



**SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM**  
*Making tourism count to communities, ecosystems and businesses*

**Esther Munyiri**

Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

**Community participation in tourism: the case of Lewa.**

The local community is one of the most important stakeholders in tourism development. However, in most instances, private benefit of conservation to individuals, households and even entire community are not made clear or may be non-existent. This research draws on social exchange theory, to examine the level of participation by communities around Lewa, a private conservancy in Northern Kenya. Lewa presents a successful model that has won the community support. Evidence shows that local people around Lewa participates in tourism through policy and planning process; benefits sharing and owning community projects. Education assistance is seen to be the greatest help that the community around Lewa gets from the conservancy. Other assistance relates to healthcare, water provision, credit facilities and grazing. The research agrees with the principles of the social exchange theory, since the relationship between the evaluation of costs, benefits and support for tourism was substantiated. In general, there is a direct relationship between positive impact variables and participation variables (benefits sharing; involvement in decision-making as well as availability of community projects initiated by tourism). These participation variables are, in addition, directly related to support for tourism. As a result, the community values wildlife for its economic benefit.