

HIGH-END ECOTOURISM AS A SUSTAINABLE LAND USE OPTION IN RURAL AFRICA:

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYMENT IN POVERTY REDUCTION & SOCIAL WELFARE

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INTRODUCTION

Rural Communities characterised by:

- Remote locations
- High levels of poverty & unemployment
- Low level of skills & education
- High dependency on natural resources for survival



New threat of climate change



Alternative income-earning opportunities that are sustainable



High-end Ecotourism



Problems:

- Declining biodiversity
- Increasing populations
- Immediate human needs
- Declining ecosystem resilience



BACKGROUND

Subsistence Agriculture – focused on utilizing the land & natural resources in the area

Protected areas – can result in restrictions on land use being imposed on local communities

Climate change is resulting in a declining ability of traditional subsistence lifestyles to sustain rural populations



Need for **diversifying rural livelihoods** to reduce the risk faced by these households, reduce poverty and to improve social welfare



METHODOLOGY



❖ Structured one-on-one questionnaire interviews

❖ **Study sites:**

Botswana: Okavango Community Trust, Okavango Delta & Kwedi Concession

Namibia: Palmwag concession

Malawi: Liwonde National Park & adjacent communities

Zimbabwe: Hwange National Park & adjacent communities

South Africa: Kruger National Park (Pafuri Camp) & Makuleke community
iSimangaliso National Park (Rocktail Beach Camp) & Mpukane community



- ❖ Questions on *demographics, social welfare, education, employment, income, expenditure patterns, health, attitudes to conservation & tourism*
- ❖ All tourism study sites were located in protected areas
- ❖ *High-end* category due to accommodation rate charged (USD 220-USD 484pppn)
- ❖ Communities were chosen as a result of their proximity to the ecotourism operation and/or conservation area or as a result of a relationship with the ecotourism operator
- ❖ Study sites had varying GDP per capita (USD 200-USD 10 866)
- ❖ **325 staff surveys** conducted in 14 high-end ecotourism camps
- ❖ **1225 community surveys** conducted in at least 30 different villages, covering more than 19 different ethnic groups



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: On average, community respondents were older (M=39.97) than staff respondents (M=34.57). This difference was statistically significant.

Gender:

Gender	Staff	Community
Male	65%	38%
Female	35%	61%

Highlights the importance of engaging specifically with women in communities in terms of education about biodiversity conservation & the impacts of deforestation, etc.

Community respondents had, on average, more **children** (M=3.53) than staff respondents (M=2.54). This difference was found to be statistically significant [t(1539)=-5.52, p<0.05]



Significant difference in mean number of years of **education**:
staff mean of **9.28** years; **community** mean of **6.09** years

Respondents in countries with high *GDP per capita* had, on average, a higher mean number of years of education (M=7.33) than countries with a low GDP per capita (M=5.78), but this difference was not statistically significant



Illustrates an important role for the private sector in assisting in rural education – building schools, crechés, scholarships, etc. – in countries with a low GDP per capita & limited government social & financial support e.g. Malawi & Zimbabwe



HOUSEHOLD INCOME IMPACTS

Only 26% of community respondents had ever had a permanent job before
For 59% of the staff respondents their current job in ecotourism is their
first permanent job



Importance of high-end ecotourism employment in remote rural areas in term of employment, skills training, development & empowerment

For 95% of the staff their salary from ecotourism is the MAIN source of income in the household & for 63% of them it was the ONLY source of income in the household.



HOUSEHOLD INCOME IMPACTS

No significant difference in the number of household income sources (M=1.00 for community & M=1.51 for staff)

Main community household income sources:

- salaries of employed family members or spouses
- farming
- selling livestock
- pensions (in Namibia)
- social grants (South Africa)
- casual labour/piece jobs (Zimbabwe & Malawi)

➔ Security of one permanent income source gives households financial security & allows them to invest in non-essential goods and services, such as higher education, better homes, generators, etc.

Clearly evidenced in an analysis of the expenditure patterns

Improved access to transport, communications, access to markets, etc:

Motor car in the household: 22% of staff; 7% of community

Mobile phone in the household: 80% of staff; 49% of community



HEALTH ISSUES

Respondents Aware of HIV Status:

Country	Staff	Community
Zimbabwe	68%	46%
Malawi	74%	49%
South Africa	79%	57%

Health Status - Community respondents

Health Status	%
Excellent	38%
Good	27%
Average	26%
Didn't Answer	0.5%
Poor	10%
Very poor	4%
Total	100%

Health Status - Staff respondents

Health Status	%
Excellent	39%
Good	35%
Average	20%
Poor	5%
Very poor	1%
Total	100%



ATTITUDES TO TOURISM & CONSERVATION

Problems with wild animals

79% of community respondents & 61% of staff respondents

76% of women had problems with wild animals

75% of men had problems

Tourism camps create jobs for local people

65% of community respondents & 90% of staff respondents

Tourism camps help to reduce poverty in the area

80% of staff respondents & 54% of community respondents

Results indicate:

- ✓ that employment in high-end ecotourism has a positive effect on perceptions of conservation & ecotourism
- ✓ Widespread belief that tourism does help to create jobs & reduce poverty in rural areas associated with the conservation area



ATTITUDES TO TOURISM & CONSERVATION

86% of community respondents feel that **conservation is important** &
8% said that it is not important

99% of staff respondents feel that **conservation is important** &
only 0.9% said that they feel it is not important

Reasons given for the importance of conservation included: for tourism, jobs, income, animals provide meat, trees are life, trees bring rain, get meat from animals & firewood from trees and for the future/children



The tourism-related reasons given for the importance of conservation highlight the fact that the community & staff respondents DO value tourism as a land use in their area & perceive that there are benefits that can be derived from it



PAFURI CAMP – MAKULEKE CONTRACTUAL AREA



PAFURI CAMP – MAKULEKE CONTRACTUAL AREA

Size: 20 tents

No. of beds: 52

Permanent Staff: 52 - more than **85%** of which come from the **Makuleke community**

Average number of dependents: 6.18

More than **270 people** impacted by the employment at Pafuri Camp

73% of respondents had never had a permanent job before



Importance of skills training and development

Staff at Pafuri Camp spend the majority of their salary on food (30%), accounts (10%), savings (8%), casual labour (6%) and education (5%)



PAFURI CAMP – MAKULEKE CONTRACTUAL AREA

Community Livestock:

Average number per household:

Cattle: 0.94 (min. 0; max. 51)

Goats: 0.66 (min. 0; max. 25)

Chickens: 3.2 (min. 0; max. 36)

Community main household income sources:

Government grants (47%); family/spouse (24%); job (12%); piece jobs (6%)

% community respondents who would like to visit the Park

92%



March 2008-March 2010 (2 financial periods)

- Makuleke bednight levies: R1.42 million
- Total staff costs: R7.5 million
- ❖ Total contribution to the local economy/communities: **R9.95 million**

Improved social welfare:

- ✓ HIV testing for staff – increases awareness
- ✓ Balanced/regular meals at work
- ✓ Ability to build better houses
- ✓ Afford tertiary education for children & other family members
- ✓ Children in the Wilderness programme & Environmental Clubs
- ✓ Community infrastructure – Makuleke B&B; Hydroponic tunnels
- ✓ Pack for a Purpose



CONCLUSIONS

Limited employment opportunities in many rural communities due mostly to the remote nature of the areas, lack of development & lack of infrastructure → these are the qualities appealing for high-end ecotourism

Poverty & unemployment levels in these areas are often *very high* & the consequent opportunity costs of using the land for conservation and high-end ecotourism are also very high

It is therefore critical that *rural communities receive tangible benefits* that outweigh the costs that they have to bear: loss of livestock & crops to wild animals & loss or limitation of access to natural resources & land for agriculture

Results have shown that **rural communities are relying heavily on the market economy** in the form of high-end ecotourism for financial, and from there, social support.

Importance of education in securing permanent employment & from there creating a greater possibility of having a higher household income.




CONCLUSIONS

- Amongst other things, the results indicate that countries with a low GDP per capita and a high population density, such as Malawi, would benefit greatly from projects relating to education: scholarships, stationery donations, environmental talks, etc.
- Participation of associated communities in development is critical to the long-term success & sustainability of any land use
- Accountability on the part of the ecotourism operator, as well as the communities involved, is also essential to sustainability
- Management of community expectations, as well as the empowerment of local people, is critical to sustainability



High-end ecotourism's role can be extended beyond only an employment impact to include *more households* & a *greater reduction in poverty* through:

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- the use of local suppliers (expanding the multiplier effect)
 - selling of crafts
 - philanthropy of tourists
 - sustainable community development projects that impact directly on social welfare

Results show that high-end ecotourism does have the potential, if managed correctly, to assist in poverty reduction and in the improvement of social welfare in rural Africa



THANK YOU

Data in this presentation is currently unpublished.
Please contact Sue Snyman (sues@wilderness.co.za or 011 257 5145)
should you wish to cite any of the information in this presentation.

