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A case study on the social impact of the eco tourism project in Selenki Ranch, Amboseli, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore community perceptions and attitudes towards the eco tourism project at Selenkei ranch, and investigate the impact of the social developments that have resulted thus far. It also considered the concept of ownership and community participation and how these relate to eco tourism and community development at the ranch.

One concern that motivated this research was the fact that impoverished communities who get involved in the tourism industry end up not benefiting from the developments. This can be attributed to a myriad of factors such as skewed arrangements between local communities and tourism investors, and a lack of policy that can protect these communities.

A qualitative method of research was employed. The study revealed that there was wide spread resentments among local community members over the fact that they were inadequately compensated for displacement from traditional grazing lands through the creation of the conservancy. Secondly, it would appear there have been few other benefits for the local community as a result of this tourism development, despite the fact that the tour operator had promised them of both financial and social benefits. According to majority of the respondents, it would seem that this tourism development has impinged on the well being of this community as it brought about conflict and mistrust between the members. This study found that local communities battle with various barriers that limit their involvement in the tourism industry. Some of these include; traditional structures, ownership, international capital, and a lack of participation and awareness.

Based on the findings, it is clear that government needs to get involved by primarily policy implementation at the grassroots level and capacity building. This will in turn enable local communities to own and manage tourism projects by developing community-based initiatives in their areas.

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