

ABSTRACT

POPULATION DYNAMICS, TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN MASAII MARA

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The Maasai Mara Ecosystem in southwestern Kenya, comprises of the Maasai Mara National Reserve and the adjoining group ranches and conservancies. The ecosystem has the richest concentration of wildlife in Kenya and is globally known for the annual spectacular wildebeest migration. Administratively, the Kenyan side of the ecosystem traverses Transmara and Narok Counties. However, the discussions presented in this paper are restricted to Narok County, which adequately represents the larger Masaai Mara landscape. In order to secure the future of the Mara ecosystem, a study on population dynamics and its impact on natural resource utilization, conservation and development is important. Population variables (human capital) can be both a threat and opportunity for development. Furthermore, the effects of population dynamics, both urban and rural, on landuse and land cover changes are important variables in this study. This paper is based on the analysis of past, present and future population dynamics in Narok County in-as-much-as they relate to environmental resources, social infrastructure, wildlife conservation and management, and changing perceptions about resource use. Migration and urbanization will be integrated in the analysis of population dynamics. The paper will also discuss population pressure and competition over resources among different land use actors and between people and wildlife, as well as conflicts that may arise and possible mitigation measures.