

East Africa Community Regional Tourism Policy: The Nexus between Cultural Heritage and Socio-economic Development of the Maasai Community in Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem

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Abstract

This paper explores how EAC tourism regional policy preserves the Maasai culture in Serengeti. It argues that in as much as the East Africa Community regional policy endeavors to protect and preserve cultural heritage of communities around the ecosystem from tourist distortions, this has not been the case. Therefore, the objective of the paper is to interrogate EAC regional policy towards preserving cultural aspects of the Maasai community from mass tourism activities. The study utilized political realism and neo-functionalism theories to analyze effects of policy cultural heritage. It employed descriptive research design to investigate how the EAC tourism policy affects cultural heritage of local communities. Purposive was used to determine samples. The study used questionnaire and interviews to collect primary. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings of the study indicate that wildlife management groups, game control areas on Serengeti side and community conservancy groups on Mara side of the border form the central pillar through which the local populace engage and benefit from ecotourism activities. The findings indicate that cultures such as Maa dances, regalia, Manyattas, traditional ceremonies have been commercialized however, benefits for the community are not sustainable.

Keywords: Policy, Cultural Tourism, Ecosystem, Creative, Cross-Border

Introduction

The focus of this paper is on EAC regional tourism policy in regard to preservation of cultural heritage of the Maa Community such as regalia, traditional dances, rituals, ceremonial occasions and their dependent of tourism as a socio-economic endeavour. It argues that EAC states have a responsibility to preserve culture for posterity at the same time ensure benefits that accrue are adequate for socio-economic well-being of the Maa community. This means that state governments have an obligation of initiating community projects in partnership with other operators like NGOs to meet these demands. Does the EAC regional policy promote preservation of the Maa community culture? Does the policy guarantee socio-economic benefits to the community whose culture is a foreign tourism attraction such that it can survive on tourism alone? These are the basic questions that this paper explores.

Scott (2008) argues that informal institutions are normative institutions; morally governed, binding expectations to which people adhere such as values, norms and codes of conduct. They can also be called cultural-cognitive dimension of institutions because of shared logics and common beliefs that are taken for granted, supported by culture and everyday practices (Moodysson & Zukauskaitė, 2012). Non-governmental organizations initiate or support community-based biodiversity projects for the benefit of the public and biodiversity/wildlife (Buckely, 2008). He argues that community-based biodiversity projects need to be supported by environmental NGOs, local schools, and universities performing research activities in tourism sites, buffer zones and connecting corridors, in cooperation and under coordination of relevant PA management authorities. . LVBC study is relevant to the current one as it points out negative human activities that do not support ecotourism development and thus the cultural heritage of a people. However, the gap here is the creation of structure on how local community can benefit from ecotourism activities fully as well as protect their cultural heritage.

In the Himalayan region, at the local level, messages on reducing poaching, controlling forest fires, ways of strengthening livelihoods, and rationally using of pasturelands have become important. Therefore, a local-level network on the management of transboundary issues is evolving in the area. Annual herders' meetings take place independently of Transboundary programmes. Moreover, park authorities in Nepal and Sikkim have used such existing forums successfully to share information, and they could be used for future training activities. The result is that several poachers were arrested in Makalu-Barun and Langtang national parks (Oli, 2002).

The majority of the surveyed facilities were locally owned (82% of accommodation and 50% of tour operations for South Africa and 62% of accommodation facilities and 60% of tour operations for Zimbabwe). Likewise, the many of employees in the sector are local residents from across the border. However, he notes that many local employees take up low ranks as a result of lack of suitable academic qualifications and skills (Suich, 2005).

These projects can have a multiplier effect towards new socio-economic action and enable additional biodiversity gains within the local communities. This increases awareness and understanding of biodiversity conservation at community level. For instance, the transboundary parks adjoining Uganda, the Congo and Rwanda, there is a very active involvement of NGOs in maintaining informal cooperation. In South America, non-governmental organizations based in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and the U.S are involved in the ecotourism industry and in the conservation of the Maya Forest across the borders as a

means of preserving cultural heritage. These NGOs regularly support the programs by promoting tours, publishing maps and newsletters, and organizing conferences and support systems for the local ecotourism ventures. In Tanzania, however, NGOs try to sort out issues of controversial land tenure affecting the Maasai. A Tanzania-based NGO called Pastoral Women's Council (PWC) has initiated works to make the Maasai aware of their land rights status. Also, they provide the local community with the skills necessary for the management of natural resources. To accomplish these goals, PWC ensures capacity-building projects in the Maasai community (PWC, 2011). Other NGOs such as Klein's Camp provides financial benefits to local Maasai people. They achieve this by leasing contracts between Klein's Camp and the community of Ololosokwan. The revenue collected enables the Maasai to reap financial benefits and be empowerment (Kathryn, 2011). Kathryn study points out that it non-governmental organizations promote local community ecotourism activities. The gap here is how to reduce local community dependence on donor funded projects and protect cultural heritage.

Therefore, informal institutional tourism policy coordination is composed of cooperation established between local authorities, non-governmental organizations businesses or individuals on two sides of a border; nonetheless it is not normally supported by laws or official treaties. Two communities belonging to opposite sides of a border planning a cultural festival is an example of informal cooperation. Cross-border tourism is flourishing in integrated and interdependent borderlands. In the Serengeti Mara ecosystem, cultural heritage protection has largely been affected by statist tourism policies despite the existence of a regional tourism policy that states that local communities have rights. This means that regional cooperation on policy coordination is minimal or lacking totally in some aspects of cultural protection in light of economic returns of mass tourism. These policy coordination challenges are a result of competing political and economic interests such that statist tourism policies are at play even in shared ecosystem. For instance, the Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem (SMME) is majorly managed by national institutions/agencies such as Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA). These national institutional entities create disjointed tourism policies. As a result, the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem suffers from uncontrolled development of tourist facilities and large numbers of visitors (LVBC, 2010; UNESCO, 2013). Despite such developments, the net benefits accruing to local communities are minimal and the various challenges to conservation including human-wildlife conflicts and encroachment on protected areas have been on the increase (Manyara, 2009). Manyara's study is relevant to the current one since it captures challenges with regard to ecotourism development in Serengeti-Mara ecosystem. However, the gap here is how political and socio-economic factors contribute to a weak regional policy and thus little cultural heritage preservation. The gap is that the local community is not engaged in policy coordination particularly on land use practices. On marketing, tourism products are supposed to be marketed in a way that benefits the local community. Coast (2002) argues that there are differences afforded by the hospitality industry for the Maasai men and women in the SMME. The Maasai women's handcraft and Jewelry that are mostly associated by the Maasai by international visitors do not directly benefit them. As such, revenues are not distributed evenly. Kathryn (2011) argues that the Klein's Camp, an ecotourism company sells Maasai jewelry in its gift shop and purchase local products. These initiatives surely allow the Maasai to share the financial benefits of tourism. The gap here is that Maasai culture is an attraction to tourists but how other non-Maasai communities' interests can be promoted is not fully studied.

Materials and Methods

The Serengeti-Mara region is found within the EAC region on which the regional tourism policy applies. The United Republic of Tanzania and Republic of Kenya share one of the greatest ecological regions of migrating wildlife in the world, known as the Maasai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya and the Serengeti National Park. The Mara River, the only perennial river in the transboundary ecosystem, is often the only source of water for grazing animals during the dry season. Increasing water demands from agriculture, industries, and growing human populations are likely to reduce its availability for migratory species. Within Serengeti Masai mara Ecosystem, there exists a diverse range of visitor accommodation which includes lodges, permanent and non-permanent tented camps, and public campsites of accommodation types and communal conservancies. The standardization is meant to ensure that two sides of the border provide quality service while at the same time inequality and competition do not occur. To gather data, there were 92 questionnaires which were administered to respondents in total. The researcher, with the help of two research assistants administered structured questionnaires to gather information from 2 EAC agency directors, 2 Park Managers, 3 directors of state agencies (KWS, TANAPA and TWS), 3 directors of INGOs, 6 directors of NGOs, 70 managers of camps/eco-camps and lodges/Eco lodges; 3 heads of conservancies and 3 heads of wildlife management areas. Secondly, the researcher used the interview schedule. The researcher and research assistants spent five days in each study site to conduct interviews. Both an in-depth formal and informal interviews were done. The formal interviews were structured since they involved a set of questions of predetermined questions. The interview schedule was used with EAC agency directors, Park Managers, directors of KWS, TANAPA and TWS, directors of INGOs and NGOs and tour operators. The research instruments were trial tested in Kilimanjaro Heartland between Kenya and Tanzania. These instruments were trial tested in a pilot survey was conducted in February 2018 using 30 respondents to validate them. The Focused Group Discussion focused attention on the given involvement of the local community in ecotourism activities. This method was used to probe various aspects of ecotourism activities that Community Based Natural Resource Management Groups engage in within dispersal areas of Serengeti Mara ecosystem. There were specific topics that were discussed by the groups. Members involved in this included heads of conservancies, wildlife management areas and existing community based natural resource management groups in these dispersal areas of the SMME. In total, there were 6 Focused Group Discussion groups comprising of 7 to 12 members in each group. This study relied on secondary data by examining books, reports, journal articles, online materials and newspaper materials and articles on aspects of ecotourism, bilateral agreement between Kenya and Tanzania, EAC Protocol on tourism and international protocols on tourism. The researcher sourced secondary data by analysis of publications such as journals on tourism, EAC tourism related legislation and government documents. These documents included Kenya tourism strategic master plan, Tanzania tourism strategic plan, bilateral and EAC regional tourism protocol/agreements.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Quantitative data consisted of measuring numerical values from which description such as frequencies and percentages were made. The data were first entered into the computer for analysis using statistical package for social sciences SPSS Version 12. This generated frequencies and percentages which were used to discuss the findings. Qualitative data basically involved themes and content analysis. The frequency with which an idea or word or description appears was to interpret the importance, attention or emphasis. Content analysis examined the intensity

with which certain words had been used. A classification system was developed to record the information in interpreting results. The frequency with which a symbol or data appeared showed the measure of importance, attention or emphasis. The researcher presented data findings in the form of frequency tables, pie charts, bar graphs and narratives. There were factors that affected the results of the study. One, the researcher was unable to gather information from some respondents who declined to participate or were unavailable for interviews. Also, there were geographical limitations that were experienced due to rough terrain in the wilderness, poor road network and bad weather. Lastly, there was a language barrier in the rural areas. To overcome these shortcomings, the researcher engaged a tour guide to interpret and translate questions for the respondents. Further, research assistants from the area were engaged to assist in data collection. The researcher used four wheeled vehicles to overcome geographical In addition, the researcher utilized secondary materials from EAC Ministry, EAC agencies, Kenya Tourism Board and Tanzania Tourism Corporation and other institutions that had previously studied this ecosystems tourism status. On language barrier, the researcher engaged an interpreter to explain and interpret for the respondents.

Findings and Discussions

The EAC regional policy states that with regard to local communities, their rights need to be protected. By mentioning rights, the policy does not directly imply that local culture heritage to be protected from adverse tourism activities. Therefore, protection of local culture is not clearly stated in the policy. One of the key aspects of ecotourism is that local culture remains intact in view of tourism activities. To this end, the researcher asked park managers, tourism officers in Ministries of EAC and Tourism, directors of EAC agencies, KWS, TWS and TANAPA to identify any socio-cultural effects of tourism activities on the local populace culture in SMME. The number of respondents was 10. Two questionnaires were not returned. Table 1 is a summary of findings.

Table 1: Socio-cultural effects of Tourism Activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Changes in community value systems and behavior	1	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Commercialization of local culture	3	37.5	37.5	50.0
	Collective traditional lifestyle	3	37.5	37.5	87.5
	Change of Community structure	1	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	8	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 1.1 indicates that 3 (37.5%) of the respondents agreed that there is commercialization of local culture and collective traditional lifestyle as a result of tourism activities across SMME. Findings show that 1 (12.5%) of the respondents agreed that there are changes in community value systems and behaviour and change of community structure. In an interview (3), a tourism officer (a) said:

The Maasai depend on their livestock and environment for their basic needs, but things have changed because local community depends on food produced from outside the area. This is due to change of lifestyle

from pastoralism to semi-agriculture and pure agriculture. In addition, indigenous medicine-based knowledge is on the decline (Interview held on 30th March 2018 at Tourism Ministry, Nairobi).

This assertion indicates change in lifestyle as a result of tourism across the SMME. The local community's needs are not fully supported by tourism activities. This finding concurs with Kathryn (2011) argument that ecotourism activities are yet to completely support local community economic needs. However, a tourism officer argued that preservation and maintenance of the indigenous knowledge of traditional Maasai food and medicine is through ethno-botany research that provides a quantitative, analytical understanding of potential impact of these changes to the Maasai Mara ecosystem. Further, educating the young members of the Maasai community about their traditional food, medicines and cultural contexts is important. But cultural distortion is rampant due to tourism activities. In an interview (6), a tourism officer (a) opined:

Maasai culture is distorted as a result of over-commercialization. For example, traditionally, a Maasai woman would do beadwork for her own beauty, her and for ceremonial purposes such as weddings, circumcision and childbirth ceremonies. Today, the beadwork is not only for beauty and ceremonies but also as a business (Interview held on 3rd May 2018 at Tourism Ministry, Dar es salaam).

Traditionally, the Maasai women did bead work for beauty and ceremonies but today it mainly to sell to tourists. Moreover, this business is infiltrated by non-Maasai communities who either imitate the Maasai beadwork or buy them cheaply from the Maasai women. This finding concur with Kathryn (2011) argument that sell of handicraft is a commercial activity. But her study does not indicate that cross border cultural routes would boost revenue of the local community. This denies the Maasai their traditional art and crafts heritage as well as income. This beadwork, Maasai 'Shuka' and other traditional craft are now littered in all major towns in Kenya. These negative cultural impacts are a result of host communities' direct and indirect interactions with tourists and with the tourism industry. The effects arise when tourism brings about changes in communities' value systems and behaviour; which has threatened indigenous identity.

Therefore, unchecked tourism activities can cause changes or loss of local cultural identity and values, through commercialization of local culture as is the case with communities living around SMME. Tourism has commercialized local culture, local customs and festivals to conform to tourist expectations. This standardization is as a result of having to satisfy tourists' desires. This could cause severe social stress on local communities in the form of cultural distortion and damage to cultural heritage.

The EAC regional policy also states that local cultural artefacts can be developed so as to promote socio-economic well-being of the community. The researcher asked managers/directors of tour operators, NGOs, INGOS to identify strategies employed towards community socio-economic development in SMME. The researcher asked whether they promote local product development and cultural events. The total number of respondents was 78. Figure 1 is a summary of findings.

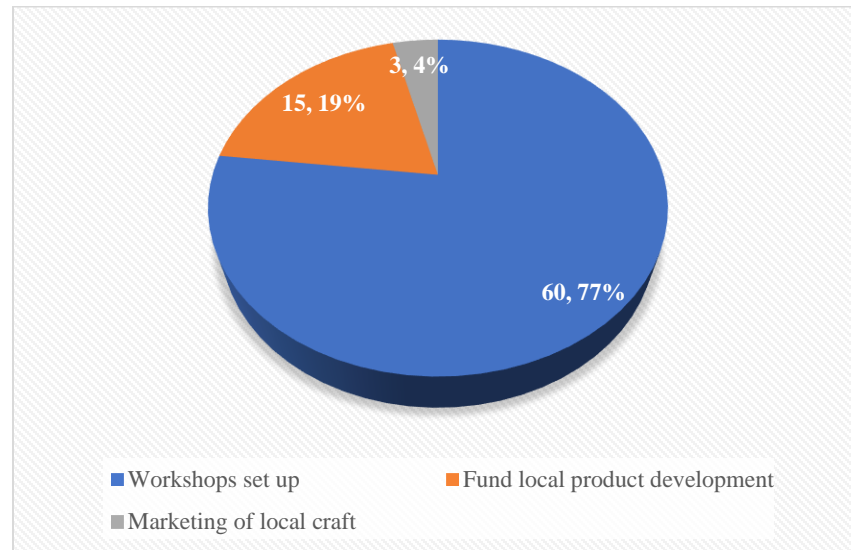


Figure 1: Local Handicraft Development

Source: Field Data, 2018

Figure 1.1 indicates that on local product development 60 (77%) agreed to support and setting up workshops where local products are produced. Findings show that 19 (15%) of the respondents agreed to fund product improvement, while 3 (4%) assist in marketing of local products. A director of an NGO agreed that NGOs or INGOs operating in Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem with branches in both Kenya and Tanzania such as the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) are involved in local product development. These organizations in conjunction with local community are involved in short-term planning of the internationalizing of Maasai handicrafts sales. This result does not concur with Kathryn (2011) assertion that through World Wide Web expands market of handicraft sales by advertising on behalf of local community.

On the other hand, tour operators' such as lodges/camps, partner with local communities so that local products are bought locally from the community as long as they meet quality requirements and market price. In Serengeti, small stores are established at tourist centres such as lodges/camps to create a secure market for the handicrafts. This allows tourists to purchase items at the lodge or camps and not enter the community and disturb communal life. The local community make handicrafts after meeting their needs for farming, hunting and fishing. This means that local community does not wholly depend on handcraft as a source of income but as a part time venture. In an interview in an FGD at Naboisho Conservancy (13), one Woman bead seller (g) lamented:

We do not get much help in marketing or production of our handicrafts. We sell them in either Maasai Bomas or cultural centres to tourists. Most of the time we camp at entry gates to Parks waiting for tourists (FGD Interview held on 29th March 2018 in Naboisho conservancy in MMNR).

This assertion confirms that local people rely on their own means to produce and market handcraft. Thus, eco-marketing that focuses on local community product is yet to take place. Eco-marketing should be undertaken in a cross-border perspective but there is no mechanism to realize this. Eco-marketing will boast sells and thus uplift economic status of local communities while preserving local cultures. Thus each side

of the border engages in this important activity independently of each other. Moreover, distortion of cultural heritage takes place when Maasai Boma is centre for cultural dances and selling of handicraft to tourists particularly in Maasai Mara.

The *boma* serves as a cultural centre where organized dances take place and handicraft is sold. Thus, this indicates over-commercialization of culture. In Serengeti, tourism cultural centres assist in marketing of the products. This indicates that support in this ecotourism area is little across the SMME. Findings of survey also indicate that the local community reaps from ecotourism activities such as cultural events. These cultural events are important in that they offer one of the few economic opportunities for local communities thereby reducing poverty through job creation.

The result indicates that Serengeti side experiences real cultural activities compared to Mara side. There are 42 Cultural Tourism Enterprises (CTEs) throughout Tanzania which have provided an excellent platform for this market segment to grow even in Serengeti. According to a Republic of Tanzania (2006-2016) report, the Cultural Tourism Program in Tanzania approximately employs 1,500 people as coordinators, tour guides, food providers, dancers, and handicrafts producers. These also include home-stays, where foreign tourists spend a night to have a feel of Maasai *Bomas* on both sides of the border. In home stays demonstrations of handicraft production and herbal medicine rituals are done. It was noted that in 2014, over 712 licensed tour operators in Tanzania include cultural tourism activities in itineraries which is one way of marketing cultural events (Republic of Tanzania, 2016). In Maasai Mara, cultural events such as fire lighting, traditional dances and traditional food preparation are showcased for tourists. Other items include bangles, necklace and other beatifying materials which are sold in cultural village *Bomas*. These activities take place in Maasai *Bomas* or village cultural centre organised by various groups. This is not the case in Serengeti.

In Serengeti, Tanzania Association for Cultural Tourism Organizers (TACTO) is an independent association that works with a range of cultural tourism providers to benefit local communities. It is through TACTO that local communities are empowered to transform their lives through the development of sustainable micro- enterprises that offer cultural products to tourists (Republic of Tanzania, 2016). Mto wa Mbu CTE employs 50 people, including local guides who lead visitors on multiple activities including: Climbing Balaa Hill, tours of a Maasai Boma, market, village, and farm, the Miwaleni waterfall and lake tour, biking to Lake Manyara, cultural dance performance, local food production, and local brewing. Traditional lunches are prepared and served by local women in their homes (Republic of Tanzania, 2006-2016). In an FGD interview (13), a handicraft seller (h) said

We do not rely on donors, tour operators or government to make and sale our wares. The only role the government has is to register their business through the social services ministry. It was found that a majority of women sell these handicrafts at various gates into Maasai Mara National Reserve (interview held on 3rd May 2018 at Siana Conservancy area in MMNR)

This assertion confirms that local communities do not get assistance in development and marketing of handicraft on the Mara side of the border. Therefore, marketing of these products is a problem since women gather around park gates to get access of tourists in tour van. In an FDG interview (14), a Maasai woman (I) opined

I depend on selling handicraft to tourists who visit the SMME but income accruing from it is not adequate to sustain me. Therefore, I supplement with other economic activities and in particular livestock rearing (Interview held on 29th March, 2018 at Ikona WMA in Serengeti).

This argument indicates that proceeds from ecotourism activities like handicraft sells are inadequate and therefore, other economic activities are important. But on the Serengeti side of the border, according to a Republic of Tanzania (2016) report, Mto wa Mbu Cultural Tourism Enterprise earns up to \$0.3 M annually. It contributes 20% of its annual revenue to surrounding villages through the Village Development Fund (VDF) which supports community projects such as school construction, health centres, and clean water projects. The CTE supports the women who make lunches for visitors, bicycle hire groups, guides and souvenir shop owners. In addition, the CTP provides grants to around 300 farmers within the Mto Wa Mbu area to enable them to preserve their rice fields. The CTP has also set up a microfinance scheme for small vendors to borrow from US\$ 30 up to US\$ 200. Lastly, the CTP has supported the establishment of eight “Roots and Shoots” environmental clubs in Mto Wa Mbu, for 2100 youth in the area aillages (Republic of Tanzania, 2016).

On the Mara side, there are no cultural tourism enterprises organized similar to those in Serengeti. In an FDG interview (15), a head of Maasai Boma (J) said:

Cultural village ‘bomas’ are cultural community centres where local Maasai showcase their cultural products such as handicrafts, traditional dances, natural fire lighting and homestays. (Interview held on 3rd May 2018 in Olarro Conservancy in MMNR)

These sentiments confirm that Maasai *Bomas* have been converted into cultural centres on the Mara side of the border. Such scenarios dilute local culture by commercializing it to suit tourist demands. Thus, cultural routes across the border should be the alternative. These cultural routes would restrict tourist such that getting into Maasai *bomas* won’t be necessary.

To this end, the researcher also asked heads of WMAs and conservancies which cultural tourism activities are practiced in a cross-border perspective. The number of respondents was 6. Table 2 is a summary of findings:

Table 2: Cross Border Cultural Activities in SMME

Cultural Activities		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduation Of Junior Elders	5	83.3	83.3	83.3
	Traditional Dances	1	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	6	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 2 indicates that 5 (83.3%) of respondents agreed to cross joint organization of events and festivals such as graduation of junior elders while 1 (16.7%) agreed to traditional dances. Thus, graduation of juniors to elders is a tradition that brings together Maasai people regardless of border existence and therefore has little to do with attracting tourists. These cultural practices are done in Maasai *Bomas* on the Mara side of

the border. Such situation can interfere with traditional life of the Maasai community. There are other cultural practices such as homestays from which the local community drives income. The local community across Serengeti-Mara ecosystem are not involved in decision making on how to directly benefit from ecotourism activities. But it is worse on Serengeti side of the border than Mara side. The local community can also benefit from cultural activities and in particular, those that are cross-border in nature. Cross-border cultural practices can be critical in low tourism season.

This finding concurs with Kathryn (2011) assertion that cultural practices form the core ecotourism activities that local community earns their income. In an FDG interview (15), a Maasai elder (k) argued:

Graduation of junior elders is cross border ceremony because it's a tradition but is not associated with tourism. Traditional dances are rarely cross border but are part of tourist attraction (interview held on 3rd May, 2018 at Siana Conservancy in MMNR).

This argument indicates that some cultural activities are cross border. For example, graduation of juniors is a traditional practice of the Maasai community regardless of the border. The Maasai people share a history and heritage that can be a pedestal for greater collaboration in other areas of ecotourism. But other cultural practices like traditional dances, homestays among others are done in Maasai Bomas (Mara side) or cultural centers (Serengeti).

It is clear that Serengeti side of the border is well organized in promoting cultural events such as traditional dances, homestays, among others. As much as the Mara side experiences the same, it is not well coordinated. Apart from traditional graduation of junior elders, other cultural events take place independently on either side of the border. Cross border cultural routes can be a new tourism product in the SMME. Cultural routes could shift attention from nature and wildlife dependent tourism in SMME. Closely related to community development are jobs offered to locals by tour operators.

The relationship between cultural heritage and socio-economic development of local community is important in tourism industry as discussed. However, the uplifting of the local communities is dependent on the preservation of the cultural heritage on which their fortunes in the tourism industry hangs on. Therefore, it is clear that loss of cultural aspects automatically affects the gains local communities accrue from tourism activities thus the need to preserve culture is critical. In an ecosystem such as Serengeti Mara cross border efforts on the mentioned aspects would boost tourism and support local community fortunes at the same time. The EAC regional tourism policy lacks mechanisms to affect such fulfilling measures with regard to cultural heritage protection while promoting socio-economic development of the local Maasai community.

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