

# **Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change to Tourism in Africa: “The Case of Zambia”**

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*The International Institute for Peace through Tourism has successfully concluded the 5th African Conference under the theme “Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change to Tourism in Africa and the Developing World.”*

The issues around climate change, central to the theme of the conference, are significant, and impact on all development and human endeavors. The government of Zambia is addressing this important phenomenon in its 6th National Development Plan (SNDP) and by developing a national climate-change-response strategy. There is a growing consensus that climate change is not just a meteorological or environmental concern relegated to science and experts, but a multifaceted issue cutting across several aspects of human life support systems, such as agriculture, water, forestry, industry, health and of course, tourism. As such, climate change continues to be a topic that requires awareness and urgent attention, and its effective solution calls for a concerted, multidisciplinary and developmental approach.

Drawing from this premise, I will focus on three inter-related areas:

- (i) The importance of tourism as a means toward reducing poverty and sustaining livelihoods;
- (ii) The link between climate change and tourism; and
- (iii) The link with the HIV/AIDS response.

Cutting across all these areas is the importance of peace.

## **Tourism as a Means to Reduce Poverty and Sustain Livelihoods**

Tourism is an important sector for the Zambian economy. From 1997 to 2008, international tourists averaged 5.4% of total exports. Furthermore, the tourism sector has been expanding. For instance, the number of international tourists in Zambia increased – quite impressively – by about 400%, from 163,000 arrivals in 1995 to 815,000 in 2010. Revenue from international tourists grew consequently, from \$29 million (USD) in 1997 to \$212 million in 2009.

What these numbers tell us is that tourism represents a very positive economic stimulus for the rest of the economy, through its direct linkages with the transport and hospitality industries, and indirect linkages with agriculture. Tourism is also a very labor-intensive industry that provides many jobs, in particular for women who depend on the sector for income to support their families, including sending children to school and paying for health services. It is estimated that globally between 60% and 70% of the sector’s total labor supply are by women. In Zambia, there are numerous opportunities for employment

generation in the handicraft industry, through museums, national parks and safaris. The potential of Zambia's tourism sector is immense. There are, as well, many investment opportunities through hotels, lodges or safari operations. Zambia has 19 national parks and 34 game areas, as well as 23 million hectares devoted to the conservation of an exceptional variety of animals.

However, tourism in Zambia has experienced some drawbacks. Despite its positive trend, the sector has been quite volatile, suffering from economic downturns. As a result, long-term jobs are not always guaranteed and uncertainties in households are ever-present, which hampers longer-term investments in critical areas such as in higher education.

To facilitate progress in the tourism sector there is a need to focus on supply-side constraints, such as access to electricity, better communications, infrastructure and a more competitive investment climate for the private sector to flourish. In many developing countries, the sector's main challenge relates to sourcing partnerships with foreign suppliers rather than encouraging local suppliers and investors. Zambia's domestic suppliers should be encouraged to flourish and if there are foreign investors, the benefits of the investment should also be retained or shared in the country through investments. An overall tourism entrepreneurial culture should be ingrained in advocacy campaigns and programs for poverty reduction and wealth creation.

Zambia also needs to be more competitive, especially taking into account the country's main competitors in its niches – Victoria Falls and biodiversity. With regards to Victoria Falls, the main competition is Zimbabwe. On biodiversity, competitors for international tourism in sub-Saharan Africa in 2009 included Botswana (1.5 million tourist arrivals), Kenya (1.4 million), South Africa (9.9 million), Malawi (755,000) and Tanzania (714,000). Zambia's authorities, departments and statutory bodies should pursue ambitious, innovative marketing campaigns on the country's strategic niches in order to gain market share from those countries. Efforts in that regard are recognized and would require support at all levels.

### **Climate Change and Tourism**

Let me now turn to climate change and its consequences on the tourism sector. Countries like Zambia, where tourism depends to a high degree on natural heritage and biodiversity, are highly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. It is not difficult to imagine how increased climatic variability may exacerbate tourism volatility (for example, droughts that may affect tourists' visits to Victoria Falls). Changing climate and weather patterns at tourist-generating and destination countries can significantly affect tourists' travel decisions.

While the tourism sector is affected by climate change, it is also a significant contributor to climate change, mainly through greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated mostly through the transportation of tourists and their energy consumption at destination points. Some estimates have noted that the tourism sector contributes 5% to the global carbon-dioxide emissions; therefore, it is imperative for the sector to respond to climate change within the evolving national responses, thus progressively reducing its carbon footprint so

as to grow in an environmentally sustainable manner. Action in this regard could be focused on a number of initiatives, including the following:

- Mitigation of the sector's GHG emissions;
- Adaptation of tourism businesses and destinations to changing climate conditions;
- Application of existing and new technologies to improve energy efficiency;
- Mobilization of financial resources required for investment in climate-change adaptation and mitigation initiatives;
- Provision of technical and training support to tourism destinations and operators in developing countries (this includes awareness raising for customers and staff members on climate-change impacts and engaging them in response processes);
- Diversification into climate-focused products to reposition destinations and support systems; and
- Striving to conserve biodiversity, natural ecosystems and landscapes in ways that strengthen resilience to climate change and ensure a long-term sustainable use of the environmental resource base of tourism.

Perhaps a most noteworthy characteristic of the effects of climate change observed in many studies is the inequity factor. While greenhouse gas emissions emanate mostly from developed countries and the industrialized giants of the developing world, the consequences are disproportionately borne by the least-developed countries, where adaptive or resilience capacity is minimal or lacking.

For our part, UNDP, in partnership with UN agencies and cooperating partners, deriving from international commitments and plans, have supported the government to establish a Climate Change Facilitation Unit, tasked with formulating a national climate-change strategy, now completed, and providing the most needed campaign for climate-change literacy. Along with other inter-linked initiatives, our hope, with our partners, is to support the government in efforts to ensure that climate change is mainstreamed in all development endeavors, that flow of funding is sequenced, institutional, human resource and negotiation capacities are strengthened, priorities are laid out and a broad understanding of the impact of climate change and adaptive and mitigating responses are secured.

Further, we are working to facilitate policy formulation or revisions, such as the Forestry Act, and legislation needed for enforcement and the timely implementation of all programs, including a national program on climate resilience and low-emission development. Programs such as the Pilot Program on Climate Resilience (PPCR) with support from the World Bank will include interventions on droughts and flooding; others, with support from the Global Environment Facility, will address areas such as crop diversification, conservation farming, water harvesting, alternative livelihoods and capacity building for early warning for communities. Still others, such as the UN Reduced Emission from Deforestation and Degradation (UNREDD), seek to reduce deforestation through increased productivity in agricultural systems and alternative-energy sources. The task is enormous and will require commitment at all levels.

## **Climate Change, Tourism and HIV/AIDS**

Another developmental link is between tourism and HIV/AIDS. Tourism is an industry characterized by high job mobility, which, as a factor, creates increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection. Zambia has a prevalence rate of 14.3%, which has potentially devastating impacts on the labor-intensive tourism industry. Since it tends to be significantly affected by HIV/AIDS, the tourism sector is a likely target for HIV/AIDS interventions in many countries. The tourist industry is at particular risk from the pandemic because of the mobility of the work force, the presence of sex tourists and the heavy reliance of many countries upon tourism revenues. Indeed, tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in many countries.

Some individuals have speculated that potential tourists' fear of AIDS could discourage them from visiting certain countries, while others have even proposed that tourism should be discouraged because the industry contributes to the spread of HIV. Empirical studies suggest some tourists often take more risks than they normally would at home. They tend to drink more, use drugs more and be generally more adventurous while on holiday. Such adventures often include taking sexual risks. When such tourists have sex with prostitutes, hotel staff and others in the local population, a bridge can be created for HIV to cross back and forth between the tourist's home country and the tourist destination.

For example, four years ago, the Center for Global Health and Development (CGHD) and the Farming Systems Association of Zambia looked at the impact of HIV/AIDS on Zambia's tourism industry, as represented by Sun International Zambia (the largest tourism company in Livingstone), small and medium-sized companies in the same city and the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA). In the case of Sun International, the study found for each employee who died of AIDS-related causes, the average cost to the company was 3.5 times that of the employee's average annual salary, but as early as 2005, many HIV-positive employees were already accessing effective treatment with antiretroviral therapy. For the smaller tourism companies, the loss of a skilled worker was estimated to cost just more than one full year's average annual salary, but there were relatively few AIDS-related deaths, and most managers ranked HIV well below other economic threats to their businesses.

Unlike these private companies, ZAWA experienced both high AIDS-related mortality and very high direct and productivity costs, losing roughly 5% of its total service delivery capacity as a result. It is important that HIV/AIDS education reaches all high-prevalence areas and tourism capitals of the country.

Action should focus on:

- Developing and implementing health, HIV and AIDS tourism sector and work place policies;
- Assessing at what stage employees become too ill to perform duties;
- Assessing the loss of skilled manpower;
- The adaptation of training programs to deal with illness progression;
- The need for additional training for inexperienced employees; and
- Death and impact on work performance.

## **Conclusion**

Tourism should be harnessed as a vehicle for the expansion of local employment and poverty reduction – one that takes into account equity and equality considerations, including gender empowerment dimensions. For Zambia, endowed with natural resources and biodiversity backed by a rich culture, and the peace dividend, the potential is enormous. The promotion of the sector should be ambitious, while maintaining the equilibrium of ecosystems and reducing the sector's vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. These actions would contribute toward the country's attainment of the related Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the 6th National Development Plan while maintaining peace within and peaceful co-existence with her neighbors.