

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates tourism's role in the development of Narok County amongst communities living adjacent to Maasai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya. The study mainly employed a qualitative research design and data was collected through a interview method approach which involved in-depth interviews with a wide range of community members, key informants and with people directly involved with tourism. Some data was also gathered from secondary sources. The findings indicate that as at the time of this study tourism was making quite a number of developments on the area. More so, many people at Mara stated that even though the benefits from tourism were not fully established it played an important role in improving the living conditions of their lives. The study also identified several problems that make it difficult for the people of Mara to draw maximum benefits from tourism. Some of these barriers included: tour driver and guide exploitation, inequitable benefit sharing and lack of broad based management structures. These forms of exploitation can be eradicated by having well established curio shops that the tourist will go to buy the souvenirs. Also on the part of lack of broad based management the county government can come up with policies that ensure there is transparency and well managed revenues for all to benefit. The study concludes that tourism has the potential to contribute to growth and development in the area; however, this can only happen if there is a unity of purpose and renewed cooperation amongst all tourism stakeholders, transparency and accountability in financial matters and popular participation in the decision-making processes