



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

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Sustainability in tourism: making tourism count to communities, ecosystems and businesses

Ecotourism is a nature based tourism which is ecologically friendly and gives benefits directly to the community. It involves learning about nature, the people and their interactions with nature. Biodiversity refers to all biological creatures- plants and animals ranging from microscopic to gigantic organisms like whales. Ecotourism became pronounced from the 1980s following disillusionment by tourists with the way tourism revenues were being used by governments which did not care about the welfare of communities adjacent to protected areas. In contrast to mass tourism, ecotourism not only protects nature but also respects and appreciates communities' ways of living. East African governments emphasized creation of protected areas for biodiversity conservation. Soon due to human population increase these became islands without any connectivity. Protected area systems account for only about 10% of the land and water surfaces leaving more than 75% of the biodiversity including endangered species in community lands. While legislative and policy frameworks are conducive for conservation efforts by communities, there are inadequate or no accompanying incentives. Efforts have been made with varying degrees of success in Wildlife ranching, wildlife farming, and recently Agro-tourism. The investments required in Agro and Ecotourism are not affordable by most communities who harbor biodiversity on their land while bearing the losses of crop and livestock or wild animals. Benefits are limited and take long to be realized. Ecotourism and Agro-tourism given priority by the various players is the answer for long term biodiversity conservation in East Africa.