

NTRES 454: Environmental Strategies

Professor: Steven Wolf

Research brief #1

Community-based Ecotourism

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INTRODUCTION

1. Definition

Defining "Community-based Ecotourism" (CBE) has not proven to be an easy task, given the different concepts involved and the different players attempting to define it in terms that are beneficial to themselves. For the sake of clarity we decided to define "community-based" and "ecotourism" separately.

a) Community-based

The idea behind the community-based component of this Environmental Strategy is to create potential for **the empowerment of the community, enhancing their involvement in decision making, but also simply making sure that the will and incentive to participate come from the community itself.** This empowerment arises specifically from the control over and the ability to manage productive resources in the interest of one's own family and community. It invokes a basic principle of control and accountability which maintains that "the control over an action should rest with the people who will bear its consequences."¹ This underlies the need for positive economical/social/environmental benefit for the community. "Community-based resource management takes as its point of departure, not the bureaucracy and its centrally-mandated development projects and programs, but rather the community itself: its needs, its capabilities, and ultimately its own control over both its resources and its destiny."²

As is now obvious, the concept evolves around the concept of community.

¹ Community-based coastal resources Management Philippines Phase I, http://www.eepsea.org/ev.php?ID=3992_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

² Community-based coastal resources Management Philippines Phase I, http://www.eepsea.org/ev.php?ID=3992_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

CB-CRM [Community-based coastal resource management] is people-centered, community-oriented and resource-based. It starts from **the basic premise that people have the innate capacity to understand and act on their own problems. It begins where the people are i.e. what the people already know, and build on this knowledge to develop further their knowledge and create a new consciousness.** It strives for more active people's participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of resource management programs. It involves an iterative process where the community takes responsibility for the assessment and monitoring of environmental conditions and resources and the enforcement of agreements and laws. Since the community is involved in the formulation and implementation of management measures a higher degree of acceptability and compliance can be expected.³

Community-based approaches allow each community to develop a management strategy which meets its own particular needs and conditions, enabling more flexibility. This approach also enhances recognition of and respect for cultural differences on the local and regional levels and among nations. It strives to make maximum use of indigenous knowledge and experiences in developing management strategies.

b) Ecotourism

Tourism represents a huge market in the global sphere. In 2002, the number of international tourist arrivals went up to as much as 702.6 millions and is projected to reach over 1.56 billion by 2020. This represents about US\$ 474.2 billions in receipts at an international scale.⁴ However, ecotourism represents a very small part of this market. "Ecotourism represents a small segment of nature-tourism. Nature-tourism is understood as travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas and constitutes about 15% of all tourism (WWF, 1995)."⁵ This branch of tourism came up as an answer to the negative characteristics seen in tourism. Indeed,

³ Community-based coastal resources Management Philippines Phase I, http://www.eepsea.org/ev.php?ID=3992_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

⁴ World Tourism Organization (WTO): <http://www.world-tourism.org/>

⁵ Gossling Stefan, *Ecotourism: A Means to Safeguard Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functions?*; Ecological Economics, v29, n2 (May 1999): 303-20

[tourism] was often condemned as “whorism” (Munt and Higinio 1993; Shoman 1994) [and] the industry was seen as elite-controlled and was thought to reinforce patterns of international inequality, exploitation, and dependency, and contribute to environmental degradation (Britton 1981; Perez 1973/74) ⁶

This encouraged the advent of Ecotourism defined by the International Ecotourism Society as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people”. Ecotourism is said to have many advantages, among those, it is supposed to imply that:

[V]isitors respect and express interest in local natural history and culture and where a local tourist economy builds support for environmental conservation (Boo 1990; Brandon 1996; Lindbergh et al. 1996). Compared with mass or “old” tourism, ecotourism is touted as providing better sectoral linkages, reducing “leakages” of benefits out of the country, creating local employment, and fostering sustainable development.⁷

c) Merging these concepts together

Figure 1 gives a general overview of the different concepts merged onto a single triangle. The 3 sides each represent one aspect of CBE, with community-based at the bottom, providing a base for this Environmental Strategy. This will be a recurrent theme throughout this work and underlies the importance of communities in processes meant to improve their quality of life and the quality of their environment. The environmental and the economic aspects are placed at the two corners at the top of the triangle: they must balance each other out for this strategy to work effectively.

⁶ Belsky, Jill M., *Misrepresenting Communities : The Politics of Community-Based Rural Ecotourism in Gales Pont Manatee, Belize*; Rural Sociology ; Dec 1999 ; 64, 4 ; PA Research II Periodicals pp.641.

⁷ Belsky, Jill M., *Misrepresenting Communities : The Politics of Community-Based Rural Ecotourism in Gales Pont Manatee, Belize*; Rural Sociology ; Dec 1999 ; 64, 4 ; PA Research II Periodicals pp.641.

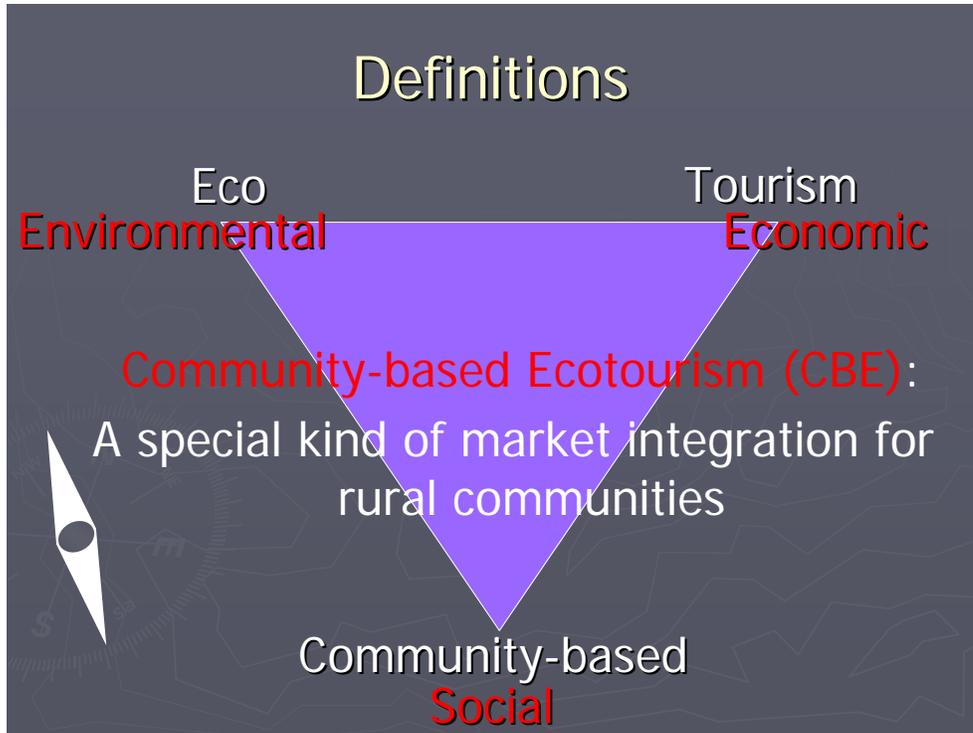


Figure 1: The 3 main aspects of Community-based Ecotourism

2. Goals of Ecotourism

As was introduced above, the central idea of Ecotourism is to combine environmental protection and with the need to sustain the livelihood of the communities, thus tackling both social issues and environmental degradation. The effective implementation of Ecotourism is thought to have positive influences in all three areas mentioned above: economic, environmental and social.

a) Goals of CBE: Economic

"Ecotourism is described here as a special kind of market integration for rural communities. Encounters between hosts and guests in ecotourism are transactions that involve more than the exchange of money for goods or services; they also involve the trade of expectations and ideas about nature and culture." ⁸ Also, when ecotourism is community-based, it essentially brings the market home, and this allows for different ways of participating in the market economy without necessarily or irreversibly disrupting normal livelihoods or social relations. For example, parks must look to another source of revenue that can rival the income from poaching. Indeed, sale of some animal species and their parts has long been a successful way of benefiting from wildlife. Demand has increased and this calls for new ways of protection. "Asian pharmacists pay cash — astronomic prices for rhino horn to grind into medicine. Yemeni men lay out more than \$1,000 for a carved rhino-horn dagger" (Knox 1990)."⁹

Tourism has serious potential to counteract this trend. An example comes from the gorilla in Rwanda:

The mountain gorilla project started with "fewer than 500 visitors...[paying] a total of less than \$2000 to enter the park... [Ten years later,] an average of 5000 tourists now comes to the park to see gorillas annually... [V]isitors pay almost \$200 each..., thus [generating] nearly \$1,000,000 per year in direct park revenues. Furthermore, it is estimated that

⁸ Stronza Amanda Lee, "Because it is ours": Community-based ecotourism in the Peruvian Amazon, VOLUME 61-08A OF DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS INTERNATIONAL. PAGE 3235

⁹ Lash Gail, *What is Community-Based Ecotourism?*, The Ecotourism Society, Vermont, USA
www.recoftc.org/documents/Inter_Reps/Ecotourism/Lash.rtf

these visitors spend an additional \$600 each, or roughly \$3,000,000 annually in the country... Estimated revenues from all tourist-related sources total \$6-8 million per year, moving tourism ahead of all but coffee and tea exports as one of Rwanda's principal sources of foreign exchange" (Vedder and Weber 1990).¹⁰

b) Goals of CBE: Environmental

By making the local economy more sustainable ecotourism also gives more support for environmental conservation and fosters sustainable development. New management practices can also encourage the reduction of tourist pressure on critical areas. An example of this is given by ecotourism practices in Costa Rica, where:

[A]dmission fees [were raised] by a factor of 10 in 1994 (from \$1.5 to \$15 for foreign visitors). In consequence, visitor numbers plummeted by an average of 44% in the following year (Ratermann, 1997), but total revenues increased substantially. This way, it was possible to combine the maximization of economic benefits and reduce the pressure on ecosystems. Admission fees are a means to keep the number of visitors within an ecosystem's carrying capacity (McNeely et al., 1990), or to limit growth rates, so that planning, management and control measures are not outpaced by the development (Lindberg, 1991).¹¹

c) Goals of CBE: Social

From a social perspective, ecotourism is meant to enhance respect and interest in local natural history and culture, but also to encourage the sharing of expectations and ideas about nature and culture between tourists and locals. It should also increase local awareness and education and provide better linkages between actors in their local environment, such as local officials, NGOs and communities. As a whole, it relies on both economic and environmental goals to benefit the communities. It is clear that these benefits will allow this environmental strategy to be effective. "Look at the rhino from the Zambians' perspective: here's an animal walking around with

¹⁰ Lash Gail, *What is Community-Based Ecotourism?*, The Ecotourism Society, Vermont, USA
www.recoftc.org/documents/Inter_Reps/Ecotourism/Lash.rtf

¹¹ Stefan Gössling; *Ecotourism: a means to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem functions?*; Ecological Economics **29** (1999) 303–320.

thousands of dollars on its nose, an animal that doesn't do anybody any good anyway, except...as an attraction for rich tourists. Should Zambian families starve so tourists can take pictures of rhino"? (Knox 1990)." Poor rural communities must be assured an improved standard of living from ecotourism, if they are to support the preservation of wildlife, the natural habitat, and therefore the ecotourism industry.

But employment and education can also bring negative social impacts. "Tribal elders traditionally hold most of the knowledge and respect of the community. As the younger generation gain jobs and money from tourism, they may also gain prestige that rivals the elders. Their income from ecotourism is frequently many times what a villager makes from traditional means. This can lead to jealousy, and even murder, as in the case of a young Malagasy guide who was stoned to death by his peers (*Jolly pers. comm.*). Uncontrolled growth of tourism and the influx of western values can erode the local culture."¹²

Another negative impact of ecotourism is the increased pressure on the region created by tourism in some areas, even when practised as ecotourism. This includes trash, increased use of natural resources, etc. "Higher standards of living (a benefit from ecotourism) have attracted mainland Ecuadorians to the Galapagos, producing an uncontrolled growth of 12% a year in the local population. This creates several problems:

resentment of "newcomers taking jobs..., shortages of basic foods at local shops...[and] raised prices" (Boo 1990). Additional negative social impacts include: begging by children; incompatibility of local versus foreign customs as female visitors dress inappropriately; social dualism; and growth of hostility towards tourists due to expatriation and overcrowding. Without proper planning and control of ecotourism, the attitudes of the local inhabitants towards tourism can go from "euphoria to apathy to annoyance to antagonism" (Long 1990). "¹³

¹² Lash Gail, *What is Community-Based Ecotourism?*, The Ecotourism Society, Vermont, USA www.recoftc.org/documents/Inter_Reps/Ecotourism/Lash.rtf

¹³ Lash Gail, *What is Community-Based Ecotourism?*, The Ecotourism Society, Vermont, USA www.recoftc.org/documents/Inter_Reps/Ecotourism/Lash.rtf

CASE STUDY 1: BAGHMARA COMMUNITY FOREST, NEPAL

The Baghmara community forest, located in the Southern plains of Nepal is a good example of how the actions of national governments, when combined with support from non-profit organizations and the cooperation and participation of local peoples, can be effective in promoting conservation ideals while ensuring the well-being of the local community. The Baghmara forest plantation makes a strong case for the ability of a community to protect and enhance their natural resources when they benefit directly from them.

The Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) in Southeast Nepal is home to over 570 flowering plant species, 486 species of bird, 40 mammal species, 17 species of reptiles and 68 species of fish. This biodiversity, as well as the fact that it serves as a habitat for such endangered species such as Bengal tigers, wild elephants, striped hyenas, one-horned rhinos, and freshwater dolphin, led to its being declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1983 (Rijal, 1997). These attractions combine to make the RCNP a major international tourist destination, which brings in thousands of dollars each year.

However, this intensive tourism has expanded too rapidly and placed a considerable strain on the ecological integrity of the park (BCN). While the number of animals in the park has increased, their habitat has decreased due to erosion, encroachment, and the succession of grasslands by tall grass, shrubs, and tree species. As a result this has caused the wildlife to wander outside the park and into the surrounding farmlands in search of food thus creating conflicts between the park and the surrounding community. (Rijal, 1997) Furthermore, the 300,000+ Baghmara people living on the outskirts of the park rely heavily on fuelwood and fodder harvest from the surrounding forests. Rijal estimates that there is an annual demand for 219,905 tons of fodder and timber and that only a limited amount of this demand can be met by sources outside the community. As a result, local people have turned to the illegal collection of fuelwood

from inside the park, which further threatens biodiversity. This conflict was intensified by the fact that the local population had only a 2% employment rate from the tourist industry. The rest of the community received little or no direct benefit from the thriving tourism industry (Rijal, 1997) so they had little incentive to conserve and protect the environment of the park.

In order to tackle these issues, the Nepal Conservation Research and Training Center (NCTRC) and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) launched a buffer zone plantation program in 1989. The objective of the program was to establish plantations in the buffer zones surrounding the park in order to meet the communities' fuelwood and fodder needs. A total of 81,000 saplings of fast growing indigenous tree species such as *Dalbergia sissoo* and *Acacia catechu* were planted over an area of 32 ha. The idea was that once the plantation was established, the community forest area could also be opened to ecotourism, thus demonstrating the potential economic value of conservation to the communities surrounding the park.

In its first year in operation, the project met with some issues concerning proper management of the park and suffered from a lack of attention from government authorities. However, there was enough support among the local people for the project that it was able to hold on. It was in 1993 when there was a real turning point in the Baghmara project. In this year, the Forest Act of 1993 was passed by the government establishing Forest User Groups (FUG's) as "independent organizations allowed to manage forest area for their own use and benefit" (Rijal, 1997). When the Baghmara FUG was established it consisted of a 19-member committee that works to prepare programs for the year. These programs are then presented to the general community only after unanimous approval by the committee. The Baghmara community group came up with its own operational plan to manage the community forest, and receives feedback in general meetings in which one person from each household in the area is required to attend. (Rijal, 1997) The KTMNC and the Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) also led an effort to draft and pass legislation through the government of Nepal whereby 30 to 50 percent of the

revenue earned by tourism taxes would be shared with the local community. Village-based user groups decide the best way to use this extra income in a way that brings the greatest benefit to the community. The result of these actions was to give the Baghmara communities incentive to practice conservation through the generation of tourist revenue while also giving them control over a sustainable source of fuelwood and fodder. This served not only to eliminate the need to gather wood illegally, thus minimizing pressure on the park, but also to extend the wildlife habitat into the buffer zone.

The Forest User Group continued to expand the plantation area, fencing in 348 ha of degraded forest in 1994 to allow for natural regeneration, and subsequently planted small sections of this area. The buffer plantation quickly grew to 400 ha of mixed plantation, pure plantation, natural regeneration forest, grassland, and lakes (Rijal, 1997). A testament to the effectiveness of the project is that the plantation area was officially handed over by the government to the chairmen of the Baghmara community forest on June 15, 1995.

The project's real success lies in the fact that the community is now able to meet all of their fuel and fodder needs in a sustainable way that is completely in their control. Extending the forest into the buffer zone has also provided a habitat for wildlife. In 1997 there were 15 rhinos living within the community forest area, as well as 104 plant species, over 20 mammal species, and 125 avian species. (Khatri, 2001). The area has also served as a buffer to local farmers, in that crop raids have been reduced significantly since the planting of the forest. Due to increased tourism, more people are being employed as nature guides, or have opened hotels and guesthouses. Furthermore, the community members have been able to establish some ecotourism micro enterprises such as the construction of a "machan," or wildlife-viewing tower, which generates about US \$8,000 per year. The community has also started some canoe and nature guide programs. By transferring some of the tourism into the buffer zones, pressure is taken of the RCNP without sacrificing revenue. Employment and revenue generated by tourism has heightened

awareness in the community about the benefits of conservation. With the approximately US \$21,000/year that is comes in as tourist revenue the community has invested in many community development projects, as well as environmental projects. Since the area is prone to flooding, the committee has helped in the construction of a series of levees on the Budi Rapti River. They have also supported the development of three local schools, and a nature guide-training program for youths. The FUG has also used the money to hire forest guards and staff to assist with protection. They have also created another aquatic habitat through the construction of a mud-filled dam, as well as set aside several grassland areas to promote greater biodiversity (Rijal, 1997). Another project activity was to conduct a seven-day "green camp" for teaching environmental awareness to local youth (BCN).

As a result of their current needs being met by the community forest, as well as the release of some financial pressure on local people, they are able to think about the future of the forest as well. The FUG has plans to initiate a livestock insurance program that will introduce a new breed of livestock that will decrease the total number of animals and therefore reduce the fodder demand, while increasing production per animal. The insurance program will offer an incentive to shift from open grazing to stall-feeding. The committee is also considering the establishment of an alternative energy program that will decrease fuelwood demand through the construction of a sustainable biogas plant.

As in any other project, there have been some challenges along the way to the establishment of the Baghmara community forest and ecotourism venture. Nonetheless, it serves as a successful example of how the interaction and cooperation of local communities, non-governmental organizations, and national governments can produce beneficial results. In this case, the proof is in the creation of sustainable economic incentives to conservation, the promotion of local guardianship of biodiversity and the resulting increases in wildlife, and wildlife habitat, and the improved livelihoods of 548 local households.

CASE STUDY 2: OLANGO BIRDS AND SEASCAPE TOUR, THE PHILIPPINES

Olango Island is located at the central region of the Philippines, 5 kilometers east of the major island of Mactan in Cebu. It has a total land area of just 10 square kilometers but is home to more than 20,000 people. The island has insufficient basic infrastructure like water and waste disposal and seventy-five percent of households depend on coastal resources for their livelihoods.¹⁴

Olango is a low-lying limestone island famous for its wide fringing coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, and most particularly its extensive intertidal mudflats, which provide habitat to migratory birds. Fully half of Olango is comprised of diverse coastal and marine habitats which has led to part of the island being designated as the Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary, a national bird sanctuary. The southern portion of the island is a stopover for “about 60% of the 77 species of migratory birds that use the East Asian Migratory Flyway (*CRMP, 2001*). Thousands of birds migrate every year to and from Siberia, Northern China, and Japan to Australia and vice versa. An additional 42 species of birds are year round residents of the wetland area.¹⁵

Like most coral reefs in the region, Olango have been under siege from destructive human practices like over fishing and blast/dynamite fishing, as a result, they are not nearly as productive as their natural potential would permit. Despite the fact that Olango’s 40 square kilometers of reefs are in poor condition they still support a fish yield of 5 tons per square kilometer. However, fish yields are far below their potential production of 15-20 tons per square kilometer.¹⁶ For this reason, in 1992, a 920ha area was officially declared as the Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary (OIWS). Thus, in July 1996, Olango (together with other surrounding islets) was chosen to be the experimental study site for the Coastal Resource Management Project (CRMP), a Philippines-wide

¹⁴ Burke,Lauretta (WRI), Sellig, Liz (WRI), Spalding, Mark (UNEP-WCMC,Cambridge,UK).”Reefs at Risk in Southeast Asia”. 2002

¹⁵ English. “Abstract of Dissertation on Environmental Education in Community-Based Coastal Resource Management: A Case Study of Olango, Island, Philippines.” 2002

¹⁶ Ibid¹

project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with the Philippine Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR). The Olango Birds and Seascape Tour was the resulting development venture and comprises one of the three components of the Coastal Resource Management Program (CRMP). It was first introduced commercially in January 1999 and is owned and managed by a fishing community organized by the Suba, Olango Ecotourism Cooperative (SOEC).

There are three elements that make this project unique. Olango islands coast, seas, reefs, and wildlife. The activities that can be done in the island are provided essentially by its indigenous natural resources. The Olango eco tour does not only provide environmental experiences that can be done in other eco tour projects but it combines education and learning with fun and enjoyment. Bird watching, coastal trek, canoe paddling, snorkeling, swimming and island hopping are just some of the activities that bring the tourists in touch with Nature. The community themselves monitor and ensure that all these activities are done with least impact on the environment. They brief and guide the tourist on appropriate behavior in that natural areas and communities they visit. Moreover, there is always a naturalist interpreter/expert on migratory birds who is around to give quality information to the guests.¹⁷

Secondly, the tour promotes and showcases local conservation of threatened coastal environments and wildlife.¹⁸ "The tour is a theater production. The guide has to be an educator, an entertainer, an advocate of environmental values, and an advocator of social ethics."¹⁹ This is how one of the staff differentiates the Olango eco tour from other island hopping packages. The tourists observe the involvement of the local community in the environment conservation likewise

¹⁷ Flores, Monina. "Ecotourism for the People, By the People, Of the People." 1999.

¹⁸ Ibid ⁴

¹⁹ English. "Abstract of Dissertation on Environmental Education in Community-Based Coastal Resource Management: A Case Study of Olango, Island, Philippines." 2002

they are also enjoying the place. It intends to be an educational experience both in cultural exchange and environmental awareness.

The interaction with the community is very much integrated in the entire program that makes the experience one of a kind for the tourist. Aside from the usual activities that they go through, there is a section where community members give demonstrations in shell crafting, preparing local delicacies, and fishing. The final interactive activity is a discussion the efforts and challenges of the community-based programs. Each community leaders take turn to relate their efforts in trying to mobilize the community for common causes such as waste management system, abolishing illegal fishing methods and making tourism a sustainable livelihood. Because of the poverty in the community and the lack of alternative livelihood, the people are forced to resort to exploitation of natural resources in unsustainable ways. The organization shares their stories in their struggle to respond to this problem through the eco tour. From these presentations, the tourists learn that the valuable and beautiful resources that they are enjoying are under severe threats from destructive human use as well as the challenges the community go through to manage their coastal resources. They realize that the fee they pay is itself the realization of a fishing community's effort to promote conservation by engaging in a non-extractive form of enterprise while promoting environmental understanding to visitors.

They levy a user fee of USD70.00 for non-Filipinos and USD50.00 for Filipinos.²⁰ This fee integrates one of the goals of ecotourism that the revenues at least partially finance the cost of protecting natural areas. It is considered expensive and discriminatory of budget pack packers and most Filipinos sightseeing their own country. However, the community justifies the price because the package is not only educating their guests about local environmental and conservation issues but also they are also financially supporting the community's efforts. In other cases, the locals also accept additional, voluntary contributions. The revenues and donations are used in either sole

²⁰ *ibid*⁵, p.25

source of funds for the operation of a conservation area or program where there are fixed amount or partially contribute to the operational costs of the coral farm or to co-finance rehabilitation on nearby reefs or elsewhere in the country. The community justifies the tour fee as more than just island hopping but a complete and integrated social and cultural experience with lessons in sociology, and a testimony to the closeness of humans with nature.

Thirdly, the project showcases the potential, viability, and benefits of community participation in the ownership and operation of ecotourism ventures.²¹ The active community cooperation in the conservation and preservation of protected areas clearly show the effectiveness of ecotourism as a conservation tool. The Olango Tour contributed largely to the community's sense of empowerment. This is exemplified through the community's growing sense of pride in their achievements, renewed confidence in their ability to reach their goals, acquisition of technical skills, and manifestation of enthusiasm and creativeness in their activities. Most of the people in the community who are involved in the program have no previous experience in the tourism industry. Probably for the first time in their lives, the people feel they are able to contribute something noble for which they get affirmation from people outside their community. Moreover, the extra income and the new skills they acquire are incentives for the community to participate and involve themselves more in the project. These raised their ability to achieve their dreams of a better future for themselves and for their children.

Elements of Community-Based Ecotourism in Olango

There are five elements of community-based ecotourism that is highly evident in the Olango enterprise venture.

1) Community-Based Benefit and Participation

²¹ Flores, Monina. "Ecotourism for the People, By the People, Of the People." 1999.

The project benefited 55 families in its introductory year. In 1999, 55% of gross revenues went directly to the community through salaries and profit.²² The tours generate additional employment in the community like accounting and meal planning which benefit the women in the community. There are also mini tour operators and local travel agents that materialize from the project. Overnight stay is not part of the program. This is in line with the environmental capability and carrying capacity of the island. This project is only a supplementary income to the families involved and there are still a lot of families in the island who are without the benefits from the program.

2) Contribution to environmental conservation and environmental education

The environmental education component is part and parcel of the ecotour. This increases the community's awareness and skills in learning their resources as well as teaching them to their guests. The locals themselves become ambassadors of the environment. The supplementary income gathered from the venture motivates the community to practice non-extractive and non-destructive means of fishing that protects the coral reefs and other habitats of fish and migratory birds.

3) Market competitiveness and accessibility

A successful ecotourism venture relies also on its accessibility to the market. The Olango tour just on its introductory year of operation had 33 tour runs with 357 visitors. 31% of them were foreign guests from 17 countries and 69% were domestic travelers from 11 provinces.²³ More than 30 international organizations have visited the project. They include PATA, the Ecotourism Society, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, Japan International Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland, etc. This has also been featured in a number of media establishments like leading national dailies and magazines and tv programs. It was cited as one of 10 "Highly Commended Honorees" of the Conservation International's 2000 Excellence in Ecotourism

²² Flores, Monina. "So Far, So Good: Venture Performance and Benefits". 1999

²³ Flores, Monina. "So Far, So Good: Venture Performance and Benefits". 1999

Awards.²⁴ In 2001, the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards cited the Olango Birds and Seascape Tour as “Best Environmental Experience” Awardee.²⁵

4) Promotion of local culture

The showcases of the ecotour and the active participation of the community promotes the local culture of the area. Tourists get a complete cultural experience from watching the locals prepare their delicacies, present their talents in shell crafts, and watch the local dances and listen to local music.

5) Financial Viability

Part of the Coastal Resource Management Plan (CRMP) is focused gathering information and assessing the value of coastal resources. Research shows that despite the degraded condition of Olango’s reefs, it is still worth between US\$38,300 – US\$63,400.00 per square kilometers annually or US\$1.53 million to US\$2.54million for all of Olango’s reef area, well within ranges previously calculated for Philippine reefs.²⁶ The costs to manage coastal resources in Olango are US\$70,000.00 per year. These include resource assessments and monitoring, community organization, education, training, law enforcement, information dissemination, and planning activities. The benefits though are still more substantial. With an effective management program, it is expected that the annual net revenues of Olango Island’s natural resources could increase by 60 percent.²⁷

The Olango Birds and Seascape Tour’s growth potential will proportionately increase with the good management of its resources. The beauty and richness of the place will sustain itself to be marketable for tourists. Coupled with community’s efforts and enthusiasm, the tour is an environmental strategy that is financial viable and ecologically sustainable.

²⁴ Ibid ¹⁰

²⁵ Ibid ¹⁰

²⁶ Calumpong,H.P., Estacion, J.S., and Lepiten, M. “Status of the Coastal Resources of the Olango Learning Site”. 1997.

²⁷ White, A.T., Ross, M., and Flores, M.”Benefits and Costs of Coral Reef and Wetland Management”. 2000

CASE STUDY 3: ESELENKEI CONSERVATION AREA

History: The Creation of Eselenkei Conservation Area²⁸

The Selengei Group Ranch (SGR), located in the Kajiado District of Kenya near the Amboseli National Park, is a community of approximately 3,000 people. The SGR owns the land on which the Eselenkei Conservation Area exists. During the wet season, the eastern area of the land is used extensively by wildebeests, zebras, hyenas, leopards, and lions however the area is best known for its abundant and diverse bird populations. Before the Eselenkei Conservation Area was created, The Cheffings Company (a British tourism outfit) with the consent of the community had been bringing ornithologists and bird hunters into the area since 1920. In 1988 a 20-acre campsite was built to accommodate the visitors, and fees were charged for hunting and camping. Portions of these fees (approximately US\$ 925) went to the Selengei Group Ranch (SGR) community as compensation for the use of their land. This money was used to build schools and sponsor primary and secondary students for further education.

In 1995 a former Amboseli game warden, which had been involved in the bird shooting tourism activities, saw an opportunity for substantial profits through the creation of an ecotourism site for wildlife and photographic safaris. When he approached the local Maasai chief about setting aside some of the dry season grazing area for a sanctuary, he was met with hostility, as the community considered him to be the man that "sold out Amboseli." They had no interest in his proposal, even though according to the game warden, "all they have to do is to set aside the land for wildlife, and sit and watch the money roll in." The game warden contacted Tropical Places, Ltd. (TPL), a British tour operator, about the venture. TPL agreed there was high potential, and was brought in to discuss plans for an ecotourism venture with the SGR.

²⁸ Rutten, Marcel. "Parks beyond Parks: Genuine community-based wildlife eco-tourism or just another loss of land for Maasai pastoralists in Kenya?" Issue paper no. 111. 2002. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

The initial plan was to have a 7,000 ha area (approximately 17,200 acres) leased to TPL and kept free of livestock, huts, and local hunting. A 60-bed tourist lodge, expected to be filled at 60% occupancy rate, was to be built in this reserve area. The initial cost of the project was estimated to be \$2 million, which would cover the cost to construct the lodge and other related infrastructure. The potential profits however were estimated to be in the range of \$1,650,000 per year, this would easily justify the initial capital expenditure. Of that money, the SGR could potentially expect to receive \$96,000 per year after costs. However, TPL said they could only guarantee about \$4,000 per year (plus an annual rental fee of \$4,445 for use of the land) since the \$96,000 was based on a prediction of a 60% occupancy rate, which could not be guaranteed. To put these figures in perspective, the average income of an individual in the SGR is \$10,000, based on a herd size of 50 cattle (the main source of livelihood for the community). Therefore \$8,000, once distributed amongst the community, would not make a significant impact to an individual member's income. As a result there has, from the beginning, been a lack of incentive for the community to view this project as beneficial and wish to see it succeed.

Below is the final agreement signed by the community and Porini Ecotourism, Ltd., a daughter company of TPL, which would be responsible for the management of the tourism venture.

- 7,000 ha would be leased to Porini to be used for the wildlife conservation area for a period of 15 years
- 16.2 ha within the leased 7,000 ha would be allowed for a lodge
- US\$ 4,445 rental fee would be paid to the SGR for use of the land each year
- Grazing would be allowed in the area during the dry season except where facilities were constructed
- A 5 km zone would be created around Eselenkei where there would be no wildlife-related tourism activities.

- Community members were to be employed by the company both for construction and running the camp
- The Eselenkei Conservation Area would be open to tourists one year after the signing of the agreement

A Porini liaison officer was employed by Porini to facilitate communication between Porini and the community. However, the liaison was mainly seen as working for Porini and assisting the Porini project manager. This liaison was a member of the SGR committee, the governing body for the group ranch. The SGR then created a community liaison post, for which Porini also paid for, angering the Porini liaison officer. Tensions mounted within the community as members began to choose sides between the two liaisons, and also between the community and the Porini manager, whom they felt disrespected their community (he had allegedly made negative comments about their pastoralist livelihood). As there was no non-governmental organization (NGO) to intervene, and the central government was not very involved, the problems continued to persist. Eventually the SGR chased the manager out, burned some of the temporary huts that had been constructed, and tore down the Conservation Area sign that had been created in protest. The project was halted for 4 months.

Clan politics mixed with national politics and quarrel continued within the community as it became divided into two factions, the Porini liaison camp and the anti-Porini liaison camp. A member of the local government finally stepped in to mediate the situation, and a new agreement was drafted to appease the community. In the agreement the number of hectares was decreased to 5,000 and a Conservation Area Committee was created to manage the distribution and expenditure of fees from Porini. Unfortunately, the community issues had not been resolved in this new agreement, and eventually it was decided that revenues would be split between the Conservation Area Committee and the Group Ranch Committee.

The tourist camp was completed in 2001 with only 8 beds available as opposed to the 60-bed lodge that was planned. This resulted in significantly decreased revenue due to the reduction in bed space and visitor fees. The actual monetary compensation to the community consisted of approximately US\$ 8 per person per year, as opposed to the US\$ 29 per person per year originally projected by TPL. Additionally, the community has lost the benefits generated from the fairly prosperous bird hunting and tourism, faced reduced grazing land for their cattle, resulting in a decrease in their cattle population and thus income, and there is more game within the area, resulting in livestock loss, disease, competition for water and grazing, and destruction of crops. Not in the least, the community, which once was known as "one of the most harmonious...in Maasailand" is now splintered and there is a lack of trust among members.

The tourist operators, however, are making substantial profits – US\$ 156,540 per year is made for Porini, after the deduction of the Selengei payments, costs, and labor.

ISSUES:

From the beginning this was not a true CBNRM strategy – the key players in any CBNRM strategy consist of the community impacted, NGOs, and the government, be it central or local. The NGOs and government can provide expertise and act as a means to ensure clear communication and diffuse any tense situations that hinder the project. SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, an NGO that has done substantial work in Kenya, could have been an invaluable source for the project, having had previous experience in CBNRM and in working with the Maasai and Kenyans in general. SNV Netherlands also could have acted as the impartial party in resolving the problems within and between the community and Porini.^{1,29}

The Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) played a minimal role in the process by bringing several members of the SGR to other group ranch sites where ecotourism has been successful.

²⁹ www.snvworld.org. SNV Netherlands Development Organisation homepage.

The minimized role of the KWS is a result from the national policy that directs just when the central government can become involved in the management of natural resources with communities. With an increased role, the government can provide some institutional capacity to assist the community in developing the necessary skills for management of their natural resources as well as political and financial management.³⁰

The Selengei community had to be convinced from the beginning to accept this project, and there were hostile feelings from the start towards the proponents of the project (i.e. the Amboseli game warden). Additionally, misaligned interests resulted in poor planning, miscommunication, and mistrust. TPL and Porini were more concerned with getting tourists to the area and making a profit – in fact, from the beginning the attitude was the Maasai didn't have to do anything but watch the money come in. TPL and Porini had immediately delegated a passive role to the community and did not give the SGR members any reason or incentive to see the venture succeeded.

The profits relegated to the community, even at the initial projected levels, would not have made a substantial increase in the average livelihood, and the community had been managing their lands and wildlife before without any problems. In fact, they were making money off of the wildlife with their bird hunting and viewing arrangement with The Cheffings Company, and keeping their grazing and land management rights at the same time. The deal offered by Porini effectively took away their management rights and offered no equivalent compensation for that loss.¹

Since the community did not have any decision-making authority in the project, they ended up competing against each other for the few jobs that Porini provided through construction and as tour guides. The community did not have the opportunity to make keeping what is mine and not sharing, and preferential treatment as far as who receives sure that all members were involved and

³⁰ Mburu, John. "Wildlife Conservation and Management in Kenya: Towards a Co-management Approach." Center for Development Research, University of Bonn. August 2003. Paper presented at 4th Bioecon Workshop on the Economics of Biodiversity Conservation.

had a stake in the project. The resulting social tensions aggravated the substandard financial situation – splitting the revenues between the two organizations makes for very inefficient use of funds and there is a mentality of how much.³¹

The social and environmental costs have, so far, outweighed the benefits, which have been few and far between. As to whether this case meets the environmental goals of CBNRM, this venture is sure to fail. Despite the lower numbers of tourists and thus reduced impact on the environment, the lack of social and political harmony will have a significant, and detrimental, impact on resource management. Community in-fighting continues and thus poor decisions result from compromises made that address politics, as opposed to actual environmental issues. Additionally, the increase in wildlife in such a limited area does not bode well for either wildlife populations or the landscape; there has been an increase in human-wildlife conflict, as leopards kill livestock and crops are grazed and destroyed by the wildlife, and there has also been increased competition among the people, wildlife, and livestock for precious watering holes and food.

³¹ Bassi, Dr. Marco. “Enhancing Equity in the Relationship between protected areas and local communities in the context of global change: Horn of Africa and Kenya.” January 2003. IUCN/CEESP/WCPA.

CONCLUSION

Ecotourism is an exciting evolution in the business of nature tourism because it addresses social and economic questions in addition to environmental issues. Community Based Ecotourism is people centered, community orientated, and resources based. By promoting tourism through the protection of the environment, biodiversity is preserved, jobs are created, environmental education within the communities is promoted, and an understanding of local peoples and cultures is fostered among the tourists who visit these communities.

As illustrated in the three case studies, involvement of the community is key to the success of any CBE venture. During the planning and development stage of the project, NGO's, environmental groups, and government agencies need to work closely with the local people involved. There must be specific and tangible benefits to the communities impacted, these can take the form of jobs, education, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. Ecotourism can help to preserve cultures by halting the outflow of people and resources from the community while simultaneously protecting and enhancing the environment.

As ecotourism continues to expand there is an increased need for some form of industry standards or certification. A recent study by Protecting Paradise compared in detail nine certification programs, including ones in Australia, Costa Rica, Canada, Guatemala, The Galapagos Islands, New Zealand, and Europe. The study concluded that two of these ecotourism certification programs, NEAP (Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program) in Australia and CST (Certification for Sustainable Tourism) in Costa Rica, offered the strongest models. The study also discussed an initiative, spearheaded by the Rainforest Alliance, to study the feasibility of creating an international accreditation system to license agencies that audit tourism businesses.³²

Ecotourism and nature tourism certification provide industry, protected area managers, local communities and travelers with an assurance that a certified product is backed by a commitment to best practice ecological sustainability, natural area management and the

³² Nature and Ecotourism Certification Program, Ecotourism Australia, <http://www.ecotourism.org.au/neap.asp>

quality ecotourism experiences³³. The Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program identifies the following to be key benefits of providing industry certification:³⁴

- Criteria to assist operators in the planning and development of their nature tourism and/or ecotourism product
- A guide to assist operators in implementing the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- An opportunity for operators to continually improve performance to a standard recognized as best practice
- A recognized logo for operators to use in their marketing material
- A recognized means for protected area managers and travelers to identify genuine nature tourism and ecotourism operators
- A tool for protected area managers to encourage improved practices that lead to less environmental impact
- A tool to help local communities determine a mix of tourism activities that maximizes benefits and minimizes negative impacts
- An essential educational and information tool.

NEAP further advocates continued assessment of ecotour operations and calls for the review and updating of certification criteria every three years to reflect emerging best management practices. This assures credibility of the industry and confidence among travelers. Having a certification system will help to cut down on fraud by “ecotour” companies that make exaggerated claims concerning benefits to communities and the environment. This will help ensure that the people who benefit the most from ecotourism ventures are the communities most heavily impacted by its activities.

³³ Nature and Ecotourism Certification Program, Ecotourism Australia, <http://www.ecotourism.org.au/neap.asp>

³⁴ Nature and Ecotourism Certification Program, Ecotourism Australia, <http://www.ecotourism.org.au/neap.asp>

Appendix: Literature review - Importance of collaboration and empowerment of the local community

This section briefly surveys some of the existing literature on the subject of collaboration with the community, a recurring theme in community-based resource management.

1) "Ecotourism will destroy itself unless it goes beyond offering attractive rural settings to discontented urban denizens. It must encompass the social dimensions of productive organization and environmental conservation to offer viable livelihoods to the direct producers of these services. Ecotourism must do more than simply create a series of activities to attract visitors. Not only must it offer an opportunity to interact with nature in such a way as to make it possible to preserve or enhance the special qualities of the site and its flora and fauna, it must also allow local to be part of the a successful strategy for promoting sustainability, it must incorporate other complementary activities that produce basic needs for the local population, as well as tourism goods and services."

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2) "Concern over the injustice and inefficacy of center-imposed natural resource conservation and development has led many to championing community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and community-based conservation (CBC) (Western and Wright 1994). But while scientists, policy planners, and international conservation organizations increasingly support CBNRM and CBC, and there are instances of very successful programs (Getz et al.1999), some warn that conservation and development may be compatible only under certain conditions (Kramer et al., 1997; Wells 1994). The implications of placing community at the center of resource management and development depend largely on the concepts and practices underlying specific

³⁵ Barkin, David, *Alleviating poverty through ecotourism: promises and reality in the Monarch butterfly reserve of Mexico*; *Environment, Development and Sustainability* **5**: 371-382, 2003.

strategies, and the interests those strategies actually serve (Agrawal 1997; Brosius et al. 1998; Li 1996)."³⁶

3) It seems that "in the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a growing awareness that the problems in development were not simply technological but were also social, political and economic and that these could not only be addressed by using different approaches. Equity and participation reasserted themselves as basic principles in development programs. (...) They also concluded that participation is necessary although not sufficient condition for achieving project success. (...) In the few recorded successful initiatives in the Philippines, the ability of communities to decide on how they manage their resources was critical in ensuring that these communities' interest and participation continued beyond the project's lifetime. (...) People's participation in the management of resources also provides a sense of ownership over the resource which makes the community far more responsible for long-term sustainability of resources. With community-shared responsibility for providing adequate resource base for future generations, CB-CRM has greater potential for effectiveness and equity."³⁷

4) "When ecotourism is participatory, that is, when local hosts are involved as decisions-makers as well as employees, ecotourism can be a transforming experience rather than simply an economic incentive. For this reason, attention to process in ecotourism (i.e., how and why people are participating) is as important as measuring results (i.e., how much people are earning, or how many locals are employed)."³⁸

³⁶ Belsky, Jill M., *Misrepresenting Communities : The Politics of Community-Based Rural Ecotourism in Gales Pont Manatee, Belize*; Rural Sociology ; Dec 1999 ; 64, 4 ; PA Research II Periodicals pp.641.

³⁷ Community-based coastal resources Management Philippines Phase I, http://www.eepsea.org/ev.php?ID=3992_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

³⁸ Stronza Amanda Lee, "Because it is ours": Community-based ecotourism in the Peruvian Amazon, VOLUME 61-08A OF DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS INTERNATIONAL. PAGE 3235

Also, it is important to realize the many different groups in a community. The next few quotes mention 'heterogeneity' which has indeed an important impact on the way ecotourism will be implemented by communities.

5) "Understanding of the impacts of tourism can be enhanced by paying attention to heterogeneity within local communities, revealing not only who is participating and why, but also how different kinds of participation lead to different outcomes across individuals and households."³⁹

6) "The politics of class, gender, and patronage inequities limit the co-management of ecotourism associations, equitable distribution of ecotourism income, and support for conservation regulations across the community. Attention to multiple interests and identities within the rural community and relationships to external actors, political institutions and national policies are critical to understanding the challenges facing community-based conservation in Belize and demonstrated the relevance of such attention elsewhere."⁴⁰

7) "Recent reviews of the community in conservation caution that the analysis of community has been uncritical and based on historically limited views. Agrawal (1997:36) suggests that the literature reveals a widespread preoccupation with a "mythic community:' small, homogeneous groups using locally evolved norms to live with nature harmoniously, managing resources sustainably and equitably." This conception of community relies on the idea of unity in sameness (e.g., shared geography, identity, and experience) rather than of unity based on difference, competition, and resistance (Whitt and Slack 1944). 'Conservationist imaginings' of community lack dynamic historical understanding of particular communities, and instead tend to bounce between two ideal types. Innocent primitive societies in pristine ecosystems (the ecologically noble community) or backward, traditional communities despoiling nature in order to respond to the intrusion of the market and state (Agrawal 1997)

³⁹ Stronza Amanda Lee, "Because it is ours": Community-based ecotourism in the Peruvian Amazon, VOLUME 61-08A OF DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS INTERNATIONAL. PAGE 3235

⁴⁰ Belsky, Jill M., *Misrepresenting Communities : The Politics of Community-Based Rural Ecotourism in Gales Pont Manatee, Belize*; Rural Sociology ; Dec 1999 ; 64, 4 ; PA Research II Periodicals pp.641.

(...) While compelling, CBC/CBNRM as a generic solution to generic problems also carries many risks. As Li (n.d.:2) observes, 'detailed studies of the effects of laws and policies on particular places always indicated that local realities are more complex than the policy model suggest, and often highlight the problems of patronage, class and gender inequities.' ⁴¹

⁴¹ Belsky, Jill M., *Misrepresenting Communities : The Politics of Community-Based Rural Ecotourism in Gales Pont Manatee, Belize*; Rural Sociology ; Dec 1999 ; 64, 4 ; PA Research II Periodicals pp.641.

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