

# Community-based Tourism Enterprises Development in Kenya: An Exploration of Their Potential as Avenues of Poverty Reduction

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## Abstract

The United Nations World Tourism Organization endorses tourism for economic development and poverty reduction in developing countries, emphasising the role of micro-, small- and medium-sized tourism enterprises. In Kenya, community-based enterprises (CBEs) are preferred. This paper evaluates CBE potential and challenges for poverty reduction in Kenya. Reviewing literature on Kenyan tourism development, it uses case studies of six Kenyan CBEs spread across Kenya's tourism-focused community-based initiatives selected using opportunistic and snowball sampling. The case studies used individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with community leaders, CBE managers, tourism academics, support organisations and government officials, and focus groups with community members. The paper develops a detailed understanding of the CBEs, identifying the catalyst for their establishment and the role and degree of external intervention. It explores critical success factors, the extent to which CBEs alleviate poverty, and factors making communities welcome CBEs (or not). The results emphasise the conservation orientation of CBEs, with support agencies preferring partnership approaches involving white investment which inadequately addresses community priorities. Through foreign resource control and heavy reliance on donor funding, CBEs promote neocolonialism and reinforce dependency. An urgent review of the support framework for community tourism development in Kenya integrating the principles of sustainable development is advocated.