

Challenges of Tourism Business Partnerships in Wildlife Management Areas around Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania

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Abstract

This article analyses how tourism development in Tanzanians' Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) is structured based on the political-ecological factors governing African countries. The article seeks to ascertain the variables that have triggered conflicts among stakeholders in tourism business partnerships. A total of 133 household heads and 74 key informants were examined, utilising a semi-structured questionnaire and an interview guide, respectively, to gather data. The findings indicate that tourism business partnerships provide challenges to local community. Their participation in business is undermined in the WMAs due to the deprivation of the benefits from wildlife resources. It is therefore important to integrate specific community-based business strategies in the policies, which can facilitate the development of tourism and provide mutual help in Wildlife Management Areas in Tanzania.

Keywords: *Tourism, political ecology, consumptive and non-consumptive utilisation, Wildlife Management Areas*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism business partnerships are expected to promote socio-economic growth for local populations living near protected areas around the globe. Various countries have overstated tourism business partnerships as a global economic driver of human development (Noe et al., 2017). Tourism business partnerships in various regions of the world are complicated, just like the biodiversity they seek to preserve, and are influenced by the socio-political environment in which they operate (Samal & Dash, 2023; Bruyere et al., 2009). Biodiversity protection is linked to economic development through tourism business collaborations (Samal & Dash, 2023). Thus, tourism business collaborations become an important aspect of neoliberal conservation

expansion since they address both conservation and human development (Müller et al., 2023). Tourism sectors are tied to the global economy and operate in areas where residents continue to live on less than \$2 per day (WTTC, 2021; Boer, 2016). The local community's inability to access financial assets from tourism industry partnerships has exacerbated revenue conflicts, and the benefit-sharing system is unclear.

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), through its regional program for Africa, has supported its member states and other organisations from the region to strengthen member relations. It reinforces public-private partnerships in tourism business partnerships (UNWTO, 2016). The UNWTO works closely with the World Bank (WB), UNDP, and other international organisations to finance different projects elaborated in the tourism management master plans (UNWTO, 2016). The UNWTO has received international appreciation of tourism as a fundamental sector in global development (UNWTO, 2016). Tourism is the world's largest economic sector, generating almost 10% of the worldwide GDP and 284 million jobs in 2015 (Rasool et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2022). Tourism business partnership is pointed out as one of the important institutions to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in developing countries, Tanzania included.

Tanzania's tourism business is based on its forests, wildlife, mountains, and minerals. Tanzanian tourism industry collaborations are drawn to the country's 32.5% of land set aside as national parks, conservation zones, and wildlife reserves to safeguard biodiversity (MNRT, 2022). Tourism business collaborations have been formed in Wildlife Management Areas, which are located near national parks and wildlife reserves. Tanzania's 28 game (including marine) reserves, 16 national parks, marine parks, forest reserves, and 44 game-controlled areas are home to the world's biodiversity and distinctive ecosystems (MNRT, 2022). Tanzania depends on tourism for its coastline, islands, Mount Kilimanjaro, and wildlife safaris. In 2018, tourist business connections brought in \$2.43 billion in revenue, up from \$2.19 billion in 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics & Bank of Tanzania, 2018). Tourist arrivals were 1.49 million, up from 1.33 million in 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics & Bank of Tanzania, 2018). The government's goal for 2020 was to receive more than two million tourists, but a global pandemic rendered that dubious.

There is a growing body of work on critical political ecology and tourism development. Political ecology is defined by Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) and Blaikie (2008) as the linkages between humans and the environment. Political ecology has been researching politics and the environment since the 1970s. Political ecology examines how politics and natural resource power struggles interact. Critical scholars have also argued that biodiversity preservation regimes are ultimately political (Bryant and Bailey, 1997; Adams & Hutton, 2007; Forsyth, 2003), and that developing countries' environmental concerns are primarily political and economic. Political ecology investigates how WMA tourism commercial connections work or fail. As a result, local politics and biodiversity conservation collaborations can profit from both successes and failures.

Much tourism research in Tanzania has focused on the Northern region, which is known for sustainable photographic tourism (Ponte et al., 2022; Bluwstein, 2017; Sulle et al., 2011; Burns and Novelli, 2007), whereas the Southern region is known for hunting in Selous Game Reserve and photographic tourism at Nyerere National Park, a UNESCO world heritage site with large groups of wild animals. According to Boer (2016), there are 1,200 formal tourist company partnerships in or near national parks for photographic tourism, with offshore private corporations owning 70%. Many of the world's most luxurious hotels, resorts, and camps are located in the north, where Western business meets Tanzania's impoverished populations (Boer, 2016). Tourism business partnerships in WMAs in Southern Tanzania have had challenges, resulting in locals not receiving the expected money.

Early efforts to involve locals in tourism business partnerships and conservation yielded different results (Bruyere et al., 2009; Boer, 2016; Ponte et al., 2022). Other actors around the world struggle to prevent local conflicts. They are looking for socio-political solutions to better regulate tourism in developing countries (Boer, 2016). Fewer studies have studied whether tourism company partnerships have caused income conflicts, or whether village land committees are structured according to the political-ecological setting.

Consequently, the aim of this article was to evaluate the origins of difficulties in professional collaborations within the tourism industry and propose various strategies for managing disputes. Five primary sections

comprise this document. The subsequent segment addresses the frameworks that were implemented and the political-ecological impact on the advancement of tourism following the introduction. The study location, research methods, data collection, and analysis are all described in the third section. Local community participation in discussions and results presented in section four demonstrated that agriculture is the primary economic activity in these WMAs. Insecurities arising from disputes between local communities and their business partnerships, as well as between the government and such partnerships regarding revenue share, warrant significant consideration. A conclusion and suggestions for future research were included in the fifth and final section.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was modified from (John, 2021) suggestions on the conservation partnerships in wildlife management areas and their implications on wildlife utilisation and livelihood sustainability. The latter source expounds further that the conceptual framework in Figure 1 illustrates an understanding of partnerships, struggles for decision-making, and their impacts on wildlife utilisation and livelihood sustainability. It explores how tourism business partnerships have increased conflicts between different stakeholders. Furthermore, the conceptual framework investigates the influence of business partners on wildlife management and tourism enterprises. With this, the study presents an assessment of the extent to which tourism business partnerships have increased conflicts and misunderstandings between local communities and tour operators and between local communities and government officials.

The conceptual framework elaborates on how the challenges that occurred due to tourism business partnerships could be solved. Besides, it suggests that local communities should be involved in decision-making concerning revenue corrections and sharing. Also, the government should influence future regulations on crop damage compensation and the incorporation of traditional knowledge in the management of wildlife resources.

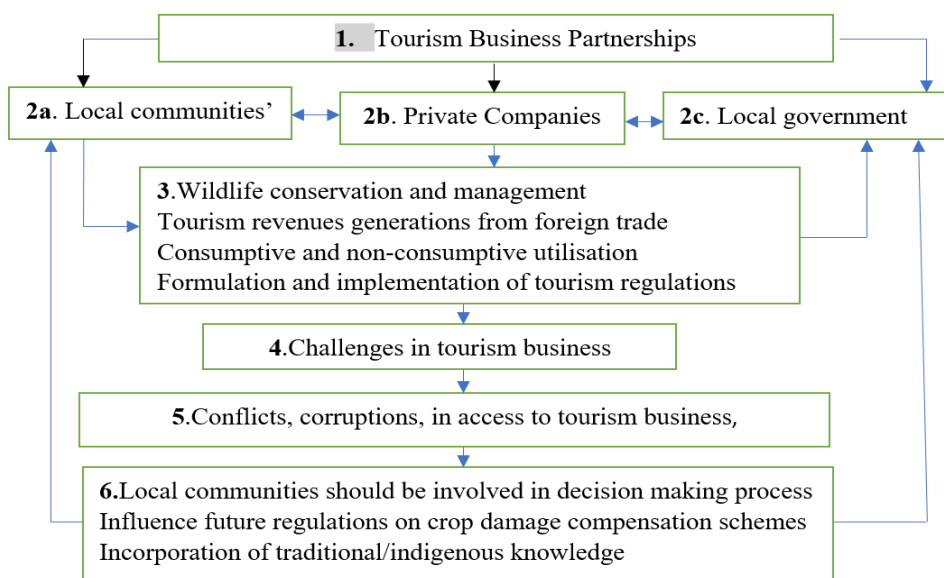


Figure 1: Tourism Business Partnerships

Source: Modified from (John, 2021)

RESEARCH METHODS

Area of Study

The Rufiji district is located in the coastal region of Tanzania, at coordinates 38.62° and 39.17°E and 7.47° to 8.03°S latitude (Haller et al., 2008). The research was conducted with a specific focus on the Northeastern sector of the Rufiji District's Selous Game Reserve. Two WMAs in the Selous were intentionally chosen to facilitate the comparison of tourism business partnerships whose revenue access has been impacted by the conflicts. The localities depicted in Figure 2 are Ngarambe and Mloka. They are symbolic of the localities located within the WMAs. Muungano wa Ngarambe na Tapika (MUNGATA WMA) encompasses Ngarambe, whereas Jumuiya ya Hifadhi ya Wanyamapori Ngorongo, Utete na Mwaseni (JUHIWANGUMWA WMA) contains Mloka.

The Selous Game Reserve generally, and the Northeastern ecosystem in particular, has some of the largest and most important populations of elephants, antelopes, cats, crocodiles, buffaloes, cheaters, lions, hippopotami, leopards, and wild dogs (Baldus et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the main livelihood activity for people in the Rufiji district is agriculture (Kibola, 2010). According to the 2012 Census, the

population of Rufiji District is 217,274 persons, with 91,661 males and 99,083 females (URT, 2013).

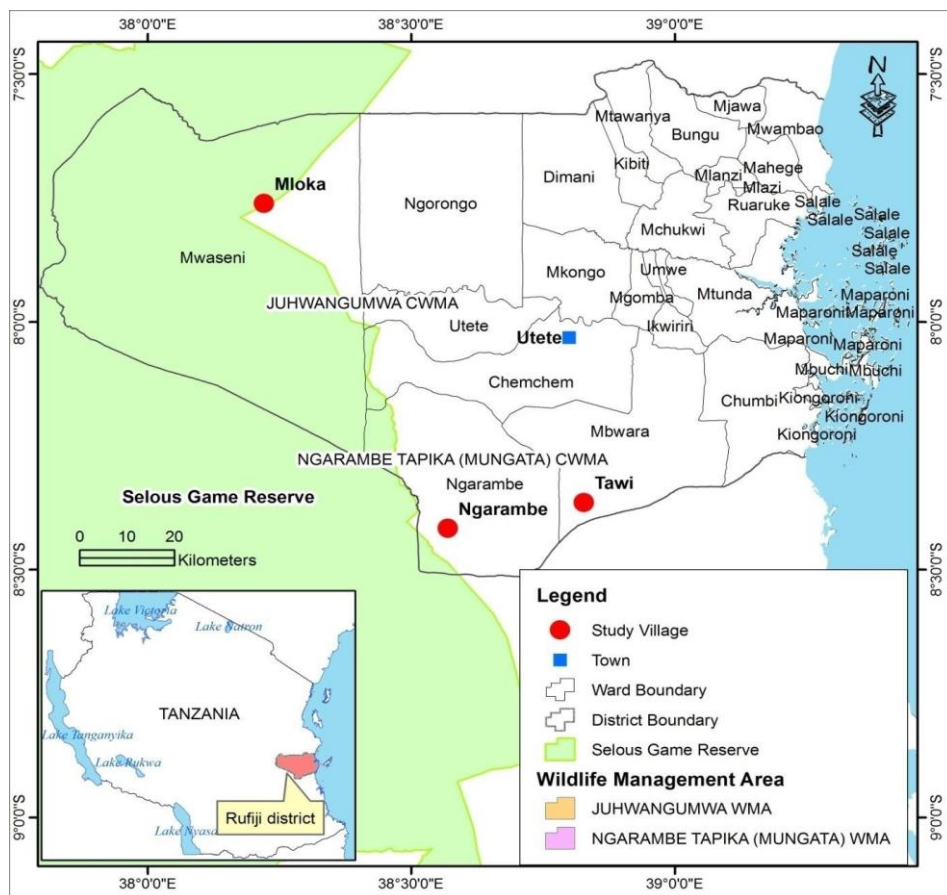


Figure 2: Location of Study Village
Source: Modified from UDSM-IRA GIS LAB

RESEARCH DESIGN

Tourism business partnership disputes were investigated in a comparative case study. This is a qualitative and quantitative. The study focused on Rufiji District settlements near Selous Game Reserve (now Nyerere National Park). Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), household surveys, key informant interviews, and participant observations collected data from February 2017 to August 2018. The household survey interviewed 44 Ngarambe, 42 Mloka, and 47 Tawi heads of household. Village Executive Officers, Ward Executive Officers, District Game Officers, Conservation

Officers, tour lodge and hotel managers, and directors were interviewed in 74 semi-structured interviews. Interviews were anonymous and confidential due to informed permission. Analysis of qualitative sources such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation was done. WMA tourism business partnership theories and frameworks and selected quotations were compared. After loading the software-assisted codebook into Nvivo v.12, themes were located, sorted, and organised to grade complex relationships. Excel developed a mother-child codebook, and SPSS analysed quantitative questionnaire survey data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Main Livelihood activities

Crop farming was the main occupation in the area, and most of the surveyed households were crop farmers (Figure 3). Crop farming is also discussed in Hall & Shivji (2021), that most of the people who live in rural areas in Tanzania depend on agriculture as the main economic activity. They grow both food and cash crops; food crops are maize, sorghum, cassava, and sweet potatoes, while cash crops are sesame and cashew nuts. Sesame was the major cash crop grown due to less impact by elephants. Also, the majority of households do not keep livestock due to being attacked by wild animals, and the presence of tsetse flies in the area. Although there were more farmers than livestock keepers, annual income from farming was higher than that from livestock keeping. Small businesses such as kiosks were also conducted in the study villages, where local communities sold souvenir gifts and food in small hotels to tourists in Mloka village.

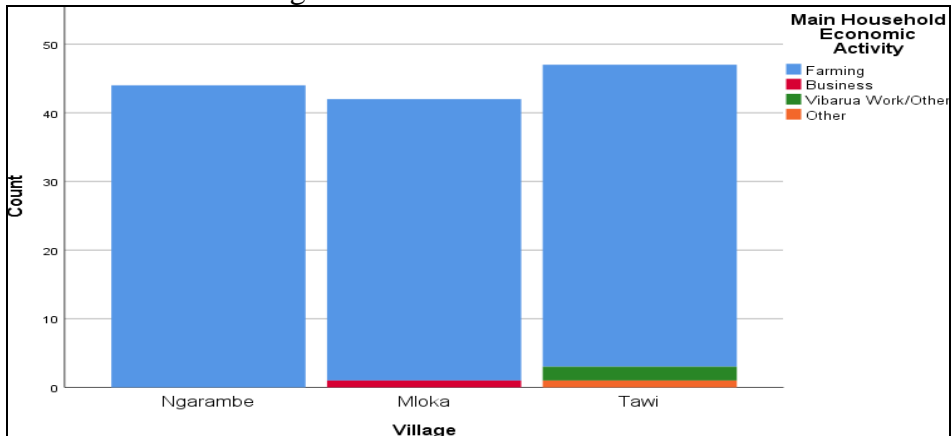


Figure 3: Main economic activity

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Tourism business partnerships in WMAs

The Tanzanian government is devoted to effectively controlling wildlife resources for the benefit of its people. In 1998, the Government implemented the National Wildlife Policy of Tanzania (WPT), which identified the number of challenges and emphasized the implementation of best practices for wildlife management in Tanzania (URT,1998). The challenges addressed were related to the protection of areas with large biological biodiversity, encouraging participation of local communities in wildlife protection in and outside protected areas, ensuring that wildlife management competes with other forms of land use, and incorporating wildlife with local livelihoods improvement (URT,1998).

The Tanzania Wildlife Policy of 1998 called for decentralisation of wildlife management to the local communities through shared natural resources management (URT, 1998). Decentralization was done through the establishment of WMAs on the village lands, whereby the central government maintains authority and control over wildlife decisions, management, and benefit sharing (Roe et al., 2009). Local communities were promised that they would benefit from wildlife resources on their village lands. Since the 1980s, fortress conservation and state control have been accompanied by policies and legislation that put communities in focus on conserving natural resources in the Global South (Roe et al., 2009).

The development of tourism business partnerships in WMAs was also implemented in Tanzania through the wildlife policy of 1998, where local communities were involved in wildlife management. The WMAs consist of a piece of village land set aside for the intention of wildlife conservation and the development of tourism business partnerships such as photography and hunting (Sulle et al., 2011). In addition, among the procedures in the establishment of the WMA is for the villages to develop land use plans and by-laws, as well as establish Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) that are granted user rights to wildlife by the Wildlife Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (Sulle et al., 2011). This study found that the development of MUNGATA and JUHIWANGUMWA WMAs followed the same procedures of setting aside the areas of land for tourism-related enterprises and conservation. In return, local communities are expected to get benefits. This study revealed that there are a lot of politics

involved in developing the land use plan to suit the interests of the government and business partners.

Changes in tourism business regulations

Selous Game Reserve has a long history of involvement in tourist hunting dating back to the end of the 19th century (Baldus et al., 2003). The tourist hunting blocks were allocated to private companies for varying lengths of time. Historically, tourist hunting was banned from 1973 to 1978 due to the malpractices of foreigners who did it without ethics regarding both conservation and finance (Leader-Williams, 2000). Most of them hunted more animals than approved on permits. In 1978, the government opened hunting tourism, which was managed by Tanzania Wildlife Corporation (TAWICO). TAWICO was vested with the power to oversee all tourist-hunting activities, while the Wildlife Department was left to decide hunting quotas and collect game fees (Leader-Williams et al., 1993). After the failure of TAWICO in 1988, the regulatory functions of the tourist hunting industry were moved from TAWICO to the Department of Wildlife in the Ministry of Tourism, Natural Resources and Environment. Therefore, TAWICO lost its monopoly in the industry.

This study found that changes that are happening concerning the tourist hunting business are an example of how political leaders use their power to implement a lot of changes without considering the effects of their changes on the community's livelihoods. Local communities who live near the game reserve receive 25% of the hunting block fee paid by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. This money came from the hunting companies operating a business inside the game reserve. The communities are also affected when the tourist hunting business goes down because they cannot get enough from 25% of the hunting block fee.

According to TAWA interviews, these changes have touched more than just local communities. Tourist hunting business operators are also affected by changes in hunting business regulations. Politically motivated ministerial changes have made natural resource management in Tanzania harder (Director of Hunting Company, 08/11/2018). On November 6, 2017, the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism suspended the Wildlife Division director, CITIZEN reported. He revoked all hunting licences from his predecessor. In order to promote

openness, the minister ordered an auction for the hunting blocks (CITIZEN, 06/11/2017). According to Matinyi et al., (2015), Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and other important government departments' frequent leadership changes have caused planning gaps and shifting objectives. Ministry officials stated"

"When the recent minister was appointed, he started by cancelling the hunting permits and re-issuing the block by claiming that some of the hunting companies are related to the illegal trade of ivory. Another major change by the minister is the proposal to use the auction for managing the hunting blocks, which is not friendly to business operators and the division of hunting blocks to increase the number (Director of Hunting company, 08/11/2018).

Other changes in tourist hunting regulations that have caused the business to go down include the changes in wildlife regulations, which were discussed by one of the key informants from TAWA. He explained that"

"Changes in wildlife conservation of 2009 that 85% of the hunting companies' owners must be Tanzanian citizens and 15% foreigners. The locals have failed to operate the business because of a lack of experience and knowledge. The question is if the citizens are knowledgeable of the company. The firm is not doing well because many hunting blocks in Selous are empty. The investors have withdrawn from the business. Also, new restrictions under Wildlife Conservation (tourist hunting) of 2015 regulations to hunt lions over six years old are very difficult for the hunters (Director of Hunting company, 08/11/2018).

Problems with Partnerships in the Tourism Industry

Local communities residing in close proximity to the Selous game reserve have entered into various contracts or agreements with private tour operators and hunting companies to conduct business on their village land, according to this study. The majority of the local people has failed to abide by the terms of these contracts and agreements, which has prevented any progress towards a better standard of living. The unfulfilled commitments resulting from the business partnership exacerbated tensions between the local communities and tour operators or hunting companies. Neef Neef & Grayman, (2018) contend that contributions towards the enhancement of health provisions, water supply, electrification, and education funds benefits that extend to the entire community are also among these requirements. However, local

communities do not perceive the fulfilment of these requirements in their entirety.

MUNGATA WMA- Hamis Said Kibola (HSK) Safaris Company conflicts

The disputes arose in 2013, subsequent to the Wildlife Conservation Regulations of 2012 authorising the Wildlife Management Authority to engage in a commercial agreement with investors via the district advisory board and Community Wildlife Management Authority Consortium (CWMAC). The tender for the hunting block previously managed by Game Frontiers of Tanzania (GFT) was issued by the WMA authority. HSK Company applied and was awarded the contract. At that juncture, the initial investor, GFT, was obligated to maintain an open hunting block in order to accommodate the incoming business partner. The HSK safari company then proceeded to the hunting location, where it discovered GFT-owned cottages. The GFT failed to withdraw their hunting block in a timely. The HSK failed to remit the mandatory payment of the hunting block charge for that particular year. The WMA, realising they were not receiving any revenue from HSK Safari, proceeded with the second announcement of the hunting block tender without resolving the disputes with the company with whom they had a legal contract.

This study revealed that the director of HSK Safaris Company decided to put a court injunction as it was defamatory to announce the tender. At the same time, they had a former contract with HSK Safari. The case started between the WMA and HSK Safari Company. The case went on for another three years without any income to the villagers. The WMA survived three years without conducting any business at their hunting block. In 2016, the WMA decided to ask for reconciliation with HSK Safaris outside the court as the WMA leaders did not have any legal background to compete at the court with HSK Safaris Company (NGO coordinator, 08/11/2018). The HSK Safaris Company agreed to settle the conflicts and start afresh to conduct the business, which began officially in 2017 and continued until 2022 (CWMAC officials, 08/11/2018).

This study contends that the conflicts arising from partnerships between local communities and hunting tourism investors exemplify the detrimental impact of tourism businesses on local communities, which cannot compete with business operators effectively. Furthermore, these

communities lack legal recourse in the event of disputes. For instance, the local communities residing in MUNGATA WMA endured three years without receiving any income from hunting tourism, which constitutes their primary source of revenue.

Tour operator -Mloka Village disputes

Mloka is one of the villages that have formed business partnerships with Tour Operators. The inception of these corporate relationships took place in Mloka throughout the 2000s, prior to its integration into the WMA. Mloka village has just become a member of a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) that consists of 12 other villages, resulting in a total of 13 villages in the WMA. JUHIWANGUMWA is one of the newly formed Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in the Rufiji district. JUHIWANGUMWA WMA was founded on July 1, 2016, and was granted user rights. JUHIWANGUMWA is an abbreviation for the Kiswahili phrase "Jumuiya ya Hifadhi ya Wanyamapori Ngorongo, Utete na Mwaseni." Mloka village engages in business relations with neighbouring villages within the same Wildlife Management Area (WMA) due to its proximity to Mtemere gate, the entry to the photographic block in the Selous Game Reserve.

This study found out that the Mloka village council struggles to run a tourism business on their communal lands. The village councils lack enough power and knowledge of the tourism business, which has caused a lot of conflicts and understanding between tour operators and villagers. These conflicts arise due to bad contracts that the village leaders, through their council, have set with tour operators. The villagers are asking if this is because of corruption or ignorance. Mloka village has more than 15 camps and lodges operating on the village lands, but the income from these businesses is not sufficient or relevant to the kind of business. The village council has three different groups of investors within the same village. They pay land rent differently depending on which time they started business on the village lands (Manager of the tourist lodge, 14/03/2018).

The conflict between WMAs and the Wildlife Division

These conflicts resulted from the failure of the Wildlife Division to grade the hunting block owned by JUHIWANGUMWA CBO. Since its establishment, the CBO has not started any business in their areas. The central government promised them that they would benefit from tourism

businesses in their WMA areas. The grading of the hunting block in this new WMA has not yet been done. Wildlife Management Area Consortium (CWMAC) assumed that the hunting block is grade B because of the nearest grade on the other side of the Game reserve. The WMAC, in collaboration with the WMA, announced the tender of this hunting block, which was later not approved by the Wildlife Division. The local communities have no money to pay for the grading of their hunting block. The study corroborates with this study that different actors in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Tanzania are playing different roles in establishing and increasing the coverage of protected areas to attract tourism business (Keane et al., 2020; Oduor, 2020; Kiondo et al., 2019).

Villagers have limited information on how their conservation partners, including the central government, district council, TAWA, and Belgian Technical Corporation, implement their objectives. Their understanding is mostly focused on the influence and power held by these other players. The villagers perceive the central government as possessing greater power in decision-making compared to other entities. The tendering processes and company operations in the WMA land are characterised by a high degree of transparency. However, the Wildlife Division poses a significant obstacle when it comes to advancing these corporate endeavours. The wildlife division states that the WMA block has not yet been evaluated for grading. The cost of grading the hunting block is prohibitively high, and local communities are uncertain about the party responsible for covering these expenses in order to initiate the hunting business in their block (Male informants 14/03/2018).

Many villages in JUHIWANGUMWA WMA have no access to photographic tourism due to the location of their villages and poor infrastructure development. These villages were waiting for tourist hunting businesses to start in their WMA so that they can get income from tourism. But, due to the failure of the Wildlife Division to give them permission to continue with the business and do animal census they are now not interested in the WMA. According to Matinyi et al., (2015), southern attractions in Tanzania are poorly linked to each other and major cities; they require long drives on poor-quality roads.

The results from the survey, however, do not support the idea that the WMA establishment has positive effects. There is a clear local view that the local communities do not get enough employment in tourism-related

businesses, and few locals are employed. For example, Mloka village has a lot of tourism activities. Still, the tourism companies, use more people from Northern Tanzania than from the Southern part of Tanzania (For women and men in 2017 and a collective feedback meeting in 2018) as well as discussions with local leaders. These findings concur with (Mutanga et al., 2017) that locals are only employed as casual labour. This type of employment is not reliable because they are seasonal. The local communities were asked about the cost and benefits of Partnership involvement to individuals, and very few respondents, however, in Ngarambe and Mloka confirmed that they were very satisfied with community involvement in the partnerships (Figure 4).

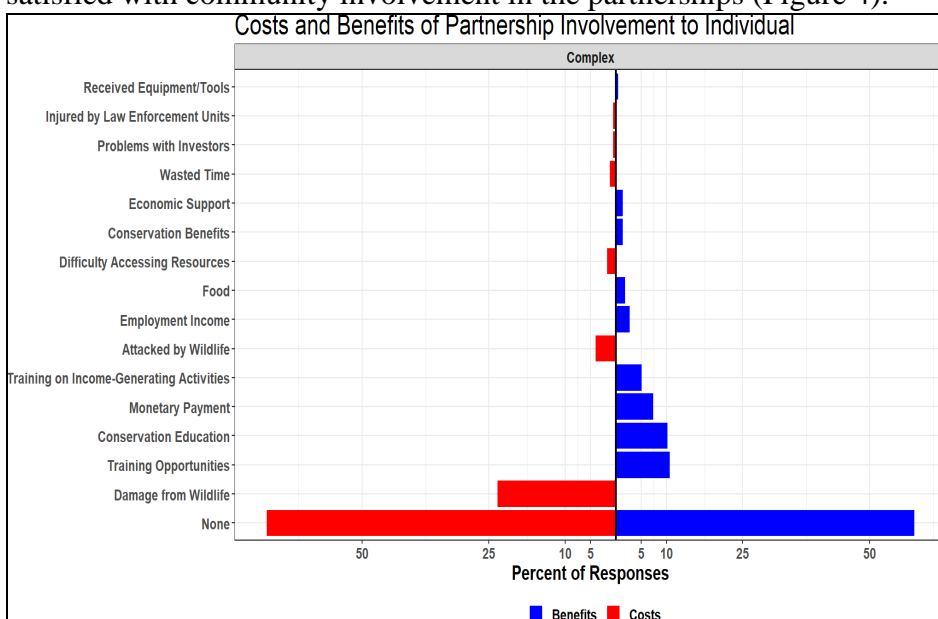


Figure 4: Cost and benefits of Partnerships involvement to individual
Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Respondents in the Ngarambe and Mloka villages said that they are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied because the benefits received are related to conservation benefits, training opportunities, and somehow economic support. Other respondents said that the law enforcement unit injured them, had problems with investors, and were attacked by wildlife. The survey data reveal that few people in Ngarambe and Mloka villages are satisfied with community involvement in the partnerships. Contrarily, and as expected, more people are unsatisfied with community involvement in associations. A study by Green (2016) also supports the

findings that community involvement in partnerships has increased the accumulation of land in protected areas. In doing so, local communities are not able to access the benefits as most of their lands are set aside for tourism business.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism business partnerships were established in the country following the land use plan and zonal management plans. These plans are set depending on the political and economic situations of the country. In other cases, tourism business partnerships are established following the political stability and interest of actors involved in the business. Since the WMA was established in the 2000s, more village land has been set aside for wildlife on village lands. Despite this potential WMA's ability to generate revenues, the challenges remain, especially in the failures of Authorised Associations to develop investment agreements with all the investors operating in the WMAs (Sulle et al., 2011).

This article demonstrated how local communities living in WMAs bordering protected areas depend on tourism business partnerships for their development and well-being. At the same time, the central government, which owns the wildlife resources, has all the powers to make decisions on their benefit-sharing obtained from tourism business partnerships conducted on the village lands. The main dispute emerging from this tourism business partnership in WMAs as a new form of wildlife management is the failure of business partners to respect the contracts and agreements. As a result, a lot of conflicts occurred between local communities and private companies or the government. This article reveals that although WMAs function at the regional scale, they are not local originalities and their foundation is mostly top-down.

These conservation partnerships use the powers to make changes in the rules and regulations governing lands, resource utilisation and institutions. As Brechin et al., (2003) suggest, these actors and their powers have as much influence in decision-making in natural resources management and utilisation. According to local perceptions, increased conflicts between private companies and local communities have resulted in losses in the tourism business. The article suggests, therefore that the evaluation of the tourism business partnership conflicts should consider the broader ecological and economic contexts in which they are established.

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