Local Community Involvement in Tourism around National Parks: Opportunities and Constraints

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National Parks are often major tourist attractions located in relatively remote and marginalised rural areas. The potential role of tourism in contributing to the costs of conservation and providing economic opportunities for communities living adjacent to natural heritage has long been recognised. Issues of access to tourists and capital, enclaves and bypasses and employment need to be addressed. The opportunities for local economic development through tourism at Komodo (Indonesia), Keoladeo (India), Gonarezhou (Zimbabwe) and Puerto Princesa (Palawan, Philippines) National Parks are explored, and the paper concludes with an agenda for action.

Introduction

This paper draws on material from a Department for International Development funded comparative study of tourism, conservation and sustainable development at three National Parks in India, Indonesia and Zimbabwe and on consultancy work around St Paul’s Subterranean National Park in Palawan. One of the objectives of the DFID study was to identify methods of raising the income and related benefits that local people gain from tourism based on biodiversity.

The idea that nature tourism could provide the incentive for conservation through the establishment of National Parks has a long history. Budowski argued that it was possible to create a symbiosis between conservation and tourism. Where tourism is wholly or partly based on values derived from nature and its resources it could provide an economic value for conservation of species and habitats. The IUCN’s 1980 World Conservation Strategy endorsed the sustainable utilisation of species and ecosystems. The IUCN in 1982 affirmed that the ‘tourist potential’ of an area is an important factor in the selection of protected areas, but recognised that many areas of important conservation value have little appeal for tourists and that the pursuit of tourism revenue may result in inappropriate development. Philips argued that tourism provides conservation with an economic justification, a means of building support for conservation and a source of revenue. Tourism to protected areas is emerging as a development strategy. As Ziffer has argued, the development goal is to attract ‘visitors to natural areas and use the revenues to fund local conservation and economic development’. Tourism is one of the forms of sustainable use that potentially enables protected area managers to allow local people to derive economic benefit from the park and to encourage local support for its maintenance.

The 1992 IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas declared that tourism associated with protected areas ‘must serve as a tool to advance
protected areas’ objectives for maintaining ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, public awareness, and enhancement of local people’s quality of life. McNeely reflects the changing attitudes of protected area managers, and recognition of the close links between biological and cultural diversity—links which he argues reflect long-established human activity embracing ‘cultural identity, spirituality, and subsistence practices’ that have contributed to the maintenance of biological diversity. Cultural diversity and biological diversity are often inextricably linked, defining the management context for the protected area manager, the ‘product’ for the tourist and the opportunity for the local community.

Table 1 Tourist motivations for travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Park</th>
<th>Wildlife</th>
<th>Landscape</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gonarezhou NP Zimbabwe</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keoladeo NP India</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komodo NP Indonesia</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Paul’s NP Palawan, Philippines</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data were collected on the relative importance of landscape, wildlife and culture to visitors to four National Parks. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a range of motivations for travel on a five-point scale. Interviews took place either within, or immediately adjacent to, National Parks. The results are therefore likely to be skewed towards the importance of wildlife and landscape (see Table 1).

Large numbers of nature tourists interviewed in National Parks ranked culture as their single most important reason for travel: 45% of respondents in Keoladeo and 57% in Komodo cited culture as their primary motivation for visiting India and Indonesia respectively. In Gonarezhou the figure was only 9%, reflecting the large number of regional tourists in the sample and the under-valuation of African culture. There is considerable interest among international visitors to National Parks in the national and local cultures of the destination countries. This represents an often-neglected set of opportunities for the development of locally owned complementary tourism products around National Parks.

Local culture is often an asset of the poor. Ljubljana was fly posted by a Swedish NGO in 1997 with posters declaring ‘Tourism: Your every day life is someone else’s adventure’. The living local culture, the fabric of the lives of local communities, constitutes a significant part of the product sought by domestic and international tourists. National Parks attract tourists and are able to ‘sell’ to them a limited range of wildlife and landscape experiences; there are additional products that can be sold by local people enabling them to diversify their livelihoods and to raise their household incomes.

Over the last 15 years there have been a series of initiatives to implement projects which enable local economic development whilst maintaining or furthering conservation objectives. Zebu and Bush produced clear survey evidence that park authorities had realised that local populations could no longer be ignored in the establishment, planning and management of National Parks and other protected landscapes. The same survey reported that tourism
formed part of the park management strategy of 75% of respondents. Wells and Brandon surveyed Integrated Conservation Development Projects (ICDPs) many of which had promoted nature tourism in order to provide funds for protected area management and to generate income gains for local communities. They reported that the results had been disappointing, with all visitor spending in the parks going directly to the central treasury or to concession holding private corporate interests. Although, at some popular sites, revenues may exceed local protected area operating budgets, it is unusual for any of the additional revenues to be returned to park management ‘and extremely rare for a revenue share to go to local people’. Wells and Brandon reported that local employment opportunities linked to tourism were ‘insufficient to attract much popular local support for the parks’. In any event ‘only a small minority of protected areas attract significant numbers of visitors’. However, it is clear that National Parks visitor numbers are increasing at a significant rate (see Table 2).

Table 2 Indicative visitor figures for four National Parks – rounded figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Park</th>
<th>1991–1995 Visitor average annual growth rate (%)</th>
<th>Total number of visitors 1995</th>
<th>International visitors as % of total visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gonarezhou NP Zimbabwe</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keoladeo NP India</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komodo NP Indonesia</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Paul’s NP Palawan, Philippines</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17,300</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Parks attract large numbers of relatively wealthy domestic and international tourists to relatively remote rural areas. Many National Parks attract significant numbers of customers to the ‘product’; the customer travels to the place of production to consume their holiday in and around the National Park. These relatively wealthy consumers, attracted by nature-based tourism, constitute a potential market for tourism products based on natural resources and local culture.

For the purpose of the management of tourism in and around National Parks, nature tourism and ecotourism need to be distinguished. Nature tourism is concerned with the enjoyment of nature, ecotourism additionally requires a contribution to conservation. Ecotourism is a management aspiration:

low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people to value, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income. If tourism to National Parks can be managed into ecotourism it can enable local people to gain economically from the protected area with which they live. Protected areas cannot co-exist in the long term with communities that are hostile to them. Local people are important stakeholders with whom protected area managers must co-operate. More of the benefits of conservation need to be delivered to local people by enabling them to benefit from the protection of the
Aspirations of Local Communities

It is unsurprising that people in relatively impoverished local communities aspire to become involved in tourism. Tourists are wealthy consumers with money to spend; it would be surprising if large numbers of people in marginalised rural communities were not interested in finding a means of securing some of that disposable income and securing a contribution to their household income. People in local communities do recognise that tourism can have negative effects and these are reported in the case study reports.¹⁵

In Palawan, nature tourism at St Paul’s Subterranean River National Park attracted fewer than 40,000 visitors in 1997 of which 21% were international. They contributed some £3.5 million (₱153 million) to the local economy but most of it was spent in the urban economy where the accommodation is available. Filipinos spent an average of ₱1,431 per day more than the international visitors who spent ₱1,346 per day, although foreign tourists did stay longer (8.1 days as compared with the average Filipino stay of 4.6 days). Not surprisingly, independent tourists spent on average 1.6 times as much as a backpacker and 1.1 times as much as a group traveller. It is often argued that backpackers spend more money in the local economy, but in Palawan backpackers stay an average of 9.1 days and spend ₱7,360, independent travellers stay 7.4 days and spend an average of ₱8,529, on average 16% more than backpackers. Clearly attracting more independent travellers and extending their length of stay would increase local revenues. In the three years between 1992 and 1995 there was an increase in the number of people employed in tourism of 219%, from 402 (3.9%) to 1284, some 9.6% of the employed population. In Sabang, the gateway community to St Paul’s Park, 28% of households were involved in tourism establishments (lodges, restaurants, cafes or guiding) while 19% were involved in the running of tourist boats. Most of the benefits of tourism accrue to the urban area, and the rural lodges at Sabang are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the kind of accommodation (with private facilities) now demanded by backpackers since the park is easily accessible as a day trip from Puerto Princesa City. Local communities seek to attract tourist dollars by providing additional excursion opportunities (visits to caves and guided walks often to view points and including a wildlife viewing opportunity or canoeing), handicraft sales and home stays, camping and picnic sites. One of the major difficulties confronting these local communities is of encouraging the day excursionists to stop along the road to visit local communities and spend money there.¹⁶

Mico, a local entertainer in Dominica, has a calypso which defines the problem clearly: ‘They pass on a bus, they don’t make a stop, they pass on a bus, they don’t stop and shop.’¹⁷ At Keoladeo the large number of international tourists who visit

Communities and Tourism Around National Parks
the Forest Lodge for lunch bypass the local economy completely as do cruise ship passengers stopping at Komodo. Coaches, boats and hotels, lodges and resorts can all create enclaves containing tourists who are then inaccessible to the informal sector and the local economy. One response to this is the hawking, which is the only way in which many traders can access the market as the tourist moves between vehicle and site or hotel.

Table 3 Attitudes to tourism in local communities adjacent to National Parks in Indonesia and Zimbabwe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indonesia20</th>
<th>Zimbabwe21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labuan Bajo (%)</td>
<td>Sape (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you be happy to see more tourists here?</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you be happy if your children worked in the tourism industry?</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism benefits the whole community?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism only benefits rich people?</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only outsiders benefit from tourism here?</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family has more money because of tourism</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Komodo National Park in Indonesia generated over US$1.25 million for the local economy in the mid-1990s and over 600 jobs were at least partially supported by tourism.18 There are economic costs associated with tourism. Local people perceive inflation to be due in part to tourism. There are also considerable changes in land ownership taking place, with non-local speculators purchasing waterfront land in Labuan Bajo. Although not a prime focus of this research, there are some social costs identified by local people. These appear to be more prevalent in Labuan Bajo, which receives more tourist contact.19

In the communities around Gonarezhou and Komodo there is considerable enthusiasm for tourism, although there are marked differences between villages in the Zimbabwe data. Tourism jobs are valued; 71% of respondents in the Zimbabwe villages agreed that tourism would benefit their community. In Sape and Labuan Bajo, in Indonesia, where there is more experience of tourism, respondents were markedly less confident that tourism could benefit the whole community. In Sape (59%) and the villages around Gonarezhou (64%) there was stronger feeling than in Labuan Bajo (35%) that tourism benefits only the wealthy; this reflects problems over access to the industry. In Indonesia one-third of respondents in Labuan Bajo felt that ‘only outsiders benefit from tourism’. In the villages around Gonarezhou three-quarters of respondents expect their household to benefit, reflecting high expectations in an area only just
beginning to develop tourism, although there were significant variations in responses by village. By contrast, in Labuan Bajo a relatively developed destination, only 20% of respondents expected their households to benefit directly (see Table 3).

In the south-east lowveld of Zimbabwe 83% of respondents thought that local people could earn money from tourism and gave a range of unprompted answers about how this could be achieved (see Table 4).

### Issues

National Parks and the communities that live in and adjacent to them share a common difficulty in relation to domestic and international tourism. International tourists arrive from the tourists’ originating countries and domestic tourists from metropolitan centres. This process is driven by demand and by the international and domestic tourism industry. Whilst local tour operators and hotels may have some, often imperfect, knowledge about the patterns of visitation which can be expected in the medium term, National Park managers and local communities have none. They are both on the receiving end of a process they do not control and over which they are able to exert very little influence. Whilst the tourists may be welcome, it is rare for park managers and local communities to be entirely happy with the arrangements for their visits or with the contribution they make to the local economy or to the park.

### Access to tourists: location

Location is a critical issue; proximity to park entrances and to flows of tourists creates opportunities. In Komodo NP 99% of revenue to the local economy accrues to neighbouring town communities, and not to those communities living within the park who are most disadvantaged by restrictions over resource use within the park and who lack the capital and opportunity to develop tourism facilities because of park restrictions.22

The Keoladeo case study demonstrates how local families, well located to the tourist flows to a National Park, can opportunistically develop accommodation

### Table 4 Ways that respondents thought that local people could earn money from tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How could local people earn money?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By increasing employment opportunities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell firewood</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levy for community development on tourists</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife hunting/ranching</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up enterprises</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction/building cultural village</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce &amp; sell agricultural products</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guides</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce &amp; sell handicrafts</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
businesses. Almost all of the private hotels used by visitors to Keoladeo National Park are run by entrepreneurs often on the (former) site of the owner’s home. Many involve family labour and brothers and sons often move on to start their own hotel on adjacent plots. Two Jat Bharatpur families own six of the hotels, all within 500 metres of each other and adjacent to the entrance to the National Park. The pattern of land ownership around the north end of the park where most of the hotels are situated accounts for this. Since Independence much of this land has been owned by a handful of Jat families – which now control the private hotel sector. Only one hotel has close associations with the rural communities around Keoladeo National Park. A family of Brahmins runs it, formerly from Jatoli village (on the north-east side of the park).

Access to capital

At Keoladeo at least two entrepreneurs have entered the hotel business after several years accumulating experience and capital from guiding, working in state hotels, with the Forest Department or even with foreign research projects. Small, cheap ‘backpacker’ hotels require relatively little capital to set up – and are run almost entirely with family labour. One such family owns three small hotels. The number of very small hotel enterprises in Bharatpur appears to be declining in favour of larger establishments although family labour and networks play an important part at almost all levels of operation. Hotels with more than two or three rooms often employ non-family labour, but they are still essentially family businesses.

Jat entrepreneurs (75% in the sample) run the majority of private hotels, typically in their mid-30s, but as the industry develops, the barriers to entering the market for hotel proprietors with little capital are increasing. The budget end of the foreign tourist market appears to be saturated and most new entrants are competing at the mid-price level while existing hotels attempt to specialise for particular types of client. The degree of linkage to the local urban economy is high, but connections with the rural economy are generally low and although hotel ownership is also ‘local’ it is concentrated into the hands of a few entrepreneurs with connections to the traditional elite.

Employment

At Komodo employment in tourism-related enterprises is mainly secured by the young (under 30), and mainly to males, although the full role of women has not been fully explored and requires more research. The levels of education and capital possessed by local people restrict their involvement in the industry. Existing skills and capacities have been utilised to enter the industry at basic levels, but there is considerable external ownership of businesses, and opportunities for retraining appear to be sparse.

Around Keoladeo National Park hotel labour is largely drawn from the urban sector, with more expensive hotels having a higher propensity to employ non-local professionals. Wages within the hotel sector are often below the national minimum, but include many payments in kind; provision of seasonal accommodation, clothing and food are the norm. Wages are higher in the public sector, and provide more regular incomes than in the private sector where there is a high degree of family labour. However, despite the strong seasonality in
tourist arrivals, labour demand is less seasonal than might be expected. Hotels rarely close for the off-season. In terms of employment, the Jat community dominates the sector, but local Jatavs also have relatively high representation. Jatavs traditionally occupy low occupational positions, but within the hotel sector they have been able to secure employment in fairly large numbers and at most levels. In contrast, Gujjars and Thakurs (traditionally cattle herders and farmers) are less well represented. The only tangible links to the rural economy in this sector is through the sale of milk and the employment of a few waiters and domestics from the Jatav communities. Despite the location of the hotel sector at the edge of the National Park, and its proximity to rural suppliers of produce and labour, Bharatpur city maintains a stronger influence. Consequently the hotel sector, although dependent on nature tourism, retains an essentially urban character.26

Enclaves and bypasses

All too often, particularly in rural areas, local people are denied any significant opportunity to participate in the tourism market. Tourists are not accessible to the local community when they are within their hotels, coaches (at Keoladeo), boats (cruise ships at Komodo), safari vehicles (in and around Gonorabodeo) or inside sites and attractions such as museums. These are all enclave forms of tourism, where those wishing to sell to tourists are often reduced to hawking at the enclave entry and exit points. Cruise ship passengers and tourists on ‘all inclusive’ packages are particularly difficult for local entrepreneurs to access (and these sectors are growing rapidly). Tourism needs to be managed in ways that enable local people to have better access to tourists. Although the average cost per trip of different types of visitor presented in Table 5 is not entirely comparable, they do give an indication of the relative contributions of different types of visitor and the magnitude of tourist spending on trips to Komodo NP, which completely bypasses the local economy. Package tours provide a visit to the park in the minimum amount of time, but with a certain (fairly basic) level of comfort. Only 17.5% of revenue from this source accrues to the local economy. Cruise trips, whilst advertised principally for their inclusion of Komodo NP on the itinerary, do fulfil other recreational functions (multiple destinations, luxury service, etc.). As such it is a little unfair to imply that the total expenditure on cruise tours is contingent upon the inclusion of KNP on the itinerary. Nevertheless, it remains true that cruise passengers visiting KNP spend over US$6.5 million for the privilege, of which almost nothing (0.01%) accrues to the local economy.

Table 5 Distribution of tourist spending by type of tourist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist type</th>
<th>Mean cost of trip (US$)</th>
<th>Total expenditure (US$)</th>
<th>Total local expenditure28 (US$)</th>
<th>Mean local expenditure per visitor (US$)</th>
<th>Proportion of total cost of trip spent locally (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cruise</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>6,763,200</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,032,000</td>
<td>180,450</td>
<td>52.46</td>
<td>17.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1,071,727</td>
<td>1,071,727</td>
<td>97.43</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>8,866,927</td>
<td>1,252,565</td>
<td>48.72</td>
<td>14.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the other extreme, independent tourists, once they have arrived in the region, spend all their money locally although, as already highlighted, a substantial proportion leaks out again. It would appear, then, that the amount of tourism spending based on Komodo NP that bypasses the local economy is substantially greater than that which accrues to it. In addition, there appears to be an inverse relationship between average spend on a visit to KNP and average contribution to the local economy. Independent visitors, demanding a lesser level of comfort and service, provide a greater contribution to the local economy than the more affluent travellers seeking higher, Western levels of comfort and service. Approximately 85% of tourist expenditure on a visit to KNP bypasses the local economy due to the dominant involvement of non-local carriers and package tour operators in the market.29

Leakages

Lindberg and Enriquez30 (1994) identified four factors that will affect the contribution of tourism to local economies: the marketability of the attraction; the type of tourist; the infrastructure/facilities, and the extent of local involvement and linkages. Leakage of revenue from the local economy is related to the magnitude of importation of goods from outside the region, and the level of non-local ownership of tourism-related enterprises.

Leakages occur because of the paucity of linkages between tourism and the existing local economy. Tourism is a tertiary industry, which at Komodo is developing in an area where the dominant industry has been primary, i.e. fishing and farming, without the development of intermediate secondary industries. Tourism relies on secondary, manufacturing industries for the supply of processed and packaged retail goods, and for much of its infrastructure (furniture, etc.). The absence of such industries locally, and the lack of linkages where they do exist, accounts for much of the leakage that is witnessed.

In the local economy surrounding Komodo NP, at least 50% of revenue leaks out of the local economy as a result of imports and non-local involvement in the local tourism industry (Table 6).31 A high proportion of public transport services is government-owned or run by external operators. Similarly, a number of the higher-cost charter operations are externally run and operate out of Lombok or Bima. The high proportion of leakage from retail outlets is due to the tourist demand for manufactured goods (bottled drinks, snacks, cigarettes, postcards, etc.) that are not produced locally. The proportion of leakage from restaurants is lower, given that much of the goods sold by restaurants is fresh produce.

Table 6 Estimates of leakage of tourism revenue from the local economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Estimated leakage (%)</th>
<th>Revenue remaining (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter boats</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>233,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops/Goods</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>87,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>639,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
obtained locally. It is difficult to estimate a figure for leakage from hotels. A number of hotels are non-locally owned but some of these owners are locally resident. The proportion of revenue that is removed from the local economy is unknown.

Although tourism earning opportunities within Komodo National Park are relatively limited, it is important to note that leakage from revenue generating activities in Kampung Komodo are negligible, since they are based upon the provision of labour and primary produce. Whilst the ownership of the shuttle boats appears to be held by Sape residents, much of the revenue is still retained by the village, and all remains within the wider local economy embracing the rural population bordering the park.

Raising the financial contribution of tourism demands two things: increasing the contact which tourists have with the local economy, and increasing opportunities for tourists to spend. Currently, the cruise ship sector of the tourist market based upon Komodo NP is essentially an enclave development. Visitors are completely isolated from the surrounding local community in a self-sufficient, exclusive environment that denies local people the opportunity to benefit. The same is virtually true of most package tourists using charter boats from Sape. Of particular importance is the lack of opportunities for people living within the park to benefit from tourism. Training and development of small-scale projects, and a greater integration with the tourism developments within the park, would greatly improve the benefits that inhabitants of the park receive from tourism.

Policy Implications

One of the key issues at the turn of the century is how tourism can become more pro-poor and make a larger contribution to the livelihoods of people living in, or adjacent to, national parks. The Department for International Development initiated debate on Sustainable Tourism and Poverty Elimination in October 1998 and subsequently commissioned research on Tourism and Poverty Elimination: Untapped Potential. Pro-poor tourism is defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor, economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits and costs are all included.

Traditional tourism development generally focused on macro gains to national economies, but there are a number of challenges to be met if the potential for sustainable local development and poverty elimination, through the localisation of benefits, is to be realised. These challenges include issues of ownership, economic leakage (from the local economy and through imports), local employment, benefit distribution, social and environmental impacts and dependency. These problems can only be effectively addressed at the destination level with the active participation of the local communities.

Tourism needs to be organised in ways that enable local people to have better access to tourists. There is a strong case for intervention at a local level in tourist destination areas to:

- enable local community access to the tourism market and avoid enclaves;
- maximise the linkages into the local economy and minimise leakages;
• build on and complement existing livelihood strategies through employment and small enterprise development;
• evaluate tourism projects for their contribution to local economic development not just for their national revenue generation and the increase in international arrivals;
• ensure the maintenance of natural and cultural assets;
• control negative social impacts;
• control the rate of growth of tourism.\textsuperscript{36}

Local involvement in the tourism industry depends largely on access to the market. Frequently, local benefits are maximised in the informal sector where the scale of capital investment is low. Interest groups outside the rural community (tour groups, hoteliers and government agencies) exercise more power within the formal sector because of their command over financial resources.\textsuperscript{37} The ability of the local population to gain access depends in part upon the expectations of tourists themselves and local suppliers have little control over the way in which the experience is marketed. At the Indian and Indonesian study sites, those populations who reside nearest to the protected areas and who have therefore borne most of the costs of exclusion appear to participate least in the tourism industry. Tourism in the south-east lowveld of Zimbabwe is not yet sufficiently established to measure the benefits for rural populations, although expectations are high.\textsuperscript{38}

The potential for rural populations to participate in the nature tourism industry and secure livelihood benefits is dependent on a range of factors, in particular the transferability of existing skills, the opportunity to acquire and develop new skills, patterns of land ownership and the ability of external interests to dominate the industry locally. Research from Keoladeo, Komodo and Gonarezhou National Parks suggests that although tourism presents additional income and employment opportunities, rural populations remain largely marginalised from development associated with protected areas. Despite the rural location of National Parks, the industry retains a distinctly urban bias.

At each of the parks different initiatives have been suggested, each intended to increase the livelihood opportunities for local communities living in and around the National Parks. In the examples that follow only some of the ideas which emerged from the case studies are reported. They are only intended to show the wide range of opportunities and ‘solutions’: for a full understanding of the different situations in and around each of the parks it is important to look at the original reports.

\textbf{Komodo National Park}

At a workshop held as part of the Tourism, Conservation and Sustainable Development project in Labuan Bajo in April 1996 a series of local solutions were identified by local people and members of the tourism industry in East Nusa Tengarra.

Leakages from the local economy are significant. Local people have had little exposure to foreign tourists and their needs, and without the necessary skills to transfer from traditional livelihoods, and with no capital to invest they experience great difficulty in entering the industry. If change is to occur, training needs
must be addressed, and local enterprises given support to establish themselves. The simplest way to achieve this may be through the establishment of co-operatives similar to that which operates the tourist infrastructure within the park.

Keoladeo National Park

In September 1996, a series of workshops was held in Bharatpur in order to discuss the development of tourism. Participants included representatives from all sections of the local tourist industry, park staff and sarpanches from communities adjacent to the park. Three schemes for using tourism to re-orient the benefits of the park back to rural communities were discussed.

Raising the entrance fee of the park for foreign tourists, and diverting some of the revenue to local development schemes

At Keoladeo National Park, the entrance fee is currently far below that which the majority of foreign tourists are willing to spend. Part of the extra income raised by increasing the entrance fee of the park could be directed towards local development such as roads, schools, biogas and water sources for the surrounding villages. A fund could be advertised within the park visitor centre whereby tourists could make contributions to local development initiatives. This suggestion has been a frequent topic of discussion between park managers and community leaders. However, the idea is discussed with less enthusiasm among villagers themselves, principally because of the lack of appropriate institutions that could administer it. The success of such a scheme would depend upon the
transparency and representation of the committee responsible for distributing the revenue. Park employees, while generally supportive of the idea, suggest that the sharing pattern should be made clear at the start of such a project – particularly with regard to the powers and responsibilities of the park management, tourists and local government.

**Opening another gate at the site of the old Aghapur entrance to the park**

An additional entrance to the park exists close to Aghapur, which was closed in 1981 when the park was created. It has been suggested that this gate be opened so that visitor pressure on the main road might be reduced and so that people living in Aghapur might be able to participate in the tourism industry. Currently, the road on the west side of the park running through Mallah village is too small to accommodate tourist traffic, and the opening of the Aghapur side gate might well encourage local non-tourist traffic to enter the park. Again, this suggestion has been met with enthusiasm from local leaders, but there is little support for it within the communities themselves. This is largely because of the pattern of land and capital ownership in the local rural areas. Creating another tourism ‘centre’ is not regarded as the answer to the problems facing many of the rural poor.

**Encouraging a local handicraft industry**

Unlike many parts of Rajasthan, traditional handicraft skills are not exploited in the Bharatpur district. Surveys with foreign tourists revealed that many wanted to purchase local crafts but could not find them. Some already exist, and are mostly made by women, for example baskets and fans made from local grasses. Other crafts such as knitting soft toys and weaving ‘endri’ (for carrying water pots) could be adapted to suit tourist tastes. Some training in handicrafts would be necessary and various methods of marketing explored. However, the potential impact on women is unknown. The lives of women around the National Park have changed significantly since the wetland was gazetted as a National Park. In the absence of grazing, the labour requirements for fodder collection are high and this task falls largely on women and children. However, rural unemployment among women as well as men is of increasing concern. One of the principal obstacles for income generation of this kind is the lack of a suitable institution in the area.

Guiding is often regarded as a way into the travel business and nature guides have the opportunity to make international connections. Of those that were recruited in 1976, two have subsequently become travel agents (at least one now lives in England) and two others have become local hotel proprietors. Many have become tour escorts, associated with particular companies and travelling across India. The changing approach of the park to the training and issuing of guide licences demonstrates what can be achieved by local park managers and the consequences of setting unnecessarily high standards for the qualification of guides. Many visitors to Keoladeo are more than adequately guided around the park by the cycle rickshaw drivers, almost exclusively lower caste.

There are approximately 20 licensed nature guides working inside the National Park. Several groups have been trained and licensed since 1976, with increasing resistance from existing guides. Incomes amongst the nature guides vary considerably and are largely dependent upon the extent of pre-booked business they are able to secure. On a routine basis, nature guides offer their
services to tourists at the main gate to the National Park. For this group, incomes are highly seasonal – with two to three months of regular work. However, those who have connections with the travel trade are able to pre-arrange their services with tour companies, while others secure additional work as tour escorts throughout India. Those who derive all of their income from ad hoc guiding from the main gate typically earn Rs40,000/- per year. The few who supplement their income through tour escort work earn more than Rs100,000/- per year. Of the guides that maintain a regular presence at the main gate, the average income per guide for 1995/96 was over Rs 60,000/-. 

Originally guides were recruited by way of advertisements in local newspapers and candidates had to be graduates. Guides were largely drawn from the Jat community that owns a large part of the medium tariff hotels close to the park entrance. In recent years, there has been a shift towards the recruitment of guides from the rural areas around the park. This has been accompanied by changes in the selection technique whereby recruitment is no longer advertised in local newspapers and fewer qualifications are required. One-third of the most recent batch of qualified guides is from the rural area surrounding the park. The more established guides have taken the Forest Department to court over its licensing procedure, with charges of nepotism, undermining existing incomes, and lowering the standard of guiding in the park. The park has responded by stating its aim for increasing its support base among the rural poor.

During the course of the research around Keoladeo NP it became increasingly apparent that despite the significant potential for increasing tourist spending at Bharatpur, there were few mechanisms that could orientate revenue and employment benefits towards rural communities. Although leakage of tourism revenue from the regional economy is low, there is a strong urban bias to the accumulation of profit due to existing patterns of land ownership and the transferability of urban skills. Access to tourist spending is highest among the rural population where existing skills and capital are utilised, i.e. those that are easily transferable and complementary to existing livelihood patterns. Few such opportunities exist within the tourism industry, and those that do are of sufficiently low status to exclude large sections of the population (for example rickshaw pulling). By far the most common suggestions for local rural development made during the field research in 1995/6 concerned access to the resources of the wetland itself suggesting that the potential for park-people conflict remains high.

South-east lowveld, Zimbabwe

In the southeast lowveld of Zimbabwe there are high expectations in local communities of the opportunities which tourism could bring to a relatively isolated and impoverished area. Surveys of tourists in Gonarezhou and the conservancies and of local communities demonstrated that there are significant areas of overlap between supply and demand in handicraft sales, village meals, village tours, wildlife tracking, music and dance performances, story telling and bush survival training. There are local people wanting to provide the services and tourists wanting to purchase them. As numbers of tourists increase in the lowveld there is the potential to develop a number of local enterprises, owned by
people from the local communities and being able to diversify their sources of income through tourism.

People expressed an interest in providing certain suggested services to the tourism industry if they had the opportunity to do so. The most popular services were producing and selling handicrafts (74.7% expressed an interest), cooking a meal in their homes for tourists (64.6%), tours round their village (61.2% were interested in providing this service to tourists) and music and dance performances (56.2%). The figures on the number of tourists interested in the various activities are drawn from the lowveld tourist questionnaire conducted in the same period. The figures are presented where a comparable question was asked of the tourists, those marked * are services which the Conservancies, Conservation Trust and/or Zimsun at Mahenye and Chilo have expressed interest in purchasing (see Table 7).

Table 7 The services respondents would be interested in providing for tourists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Frequency of a ‘Yes’ response</th>
<th>Level of interest expressed by tourists or local enterprises (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selling handicrafts in your village</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking a meal in your home</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tours around your village</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music &amp; dancing performances</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching wildlife tracking</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing vegetables to lodges</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat trips on the river</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird watching tours</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling &amp; theatre</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing chickens/eggs to lodges</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush survival training</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling beverages in village</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing textiles to lodges</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoe safaris</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botany tours</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The continuation of communal land ownership in Zimbabwe and the CAMP-FIRE programme enabled the Mahenye community down on the Mozambique border to secure a land rent and planning gain. Zimbabwe Sun Ltd (Zimsun) has leased land from the local community for two lodge developments, bringing tourists to a remote part of Zimbabwe that was previously virtually unvisited. The lease commits Zimsun to pay a significant yearly minimum lease fee and a percentage of gross trading revenue, rising to 12% in the final four years of the 10-year lease. Zimsun also undertook ‘wherever reasonably possible’ to employ local labour. In the construction phase 120 permanent and 40 casual labourers were employed on the project, amounting to some 7300 months of labour at an average of US$110 per month, amounting to some US$800,000. In March 1997 the Mahenye and Chilo Lodges were employing 63% of their labour from the local
community; and whilst only seven women were employed in the lodge, six of them came from the local community. The Chipinge Rural District Council and local community are both pressing for more local employment and for the training necessary for members of the local community to fill more skilled posts. This lease agreement points to the value of formal development and lease agreements in laying the basis for local employment and associated training.44

The changes of land use in the lowveld as overgrazed cattle ranches switched to wildlife and consumptive and non-consumptive tourism caused the conservancy entrepreneurs involved to think very carefully about how linkages into the local community could be maximised. There was an urgent political and economic imperative to identify ways in which economic linkages could be forged. Table 8 shows the initiatives that have been discussed and the progress towards implementation that had been made by March 1996.

Table 8 Tourism related complementary enterprise development in the Lowveld

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supply of goods</th>
<th>Zimsun Mahenye Chilo Lodges</th>
<th>Malilangwe Conservation Trust</th>
<th>Bubiana Conservancy</th>
<th>Chiredzi River Conservancy</th>
<th>Save Valley Conservancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curio manufacture</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture manufacture</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacture and supply of building materials</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform manufacture</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and vegetable production</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●</td>
<td>●●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supply of services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game meat retailing and distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of transport</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailing and distribution of fuel wood</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complementary tourism enterprises</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural tourism</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist accommodation</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional show village</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based wildlife projects</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joint ventures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation joint ventures</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of resettlement of communal lands into conservancies</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife ownership on conservancy land earning dividends</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

● Idea has been discussed ●● Implementation has been commenced ●●● In operation
Palawan

At St Paul’s Subterranean River National Park there are large numbers of tourists who pass by local communities and the park management would welcome a reduction in visitor pressure experienced by the park. Both the park and local communities share an interest in developing additional tourist attractions in the rural areas between Puerto Princesa City and the park. The priorities for development identified in consultations with the local communities and the tour operators based in Puerto Princesa City are:

- Craft work. This requires training and the opening up of access to a market through the development of craft markets and labelling. A tribal market (a tabuan) is proposed. The branding would increase sales by assuring the consumer that the labelled product is locally produced; handcrafted; uses renewable resources sustainably; meets a minimum quality standard and is authentic. The park could also assist by producing computer-printed labels (in Tagalog and English) with a brief description giving the product name, the use and details of the material used to make it.
- The park is withdrawing from providing picnic and campsites, this provides opportunities for local communities and entrepreneurs.
- Wildlife viewing opportunities, trails, walkways and viewing platforms/hides are a priority for visitor satisfaction. However, without skilled development – including walkways, hides, planting and some limited ‘natural’ feeding – this will be difficult to accomplish.
- A local river kayaking enterprise is possible between Tagabinet and the sea.
- An approved trail with appropriate campsites should be developed between the road on the San Raphael side and the park. This is necessary both to minimise ecological impact and to protect the privacy of the Batak who live in this area and who feel harassed by tourists.

A Batak visitor centre would create an economic opportunity for this marginalised community, act as a buffer zone between the Batak and tourist and enable them to exercise some control over the tourists who currently walk through their territory, often in a very intrusive way. The Batak Visitor Centre emerged as a mechanism through which the Batak might exercise some control over the tourism that they currently experience and enable them to harness it to their purposes. For the Batak one of the key issues is to gain control over the access of tourists to their home territory, in order to earn something from tourism and to gain some control over its impact on their communities. This can be achieved by creating a Visitor Centre through which entrance to the area is controlled, and if it works closely with SPSNP that controls the point of exit, then the whole tourist visit can be controlled. With the support of the Park Rangers and the Community Rangers the rules negotiated with the Batak can be policed. The Batak do not currently receive a fair share from the tourism to their area.

A Visitor Centre is to be preferred over a Cultural Village because it avoids the idea of tourists coming in to a show or mock village to ‘see the natives’ and to photograph them. The Visitor Centre places the emphasis on the Batak interpreting and showing their culture – on their terms – to the visitors. It is their culture and they should control its presentation to the visitors. One of the key purposes

Current Issues in Tourism
of the Visitor Centre is to empower the Batak as teachers, guides, hosts – to give them the major say over the terms upon which visitors enter their home territory. The visitors should be placed in the *subservient* position as *learners*. The centre would act as a *cultural buffer zone*.

The Batak Visitor Centre could contain:

- A small museum of the history, ethnography and cultural history of the Batak (this would be for visitors and for the Batak themselves).
- A display about the ecology of the area and the ways in which the Batak live from the land (including gathering, hunting and farming – and medicinal plants). This display should also address the issue of sustainability.
- A School of Living Traditions – with a dual teaching function: the development of Batak culture and craft skills *and* a place where the Batak could teach craft or life skills to tourists – if they choose to do so.
- A craft exhibition, a market and a café.
- A starting point for the trek across to the park or for short trails to introduce the visitor to the ways in which the Batak use the forest – including *sagbay*. Batak guides would accompany all walking groups.
- Seasonal demonstrations of agricultural and hunting practices – including *kaingin* and honey gathering.
- A venue for closed and open cultural performances – including music, dance and story telling.\(^{45}\)

**Guidance notes and action lists**

Whilst some common themes can be abstracted from the agendas for action which emerged from the four case studies, it is important to recognise that particular local solutions need to be identified which address the concerns of local communities and for which there is evidence of tourist demand. Tourism is a business and initiatives can only be successful if visitors are willing to pay for the goods or services offered. The solutions have to be made to work and poor people’s livelihoods are at stake.

However, the level of income and employment opportunities arising from tourism at protected areas depends largely on the form of tourism development (enclave or dispersed), and the articulation of particular social structures in the host population. Histories of land ownership, political representation and engagement by the state have a special relevance. Research in at least two of the study sites suggests that while protected area managers, tourism professionals and researchers prefer to make a clear distinction between the tourism and conservation objectives of National Parks, the views of local inhabitants often combine them. Programmes for increasing the degree of local control over tourism development can only proceed from techniques and approaches that seek to address local concerns. Where tourism is identified as an appropriate area for growth, the following principles may be useful in guiding development for the benefit of the poor and relatively poor in local communities.

**Focus assistance to non-capital intensive enterprises**

Local involvement in the tourism industry depends largely on access to the market. In many cases local benefits are maximised in the informal sector. Local
skills and services are often maximised where the scale of capital investment is low. This aspect is sometimes neglected in tourism planning, and access to tourists by the informal sector is restricted. Training in market research, understanding consumer tastes and product promotion may increase sales for small traders.

**Maximise tourism based on local skills and technology**

Transferability of skills and hence local involvement is largest where existing capital and know-how can be utilised. Tourism developers should be encouraged, wherever possible, to use and promote existing local modes of transport, accommodation and art and handicrafts, food production and preparations – remembering that a significant motivation for travel is the natural and cultural diversity that can be experienced.

**Discourage enclave practices**

Resist the tendency of some tour operators to bypass local business opportunities by regulating traffic (for example through the judicious location of parking spaces and entry restrictions). Ensure local access to the tourism market through the development of markets and opportunities for visitors to interact with the local economy and local people. Prioritise local outsourcing and encourage tourists to purchase local goods and services directly from producers.

**Encourage flexible partnerships between public and private sectors**

Despite the wishes of protected areas to increase rural support, efforts are sometimes frustrated by emergent monopoly practices within the local private sector. For example, local Nature Guide training and selection should be based upon a clear agreement of recruitment practices with participation from existing guides, protected area managers, and rural development associations.

**Create and strengthen appropriate institutions**

Local concerns regarding tourism development and attempts to retain some of the revenues from tourism are often hampered by the lack of local representation at an institutional level. Nature tourism, conservation and income generation often fall between the jurisdictions of several institutions. A clear destination focus is important. Local government and donor agencies should explore means of establishing an appropriate forum for the articulation of local concerns with representation from, and managed engagement of, all stakeholders (park management, tour companies, hotel developers and small businesses).

**Developing revenue sharing policies**

Some park directors are considering the introduction of local development levies on entrance fees. Collaborative policies may be pursued in order to raise the total revenue for both local people and parks.

Some generalisations can be made, but circumstances do alter cases. Questions can be useful in provoking different groups to take action and the Department for International Development also produced *Changing the Nature of Tourism* which drew media and travel industry representatives and NGOs into the process of developing agendas for action (See Figure 2).
Correspondence

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Notes
9. Likert scale from 1 ‘unimportant’ to 5 ‘very important’.
10. The St Paul’s survey included both international and domestic visitors – the other figures are for international tourists specifically.


15. See in particular the Indonesia and Zimbabwe case studies.


27. Given that the point of departure of different trips is not universal.


31. This does not take into account leakages associated with initial infrastructural and development costs, or overheads.
33. Deloitte & Touche, the International Institute for Environment and Development and the Overseas Development Institute, London, April 1999.
34. Ibid.
36. Sustainable Tourism and Poverty Elimination
40. Ibid.
41. Five guides who now have their own businesses as hotel proprietors of permanent positions with tour companies earn more than Rs200,000/-. They no longer wait for business at the main gate.

References
— *Case Studies from Asia and Africa*. Wildlife Development Series No. 11.