coast, where land use is mainly agricultural; and Rumuruti in Laikipia, where elephants from the forest invade farms and people encroach onto the forest in search of firewood. The situation has called for KWS to establish a rapid response team composed of an elite squad of rangers that beefs up the ground problem-animal control units in the high-conflict areas.

Ranger-based data collection

Currently, KWS is implementing the management information system (MIST) program where training of all the ranger force will be carried out to equip them with knowledge and skills to attend to human–wildlife conflict, among other tasks. Collection of data using the MIST technology will assist the organization put in place proactive actions in dealing with this challenge. This is also expected to generate data that can help KWS develop, implement, and review, as necessary, policies, guidelines, and standard operating procedures to address the problem.

Community outreach

A key function of KWS is to establish linkages and gain support for wildlife conservation and management from stakeholders and communities coexisting with wildlife. The KWS motto of "Reaching Out to the Communities" is implemented through a three-pronged approach: conservation education, extension services activities, and mitigation of human–wildlife conflict.

Corporate social responsibility

Since inception in 1990, KWS priorities have been shifting slightly each year, reflecting the success and commitment of KWS teams in tackling major issues such as security, poaching, human wildlife conflict, donor collaboration and community involvement.

For the last decade, KWS has been implementing a corporate social responsibility program whose aim, is to change community attitudes towards wildlife conservation (Kenya Wildlife Service 1995; Kenya Wildlife Service 2008: 47)

However, the charitable contributions approach has been faulted for lack of accountability, legitimacy, and participation and its "quick-fix" mode of delivery that engenders a dependency syndrome that often acts as an obstacle to community regeneration. This kind of philanthropy does not adequately address issues of community engagement and accountability (Tracey 2005).

However, it's important to note that some donor-funded projects in the 1990s saw the creation of community-based conservation enterprises such as Kimana Elephant Conservancy in Amboseli, Il lngwesi, Tursit Bandas in Laikipia, Mwaluganje Community Elephant Sanctuary, Kitui Honey, and several fishing projects that are all still functional.

Re-engineering community outreach

Toward the end of the second phase of KWS reforms, a new Community Enterprise Department was specifically created within the agency to streamline community involvement in nature-based enterprises. The underlying philosophy is that *if people benefit from wildlife and other natural resources, then they will take care of these resources, using them sustainably.*

The department provides technical assistance and capacity-building to communities and individuals, focusing on business development skills. Emphasis is placed on enterprises that have a clear link to conservation and tourism and show a strong potential for economic viability.

The main goal is to develop the capacity of communities and private landowners to establish and manage economically viable and sustainable nature-based enterprises. It is vital that communities benefit from profit-making nature-based enterprises in order for them to successfully engage in wildlife conservation and management as a land use option.

The creation of a formal unit within KWS to support community enterprises reflects a transition from the traditional corporate social responsibility concept to a more strategic mode, which provides innovative ways of channeling resources that allow social investments to yield long-term benefits. Community enterprise has been observed to have the potential to provide a framework through which corporations can establish reciprocal relationships with local stakeholders that allow for transparency and local accountability.

At inception, the department has been dealing with problems facing established community-based nature enterprises. The problems include governance issues, inadequate community benefits, flawed community–investor contracts, and lack of business management skills.

It is envisaged that partnering with communities to promote nature-based enterprises will promote targeted development within community wildlife areas. This will bring direct financial benefits from wildlife conservation to communities and individuals through the establishment of environmentally sound and complementary businesses. Maintaining community support for conservation is integral to achieving the KWS mandate.

Since the new focus of community enterprise was adopted, KWS has undertaken a number of activities, including developing a *Community Enterprise Strategy 2011–2017* as well as a policy on the establishment of conservancies and training of community rangers. It also has undertaken an inventory of wildlife conservancies and created a database to evaluate community and private capacity to manage wildlife outside protected areas.

Some of the recent achievements under this initiative are developing a 10-year general management plan for the 5000-ha Olerai Community Wildlife Sanctuary and conducting feasibility studies for a number of proposed community sanctuaries, including Empash, Yatta B2 Ranch, Mailua, Kipwa and Blue Post. A memorandum of understanding has also been signed between KWS and Ishaqbin and Ndera community wildlife conservancies.

Learning from experience

KWS has also organized exposure and educational tours for communities in Bonjoge, Iten, Rimoi, Samburu, and Isiolo where wildlife benefits to communities are evident. Similar tours for communities in Ndera, Ishaqbin, and Shimba Hills have been made to Samburu and Laikipia conservancies, where communities were earlier converts to the concept of community enterprise.

Community outreach

Awareness of human–wildlife conflicts is continuous and communities in wildlife areas are encouraged to participate in putting in place mitigation measures to minimize wildlife-related destruction.

KWS deploys resources to address human–wildlife conflicts, including building and maintaining wildlife barriers and enhancing the institutional and technical capacity of local communities to manage the conflicts in their areas. Partnership arrangements with the local communities that surround protected areas are being developed so as to promote commitment and acceptance of wildlife by these communities.

Another key strategy to working with communities and partners is the Corporate Social Citizenship policy. This strategic approach is KWS's guiding principle on how the organization contributes to, and improves the quality of life of, the society that interacts with and bears the cost of wildlife conservation. The policy guides the organization's sensitivity and responsiveness towards the larger community. The objective of the corporate social citizenship policy is to assist the communities to benefit from wildlife conservation. The aim is to change the attitude from viewing wildlife as a menace to seeing it as an economic asset that can improve livelihoods, create wealth, and alleviate poverty.

The key principles of the KWS corporate citizenship and social responsibility policy are (1) public education on wildlife matters and (2) provision of health facilities and clean water to communities who interact with wildlife and bear the cost of its conservation and management. KWS selected these principles after participatory rural appraisals with target beneficiaries. It is important to note that these projects were initiated by the communities to ensure ownership and sustainability.

The policy seeks to achieve equitable distribution of corporate social citizenship funds and provide the criteria to guide funding of community-based projects. It is expected that more land will be set aside for wildlife and at the same time communities will benefit economically from the option. KWS continues to assist in the establishment of private and community conservancies and has put mechanisms in place for their professional management. Training of managers and wildlife rangers for these community-run areas is critical to sustainable wildlife conservation and management outside KWS-administered protected areas.

The essence of this policy is to put in place measures to ensure that wildlife is conserved and managed in an organized and standardized manner both within and outside protected areas. The policy, therefore, entails the implementation of standard procedures for the establishment of conservancies; enforcement of and compliance to wildlife laws and regulations; handling of human–wildlife conflicts; protection of wildlife; development and harmonization of standard operating procedures, codes of ethics and standing orders; and monitoring and evaluation.

Examples of success stories

KWS has secured more than 1 million ha of land for use by wildlife in non-protected areas as part of the benefits of the establishment of conservancies (Kenya Wildlife Service 2011). For instance, in Amboseli the establishment of community-owned and private wildlife sanctuaries has taken off as a way of expanding wildlife habitat and bringing wildlife-based tourism benefits to the people.

However, wildlife-based tourism is a complex business that needs marketing expertise and resources. Even if ecotourism and community conservation initiatives succeed, there are challenges related to sustainability, management, and equitable sharing of benefits among shareholders.

Conclusion

Kenya Wildlife Service's institutionalization of a structure to support nature-based community enterprises promises to be not only an effective tool for managing relationships between people and wildlife, but also a sustainable source of livelihood for communities in wildlife areas. The re-engineering of the KWS community programs and stakeholder engagement — from benevolence toward a more sustainable form of long-term involvement with communities—holds a bright future for Kenya's wildlife conservation efforts. Communities have shifted from being passive recipients of corporate donations to active partners in shaping conservation and social development programs. The new mode of community engagement is providing to be an effective mechanism for community renewal and local capacity-building. Many communities are now seeking opportunities to collaborate with KWS in efforts to conserve wildlife.

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