

THE PEOPLES' VOICE:
PARTNERSHIP AND
COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Edmund Barrow, Patrick Bergin, Mark Infield and Peter Lembuya



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Abstract: A brief history of protected area establishment and the alienation of local people is discussed as background material for the African Wildlife Foundation's Community Conservation Programme in East Africa. The methods used are presented in the context of creating mutual responsibility for conservation. Three case studies illustrate this. In Lake Mburo National Park in Uganda re-establishing park integrity and creating good relations is the starting point. Active Community involvement is sought in the development of the Lake Manyara National Park management plan. Illegal grazing and incursions into Tsavo West National Park in Kenya are discussed and resolved with pastoral Maasai bordering the Park. The case material and discussion illustrates the depth and variety of issues which need to be addressed; the facilitating of community conservation relations; and the time it takes for effective lasting community conservation.

Key words: African Wildlife Foundation, Benefits, Community, Conservation, Kenya, Lake Manyara, Lake Mburo, Partnership, Tanzania, Tsavo, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

In East Africa many the most significant protected areas are found adjoining pastoral land use systems while the montane higher rainfall indigenous forest parks are, usually surrounded by intensive cultivation. Extensive forms of land use are, to a greater degree, compatible with wildlife management when wildlife, livestock and local resource users are part of a complex social and natural resource management system. Where cultivation is dominant this is not the case. In the recent past there was rarely harmony, only conflict and the necessity for amelioration as wildlife were perceived as vermin.

The most important shortcoming in the past establishment of protected area systems may not be geographical and ecological but human and institutional. Protected areas in Africa were usually established without the participation or consent of local people and many times involved their forced removal (Adams and Mcshane 1992, West and Brechin 1991). Few attempts were made to educate people about the importance of an area or indeed to learn about its importance from those who knew it best, i.e. those people living there. Parks were not established with linkages to local land use plans or as part of a system which provided opportunities for sustainable development.

Wildlife related problems are particularly acute where people have squatted or moved onto, land adjoining protected areas due to increasing population and land pressures, and this is seen as a threat to conserving bio-diversity. Local resource users were seen as the enemy

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problem of trying to manage protected areas in isolation from or in opposition to local people has been well documented. Ryan (1992) notes that " Over the past decade, many park managers have come to realize that the survival of protected areas depends ultimately on the support of local people, rather than on fences, fines and even armed force" (p. 17).

The prevalent attitude of protected area authorities towards local communities was simply to keep them out. Only recently has this attitude started to change. Adams and Mcshane (1992) demonstrate that "Africans do care about wildlife. They live with it every day. They have been labelled as the problem; they are in fact the solution" (p. 247). However community conservation cannot be simplified to the provision of benefits but has to relate to wider issues of land use and tenure together with local and national economic needs and aspirations. This implies the need for alliances and real partnerships.

This paper, using three case studies from the African Wildlife Foundation's (AWF) community conservation work with National Parks Authorities in East Africa, illustrates the problems and opportunities in trying to seek such alliances and partnerships. Initial work started in 1988 and has expanded with experience and the benefits that such partnerships implies. The authors gratefully acknowledge the comments and criticisms from AWF staff, as well as from our partners in Kenya Wildlife Services, Tanzania National Parks and Uganda National Parks.

METHODS AND PROCESS: NEIGHBOURS AS PARTNERS

It is necessary to build relationships between rural resource users and conservation; to build sustainable community systems and create new alliances between conservation authorities and local communities. The African Wildlife Foundation, an international conservation non governmental organization (NGO), has helped develop the field of community conservation through its "*Protected Areas: Neighbours as Partners*" programme in East Africa. The principal that local communities should be involved in and benefit from conservation of protected areas is now widely accepted but there is still little experience of how to put the principle into practise. AWF is pioneering this field in East Africa and the "*Neighbours as Partners*" programme is already operating in several National Parks in Kenya (Tsavo West and Amboseli), Tanzania (Arusha, Lake Manyara, Tarangire and Serengeti) and Uganda (Mburo and Bwindi). Community conservation seeks to involve local people in dialogue which will lead to joint responsibility for natural resources and sharing in the benefits of conservation (Snelson 1993). It is not a rural development programme but may act as a catalyst for such activities.

Creating a real and lasting partnership is not easy, especially in a context of doubt and conflict between protected area managers and local people. Nor is the implicit change of protected area authority attitudes towards local community issues, easy. It is difficult to change an anti-poaching and protectionist model to one of conciliation, consultation and enablement. However it is now recognized that this must be done. Partnership and consultation, concern over sustainability leading to a voice in decision making, an increased responsibility and benefit sharing are seen as keys to long term sustainability of protected areas. This hinges on the creation of attitudes of responsibility towards natural resource management, understanding problems and opportunities that exist, and enablement. The case

material presented here discusses this from the perspective of what is practical from the past five years of field experience, not the ideals.

The ultimate benefits of community conservation should include maintenance of protected area integrity, resolution of conflict resulting in sustainable conservation for improved food security and household economics of rural resource users and may be both attitudinal and physical (Barrow et. al. 1993). Community conservation needs to be able to address the wider political, policy and land issues so as to be better able to achieve its conservation objectives. Broader political and land use issues have to be understood and influenced, for instance land use and tenure is a critical, highly emotive and politicised issue in East Africa.

National parks authorities in East Africa have been evolving a functional means for involving neighbours as partners in conservation through its East African programme over the past six years. Issues are discussed with Park management in the National Park and broad problems, opportunities and priority target areas are selected. This forms the basis for opening channels of communication and target areas being informally surveyed. District and local level support is solicited. Initial baseline socio-economic data is gathered from various sources including Park records; literature; establishing district and village profiles for the priority areas and the carrying out of a simple **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey**, which was designed in close collaboration with the wardens. As an example of this, Table 1 illustrates issues concerning natural resources not liked by local people, some of which are related to conservation, while Table 2 illustrates some negative aspects of living close to a protected area. People are most likely to act on problem they themselves recognize. Thus the survey provides a logical starting place for community conservation extension work.

Table 1. Issues Concerning Natural Resources not liked by local people

Issue	Lake Manyara n=1597	Arusha n=983	Lake Mburo n=304	Tsavo n=968
Damage by Wildlife	8%		79%	
Tree destruction and charcoal	54%	71%		80%
Destructive fires	43%	75%		
Poaching, killing wildlife	31%	43%		
Water catchment destruction	5%	30%	24%	13%
Common resource destruction		14%	40%	70%
Drought and Pests			63%	45%

Table 2: Negative aspects of living next to a Protected Area and wildlife

Problem	Lake Manyara n=1597	Arusha n=983	Tsavo n=968
Livestock related	48%	20%	76%
Destroy crops	82%	95%	81%
Threat to security	62%	33%	86%
Ranger disturbance	31%	16%	91%
Cannot increase farm size	38%	29%	
Not allowed to cut trees for fuel		24%	
Not allowed to graze in park		16%	78%
Other, general destruction		6%	51%

This experience forms the basis for dialogue which is based on a process of visiting and revisiting people and communities. Community leaders and local level workshops are implemented on the issues and problems which were listed, prioritized and then proposed solutions sought. Techniques for village meetings favour broad participation and not those dominated by leaders. The use of simple dialogue event sheets, which record information on all formal interactions with community groups, helps establish a database for monitoring activities and relating these to impact. These tracking and monitoring tools are field based, affordable and focused on information that can be easily gathered by often over worked field staff as part of their normal work routines in and around the protected area.

THREE CASE STUDIES FROM EAST AFRICA

Lake Mburo National Park, Uganda And The Reestablishment Of Park Integrity

Lake Mburo National Park in Uganda presents an example of how the creation of a national park can lead to resentment and result in partial loss of the conservation area. Through the political, social, and economic chaos suffered by Uganda up to the early 1980s, the Lake Mburo area, which was a gazetted game reserve, came under increasing human pressure from growing numbers of cultivators, cattle herders and fishermen, resulting in loss of biodiversity and natural values. The area was upgraded to national park status on 1983, but in such an authoritarian and non-participatory manner that there was no support for the park, except at the highest political level. All residents in the Park were evicted, despite long presence in the area and valid claims. No attempt was made to compensation these former residents. When the government fell, in 1985, local communities invaded the park with the intention of destroying its conservation value and winning back the land. This resulted in the removal of conservation status from 60% of the area leaving 287 sq.km. National Park in 1986. Despite this reduction in size pressure continued to have the remainder degazetted.

The Lake Mburo Community Conservation Project was established, in 1991, to help change the relationship between people and the park authorities by instituting a process of dialogue, problem-solving, partnership and mutual respect which would improve the conservation status. The process of building a partnership with communities has been difficult. The Project has helped to establish a Community Conservation Unit comprised of a Warden Extension and three Community Extension Rangers in the Park. This Unit has

undertaken an extensive programme of dialogue with local communities. It has ranged from formal environmental education, to capacity building, and support for community development. A socio-economic survey was undertaken to learn about community perceptions of the park, the problems it caused them, their relationship with natural resources in general and their attitudes towards the park in particular (table 1 shows some of the results).

Two villages in Kamuli parish to the south of the park illustrates the process. Parish and sub-county contact and approval had been obtained. Of particular concern to the park was the level of poaching in the area. During early 1993 nine meetings, attended by over 180 people, were held. Initially, general discussions were held before entering into more focused topics concerning how to limit conflicts, for instance poaching and damage by wildlife, cooperate and the role of the community in conservation. This led to further discussions on community problems which centred on how each partner could mutually help the other. Between April and July 1993 a further 8 meetings, attended by 234 people and a study tour were held to visit a traditional hospital. The meetings initially centred around what constitutes a good environment, and what causes diseases. This evolved into negotiations, which are still continuing, about a possible benefit sharing project to construct a healers clinic. During this 8 month period over 17 meetings, attended by a total of 414 people were held resulting in an apparent decline in poaching and much improved park-people relations. This was done at the same time as lots of other meetings with other groups. The stage has been set for the community to become more of a "voice" in the process of natural resource management.

Participatory Park Planning And Lake Manyara National Park, Tanzania

In the case of Lake Manyara, it was recognized early on that the most serious threats to the park originated from out-of-park sources, for instance due to population and land pressures on the north border of the Park, irrigated farming and reduced river flow to the park. The TANAPA Planning unit and Community Conservation Service met to look for the best strategy for community input into the a park management plan being developed as part of a participatory approach involving an interdisciplinary team, as well as input and participation of a number of park stakeholders for instance local people and tour operators. TANAPA had three objectives in seeking the participation of local communities in park planning: (i) to get good information, much of which only local people have; (ii) to enhance the likelihood of local cooperation, for instance through mutual benefits from tourism; and (iii) the educational goal of exposing people to the many types of issues and concerns the park management faces.

TANAPA agreed upon a two-fold approach using surveys and workshops. A Community Conservation Warden was posted to initiate contacts with district leaders and establish dialogue, considered essential for establishing credibility and for ensuring that local protocol would be followed. Utilizing the department's **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practises Survey** was a major logistical undertaking. Permission was sought from the District Educational Officer in all three surrounding districts to make use of the services of primary school teachers as enumerators. These teachers underwent a half day training in using the instrument, in an open ended way, followed by two to three days of actual surveying. The teachers were supervised by TANAPA staff. A random sample of 1597, based on village population census details were surveyed on questions of the park, park staff, wildlife and natural resources, hunting, tourism, community development and other issues (see tables 1

and 2). One major finding of the survey was the high percentage of local people living very near the park who resented never having had the opportunity to visit it.

The second approach was to hold a series of Community Leaders' Workshops which served as a means of "ground truthing" the information collected in the survey and gained participation not only of local people but of local leaders and government officials, as well as providing a dynamic consultative setting where attitudes could be not only expressed but solutions proposed. Leaders included village officers, traditional leaders, women, and representatives of other stakeholders. For instance representatives of merchants and businessmen who rely on the tourist trade were invited, as were fishermen who use the lake, and Maasai pastoralists who graze livestock along the Park border.

These one day workshops were held using participatory and group discussion techniques. An introduction to the planning process was provided by park staff. Participants generated lists of problems and issues, discussed them at length, prioritized them by voting, and proposed solutions for their top problems. Priority problems included problem animal control, unethical park staff behaviour, Park expansion, shortage of water and inaccessibility of ranger posts for villagers. Some proposed solutions included ranger re-training, park involvement in land use planning, and water catchment protection. In others it was recognized by all participants just how difficult to solve some problems are. The results of the survey and the workshops, which had input from over 2,000 diverse stakeholders from around the park borders, have been summarized for the use by the Planning Unit. Community Conservation staff continue to participate in the Planning Unit's core workshops to represent these issues as proposals for the management plan. Issues of unethical park staff behaviour identified indicate the need for retraining and restructuring incentives for staff, which are within TANAPA's ability to effect. The senior Park staff of Lake Manyara must be drawn in, and agree to make dialogue effective. These proposals will then be taken back to the same workshop groups for reactions and comments from local leaders. Progress has been made in developing a system for the peoples' voice to be heard in park planning for the first time in Tanzania.

Negotiating Grazing Rights Around Tsavo National Park, Kenya

The Tsavo West Community Conservation Project in Kenya addressed the problem of illegal grazing of livestock in the Park by Maasai pastoralists from Kuku and Rombo group ranches, which are two community managed areas of rangeland bordering the Park. Portions of this land were leased to outsider for cultivation, and this loss of grazing combined with an increase in livestock numbers was accommodated by the Maasai moving into the National Park to graze their livestock. This resulted in serious over-grazing within the park and competition for available grazing between wildlife and livestock resulting in environmental degradation and loss of habitat.

Between 1990-92 community conservation dialogue involved many different stakeholders both individual and in groups. Over 700 meetings were held with livestock owners both individually and in groups from the group ranches which had a population of about 5,500; over 200 meetings were held with men and women who herded livestock in the park; 105 meetings were held with local chiefs, their assistants and councillors; and 18

meetings with senior district level officials. Total attendance is estimated in excess of 3,000 people. The meetings and local level workshops have been used to agree to a mutually agreed 5 km wide buffer zone along a 60 km edge of the park which would only be used for dry season grazing.

Creating functional group ranch wildlife committees to enforce and patrol the buffer zone, was no less arduous. Between 1991-93 this involved 45 meeting with group ranch management committees; 7 meetings at the group ranch annual general meetings; 14 meetings with the newly formed wildlife committees. The creating of wildlife committees as a means for dialogue between the park authorities and adjacent group ranches is an important mechanism for improving park-people relations, resolving conflict and benefit sharing.

There have been tangible outcomes over the long project duration. These include the establishment of wildlife committees with the group ranches to oversee the removal of livestock from the park; an agreement by irrigation farmers to use water more efficiently with an apparent increase in the water down stream for use by livestock and wildlife outside the Park; meetings with group ranch management committees on such issues as leasing of land for cultivation and its effects; a completed livestock auction yard to facilitate livestock marketing and reduce grazing pressures; and conserving a swamp, outside the Park for the benefit of both the wildlife and livestock from the surrounding group ranches.

The importance of partnership and dialogue is exemplified by the initial agreement with the Maasai not to graze within the park, an agreement which was later rescinded during the 1991 drought. This was done on the understanding that the group ranches would move their livestock out of the park as soon as the rains started. With the re-introduction of livestock in the park, the use of the buffer zone as a dry season grazing area for livestock as had earlier on been agreed upon had been violated. Negotiations to re-establish the zone are presently under way. This shows that community conservation can achieve good results even without revenue sharing or generation, but such gains can be fragile, being affected by external factors such as climate, politics, changing land use. This emphasizes the need for continual dialogue to fine tune and adapt community conservation practise without compromising overall goals.

CONCLUSION: TIME THE LASTING PARTNERSHIP

Changing attitudes, and improving rural economies takes time. Results are not easily and quickly visible or quantifiable so it is important to track and monitor community conservation initiatives to show such change. Partnership, related to mutual responsibilities, is crucial to the long term success of community conservation. Relationships between park and community will depend increasingly on their direct or indirect involvement in park management decisions. But community conservation can succeed as this case material shows even without tangible benefits. Local people's "voice" in a partnership is important on its own. To re-enforce this community conservation needs to be tied to some form of benefit sharing. Provision of benefits and resources is one mechanism for encouraging the establishment of community structures that will persist in their positive relationship with the park. For park authorities to be fully involved in community conservation, they have to see benefits related to protected area integrity. Neighbours bordering protected areas also have

top benefit directly or indirectly. The responsibilities are two way, with mutual respect, otherwise rural resource users will not have a true voice.

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