

Improving Livelihoods in Amboseli through Payment for Ecosystem Services: Concept for a GEF Medium-Sized Project

Problem: Loss of ecosystem and biodiversity services in the arid/semi-arid ecosystem of Amboseli

1. The livelihoods of 200,000 [chk] people living in southern Kajiado District, Kenya (the vast majority of whom are Maasai), and their potential contribution to the economy of the nation, are at risk. The reasons are complex – part history, part politics and part ecology. They include: lack of rational land use planning, private greed and public corruption, inequitable distribution of benefits, unplanned and uncoordinated exploitation of natural resources, and, last but not least, the inherently variable nature of the resource base.
2. The Amboseli ecosystem, an area of some 8,000 km² comprising part of the Ilkisongo region of southeastern Kajiado District in Kenya and the Longido region of northern Tanzania, is typical of African arid rangelands. Plant production is largely determined by rainfall, which is low (ca. 350 mm on average per annum), highly variable and unpredictable in time and space. The traditional transhumanant lifestyle of the Maasai is flexible and well-adapted to this uncertain rainfall regime that makes rainfed agriculture extremely risky. Nonetheless, with the growing size and sedentarisation of the population, traditional pastoralism is increasingly challenged as a sustainable enterprise for alleviating human poverty in the region: Kajiado District was the subject of a Famine Early Warning in March, 2005.
3. On the other hand, Amboseli has unique potential. The swamp system that is literally the lifeblood of the ecosystem is fed by subsurface water that percolates through volcanic rock from the forested catchment of Kilimanjaro looming spectacularly to the south. The absence of large-scale intensive agriculture and the relatively low population density encourages and provides refuge to a magnificent array of biodiversity, including large and small mammals, birds, reptiles, insects and plants, some of which are rare or threatened. Birdlife International has named Amboseli one of the world's Important Bird Areas.
4. At the heart of the ecosystem is Amboseli National Park, the Core Area of a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve that protects only 392 km² (ca. 5%) of the wildlife dispersal area. Nearly four decades of ecological monitoring and research as well as two of the world's longest studies of elephants and primates have brought international scientific and conservation recognition. As a prime attractor to both overseas and domestic visitors, the Park is fundamental to Kenya's tourist industry and typically ranks number two among parks in annual gate takings, some USD 3.5m in 2004. However, the Park's central swamps provide water and dry-season grazing to both wildlife and livestock and are a perennial source of tension between park managers and pastoralists.
5. Over the past three decades, the traditional tolerance of the Maasai to the presence of wildlife has worn thin as the people continue to suffer the opportunity costs of wildlife presence on their land – for example, from physical conflict, loss of crops, competition for grazing – without sharing in much of the benefits. It is estimated that in 2004, community benefits from the Park's gate takings amounted only to about USD 10,000.
6. Maasai landowners have sub-let most of the non-protected swamps in the ecosystem to sharecroppers from other tribes who, with their backers, are reaping large returns from gardening produce for urban centres. Already the water quality in at least two swamps (Kimana and Namalok) has degraded beyond all acceptable standards, and soil salinisation threatens to reduce returns to zero in a very few years. Meanwhile, 'young elder' cohorts within the Maasai social structure are lobbying for subdivision of the rangelands and demanding title deeds in order to gain bargaining power in the scramble for benefit sharing.
7. Even though Amboseli is currently undergoing rapid social and political changes, it is not too late to put in place appropriate plans, projects, infrastructure and informed community participation in order to benefit fully from the 'wildlife estate' in a sustainable manner. The proposed project will aspire to develop and implement innovative guidelines and mechanisms for creative planning and funding, and thereby develop enterprises for managing and sustaining ecosystem services.

The Search for Solutions: Improved incentives for providing ecosystem services

The ***Project Objective*** is to provide new or alter existing incentive structures in order to restore and maintain world-class biodiversity and in so doing achieve measurable progress in poverty reduction, food security and individual welfare.

8. There are a number of interrelated, concrete *Project Outcomes* to which the project will aspire, including:

Livelihoods

- Improved welfare, including reduced poverty and food insecurity among local communities, households and individuals, through providing direct and indirect public and private incentives to encourage sustained use of biodiversity services.

Ecosystem Biodiversity

- Ecosystem-wide management plans and organizational structures for effective participation, coordination and conflict resolution in decision-making for natural resource management and biodiversity conservation;
- Rehabilitation of degraded parts of the ecosystem;
- Reduced conflict between humans and wildlife, *inter alia*, through increased availability of wildlife corridors, dispersal areas, water sources and habitats at appropriate sites throughout the ecosystem.

Production Systems

- Improved planning for range management, farming and ranching skills, agriculture and irrigation practices, including appropriate technologies for mitigating human-wildlife conflict;
- Higher productivity, higher value-added and increased employment, while using less land, for cropping and irrigation within the ecosystem.

Management & Welfare

- Development and adoption of decision support tools by policy makers, local administrations and project implementers, contributing to improved ecosystem management and participatory conservation of biodiversity;
- Flexible and sustainable institutional and financial mechanisms that conserve and increase ecosystem services.

Financing

- Development and testing of financing mechanisms based on innovative debt-swapping strategies;
- Engagement of bilateral donors for targeted programme areas.

Outreach

- Raised awareness and improved knowledge management at the local, national, and international levels, including the adoption of global lessons from Amboseli on biodiversity payments and incentives into other similar projects around the world.

NB: This draft has been distilled from a number of working documents: <5th draft Logical Framework Analysis3.doc>, < Full project description v2_hc.doc>, <MSP Amboseli draft.doc>, < Amboseli_as_BR.doc>.