

CASE #6: PARKLIFE

Desperate Kenyans, who, due to climate change, have seen a dramatic drop in their food and water supplies, are settling illegally in their country's national parks. Around 15,000 squatters currently live throughout Kenya's protected parks.¹ In order to make heavily forested areas apt for cultivation and cattle-grazing, settlers have deforested almost 1 million acres.

Food insecurity has been the main cause behind these settlements, yet the consequence of cutting down protected forests is to put Kenyan people in an even more precarious situation. Because trees "promote the formation of clouds – cutting them down inevitably leads to lower rainfall." In turn, lower rainfall adversely affects agriculture and food security. The indiscriminate clearing of many of Africa's forests has already caused the desertification of the African landscape. Mourning the recent disappearance of a local river, a Kenyan farmer worriedly complained: "My life will be completely ruined if I cannot get water for us and our livestock, our land will turn into a desert. We will all die."²

Thus far, the Kenyan government has responded to the so-called assault on its parks by vowing to add more armed guards and electric fences to prevent illegal settlements. However, the situation in Kenya defies easy solutions. While many squatters are hungry Kenyans in search of sustenance, allowing the poor to extract resources out of nature parks will not solve Kenya's problems. As the director of Kenya's Wildlife Service has argued, "Kenya is destroying itself. The population has reached an unsustainable level. We are killing ourselves slowly by destroying the forests and settling there." Complicating the issue still further, many of the current settlers belong to indigenous groups who claim to have lived in the forest for generations while allegedly harvesting its resources in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, the label "squatters" has even been called into question by those who claim to have land titles in the protected areas.

Electric fencing might prevent additional settlements in Kenyan parks, and the removal of current squatters may help prevent further destruction of Kenya's flora and fauna. However, these measures do little to address the underlying cause of these illegal settlements: food scarcity and climate change. It is unclear what the Kenya government can do to address climate change, given that global warming can be partly attributed to developed nations overuse of ecological resources.³ Because the lifestyle in developing nations (in the form of copious carbon emissions) has unavoidably impacted the whole earth, the negative consequences of global warming experienced in the developing world constitute the "largest health inequity of our time."⁴

¹ Vidal, John, "Electric fences to stop invasion of Kenya nature parks," <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/10/kenya-climate-change-mau-park>, *Guardian News and Media Ltd.* (May 10, 2009).

² Moody, Barry, "Destruction of Kenya forest is national emergency," <http://ca.reuters.com/article/oddlyEnoughNews/idCAL246908720080903?sp=true>, *Reuters* (Sept. 2, 2008).

³ Baer, Paul, et al., "Equity and Greenhouse Gas Responsibility," *Science*, v. 289, i. 5488, p. 2287 (Sept. 29, 2000) <http://www.climate-talks.net/2004-ENVRE130/PDF/20000929-Science-Equity.pdf>; Srinivasan, U.T., et al., "The debt of nations and the distribution of ecological impacts from human activities," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, v. 105(5), p. 1768 (Oct. 19, 2007) <http://www.pnas.org/content/105/5/1768.abstract>; Singer, P.P., *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (2nd ed.), Yale University Press (2004).

⁴ Patz, J.A., et al., "Climate change and global health: Quantifying a growing ethical crisis," *EcoHealth*, v. 4(4), pp. 397-405 (Nov. 30, 2007) <http://www.springerlink.com/content/212lw8m6466n645p/>.