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Presentation on the Potential of Community Ecotourism

With so little of the world in protected status, and so much of the world's biodiversity outside of those reserves, new tools need to be found if we are to save the natural world that poor populations depend on. "Eco" tourism, as is currently practiced, concentrates profits in cities. We need to meet the economic needs of communities living in biologically rich regions, if we are to preserve the biodiversity found there. Community-owned ecotourism businesses concentrate the profits in the communities, giving those communities an economic reason to preserve their natural resources. We need to create a network of community-based ecotourism businesses to capture international travelers.

In January 2005 the BBC reported that Dr. Jeffery Sachs - director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University – is publishing a report for United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. According to Sachs, the UN's Millennium Development Goals are to reduce extreme global poverty by half by 2015, but six years have gone with not much done; and we have seen no increase in aid to bring this change into reality. Unfortunately, it is now 2007, and we still are far behind the Goals.

Nor are we winning the struggle to protect the natural world. The 2006 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species reveals an ongoing decline of the status of plants and animals. The number of known threatened species has reached 16,119, and we can be sure that many species that have yet to be discovered would increase this

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number. While just less than 10% of the world enjoys some form of protected status, many of those parks continue to suffer from poaching, illegal logging, and corporate takeover. Worse, over 90% of the world's biodiversity lives outside of these parks. Political will and economic realities will prevent the creation of parks to double, and even if they did, the vast majority of species would still be threatened.

The loss of natural resources can leave the people in a destitute situation, angry, and with little to lose. Forests provide water, medicine and food for many people, and well as a spiritual base.

Millions of people live in poverty throughout the tropics. Over 40% of the world's population earns less than a dollar a day. If their economic needs remain unmet, we cannot expect that they would have an interest in preserving the natural world. This is where tourism, *ecotourism*, was supposed to come in, helping communities economically with the resulting in protecting biodiversity. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, communities have been left out of the equation and the hoped for biodiversity preservation has not fulfilled expectations.

Most of the tour and hotel profits worldwide end up outside of the poor communities. The people living in or near the natural areas that tours visit and hotels are located receive menial employment if any. These people don't have the skills to own tourism businesses, and are usually unable to successfully compete with the city based tour businesses. Until they do, and become organized, "ecotourism" will continue to have little to do with "eco". A potential tool in the fight to save the natural world, community owned ecotourism businesses can provide economic security and in but in fact, peace, continues to languish. This is where SCDC – Sustainable Community Development & Conservation, and the nonprofit Focus Conservation Fund (FCF) are working to make a change.

Tourism is the world's largest industry, with nature tourism is reported to be growing faster than any other segment. Advances in information technology and transportation have opened many new areas. With this comes the threat that tourism will destroy the natural history of the region. In many countries beachfront hotel development has led to the deforestation of the beaches, and pollution in inland river destinations is outpacing the river's ability to absorb the waste. Tourism has led to the decimation of cultures as well.

What then, is Ecotourism? Some definitions of Ecotourism do not go far enough, and equate nature tourism with ecotourism. See this definition from *Answers.com*:

Tourism involving travel to areas of natural or ecological interest, typically under the guidance of a naturalist, for the purpose of observing wildlife and learning about the environment.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has adopted this definition of ecotourism: *"Environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples."*

Similarly, the International Ecotourism Society has adopted this widely accepted definition:

"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."

They also go on to give a specific definition for Community based Tourism:

"The aims are to enable participation from the local community in the development and operations of tourism with their consent and support. Another important feature is that a reasonable share of the revenues are enjoyed by the community. This type of tourism also maintains and respects the local culture, heritage and traditions. Often, community-based tourism actually reinforces and sometimes rescues these. Community-based tourism also implies respect and concern for the natural heritage, particularly where the environment is one of the attractions."

The Nature Conservancy states "Most tourism in natural areas today is not ecotourism and is not therefore, sustainable. Ecotourism can be distinguished from nature tourism by its emphasis on conservation, education, traveler responsibility and active community participation. Specifically, ecotourism possesses the following characteristics:

- * Conscientious, low-impact visitor behavior
- * Sensitivity towards, and appreciation of, local cultures and biodiversity
- * Support for local conservation efforts
- * Sustainable benefits to local communities
- * Local participation in decision-making
- * Educational components for both the traveler and local communities"

Increased tourism in fragile natural areas can threaten the integrity of both local cultures and ecosystems. It can lead to significant environmental degradation and local communities and indigenous cultures can be harmed in numerous ways by an increase in foreign visitation and wealth. Likewise, over dependence on tourism is risky in the face of fluctuations in climate, currency exchange rates, and political and social conditions.

Community based ecotourism brings significant opportunities for both conservation and local community benefit. It can bring needed revenues for parks and other natural areas, as well as providing a sustainable economic development alternative for communities with few other options. This form of tourism can increase the education and support for activism of travelers, and they will often do more to help both the community and conservation efforts.

Let us look at a real example to understand the profit structure of an international tour operator that does tours to Venezuela. We can do this without naming the operator, estimating costs and with a small margin for error.

A foreign birding tour operator sells a 18 day/17 night tour to Venezuela that covers areas from Caracas to Henri Pettier National Park, to the Andes and Llanos. The cost of the itinerary without airfare is U\$4,425.00 per person, with two guides and a 14 person trip limit. With just 10 clients, the gross income for the tour is U\$44,250.00.

With 10 clients in 5 double rooms, the total hotel cost for the tour is U\$5,140, with the guides and drivers staying in a courtesy room. Transfers and minibuses where not included in hotel rates will cost around U\$150 a day or less, and total around U\$2,100. The guide's airfare will cost around \$1,500 total. Meals will cost around U\$10 each, where not included in hotel rates, meaning a cost of \$200 X 12 people, or \$2,400. With each of the guides earning U\$150 per day in salary, for 18 days, the total is U\$5,400. We can add an additional \$2,000 to be sure not to be underestimating the tour operator's costs and profits. So we have:

- + \$44,250 received
- \$ 5,140 hotel expenses
- \$ 2,100 transportation expense
- \$ 1,500 guide airfare
- \$ 2,400 for meals
- \$ 5,400 for guide salaries
- \$ 2,000 to be sure not to underestimate the expenses, leaves:

+ \$25,710 TOUR PROFIT

The Venezuelan hotels would receive a total of \$5,140 from this tour, and with a generous 35% profit, would earn \$1,799. The transport companies, paying vehicle upkeep, drivers and fuel, would be expected to earn less. With \$2,100 at a 20% profit, these companies would earn \$420. Most of the world's airlines are currently operating at a loss, so we will not consider a profit on the guide's airfares. With 12 flying, however, we could add \$600 of profit, to keep our figures on the conservative side. Restaurants have high costs, and with \$2,400 with a 25% profit, they might earn \$480. To remain conservative, lets say half of the \$2,000 extra added above left another \$1,000 in Venezuela. Adding this up, we could expect that city based **Venezuelans would earn \$4,299, roughly 17% of**

what the foreign operator would earn, and \$1,000 less than the two guides together would earn for guiding the tour.

It the tour had 14 people instead of 10, the tour operator would receive \$61,950, with an increase in hotel and food budgets of \$2,856, would profit \$40,554. The profit of restaurants and hotels would increase only by \$919.60. Venezuelan businesses would earn around \$5,218.60, or just under 13% of the tour operator's profit.

While this example comes from a tour operated in Venezuela, the same fiscal phenomenon occurs around the world. Whether the tour operator is in this case a city based Venezuelan or foreign company, most of the profits stay in a city. Most of the vehicles will be city based, and the airlines certainly are. Most of the hotels and restaurants are in cities. In fact, very little of the profits from this tour will in any way help the local people that live in the natural areas that are biologically rich enough to attract foreigners. If the very people that are living in these regions are struggling to survive, as we know to be the case in much of the world, can we expect that so called "ecotourism" will in any way convince them to preserve *their* nature?

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, many of the luxury lodges foreign-owned, or owned by rich nationals living in cities. They usually hire nationals at low wages, while charging clients hundreds of dollars per person per day. The same economics work in this form of "ecotourism".

Where is the "eco" in this nature based tourism parading under the name of Ecotourism?

If we are to take the opportunity to reduce poverty and preserve the natural world by economically helping the people that live in it via tourism, we clearly need a different model. This is where community based, community owned, *real* ecotourism can come in. Clearly, there is money to be made for communities owning and operating a successful ecotourism business!

This workshop provides a plan for communities to be developed in a way that reduces poverty and preserves biodiversity. It also provides governments with a political tool that can favorably benefit the ruling political party that promotes such development. Below are outlined the steps SCDC takes in such projects.

COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Identify a region for community ecotourism development

Many of the failed community ecotourism programs do not take into account that all areas are not suitable for successful development projects. One needs to consider the natural resources, species diversity, cultural resources, historical sites, accessibility, the size of the community and the competing destinations within the region. Tourists will go to the best place, and if you develop a community ecotourism business in the second best place, it will be difficult to be successful.

a. *Natural Resources*

These are the areas where the nature is special. It is with endemic species only occurring there, has rare creatures, and has high or special biodiversity. It is where better places are not more easily accessed, or safer, etc.

b. *Species Diversity*

Most travelers to these destinations want to see wildlife, species they have not seen elsewhere. The more diversity there is, the longer tourists will stay in a location. I.e.: Chapada dos Guimarães National Park in Mato Grosso, Brazil, with the surrounding region support a 3 day tour because of the bird diversity, with around 200 species that can be seen, including several endemic and species with restricted ranges. Itatiaia National Park, near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, covers about the same area, but one needs 7 days to see most of the birds. There are just over 400 species in this, Brazil's first national park, but it also hosts the highest number of endemic birds of any park on the continent (162 species). Serra do Cipó National Park, near Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais has just a few bird species, with a couple of endemics, along with numerous restricted, endemic, rare and interesting plant species. This region rarely has tourists that want to see nature staying more than one night, but supports local weekend business based on trekking and staying in a variety of lodges. While the plant diversity is great, few people travel to see plants, so it is mainly a few bird species that draw in the international tourists.

c. *Cultural Resources*

In order for a county to have tourism based on cultural resources, these must be very rich. Places with successful cultural tourism often have accompanying wildlife, so it is difficult to know how much the exotic cultures play in attracting tourism. One thinks of the colorful tribes of Papua New Guinea, the noble Maasi of central west Africa, and the dramatic powwows of the native peoples of the American Southwest. Other cultural resources include markets, traditional meals and beverages. Cultural attractions, however, can certainly add to the

value of the visit, and if the cultural resources are special enough on an international scale can increase the number of days one stays at a destination, increasing the profit for the community as well.

d. *Historical Sites*

Depending on the richness of these sites, they can add substantially or only marginally to a destination's appeal for the ecotourist. Many natural history tours in Minas Gerais include a stop at the World Heritage city of Ouro Preto. While historical tours can benefit a country, especially community operated, this is not ecotourism, and so not covered here.

e. *Accessibility*

A successful community-owned ecotourism destination must either be fairly easily accessible or so special that the cost of chartering a plane to get there is worth the cost to enough travelers. Most international tourists are savvy, and there are enough wealthy travelers that the cost of arriving in a remote location is not a problem, but the place needs to be worth the cost. Included in accessibility is having a place to stay when one arrives. There are a number of biologically interesting areas where there is little or no accommodation, making the destination inaccessible to most travelers.

f. *Community size/benefit ratio*

To get the most benefit from community-based ecotourism the community must be small. It is possible to benefit a community with up to 2,000 people, if the destination supports several days of visitation. This is near the upper limit. A small community will benefit more on a per capita basis. How a community decides to invest the profits of ecotourism will greatly influence how many people benefit from tourism.

Community meetings

Community meetings and involvement are critical to the success of a project. We need to have the right people involved from the beginning, and give the community solid information so that they can make a choice about hosting a project or not.

a. *Whom should be included*

The first meeting should be with the leaders and decision makers. This can include the government players (mayors, governors, tourism officials, councilpersons, chiefs etc.), university science and other relevant representatives, religious leaders, local non-profits, school leaders, etc. Potential corporate supporters and foreign embassies can also be useful. We need the local leaders to be in support of the project before we explain it, with their help, to their community. Secure the support of these people before going further with a project. Without their support the project will

likely fail. After this, another meeting open to community members, explains the project. This needs to be explained as an option, a choice that can work for the community. It needs to be made clear the community can have as long as it wants to decide, and that more meetings will be held until the community decides if it wants to pursue this path or not. At any time the community decides it does not want to develop ecotourism, the project is cancelled, and goes no further. In addition there can be times when a community is willing, but not ready for an ecotourism development program, and other development strategies will need to be considered.

b. Five critical issues for success

There are five issues that we discuss with first with the community leaders, and then in the first community meeting. They are

1 *This is a partnership between the stakeholders (Government departments, the funding source, SCDC or other developing agency, the people of the community and other potential shareholders);*

It is important for the community to see that they have other parties and people interested in working to make this a reality. This can energize the community, making it easier to become a reality. It also assures the representatives of the funding source and governments that have political considerations.

2 *The community will own the project.*

This cannot be stressed enough. The ownership must be established early if the community will be responsible for its success. A common source of failure in community development projects is that the community does not view the project as theirs, and thus when it has difficulties, the community quits the project and considers it yet another failure by outsiders to help or worse. At the same time, long term involvement, addressed later in this conference, is also necessary to maintain its sustainability, and this must be discussed as well.

3 *The community agrees to be actively involved and outspoken in preserving the natural world;*

This will often be the responsibility of the guides, as they have the greatest contact with the most people, and can have the most influence. It is often a platform that can move community members to become more politically active, usually in support of the government that is in office when the project is funded, with government support. When interviewed by the press, or explaining

the project to anyone, the role of preservation of the natural world will provide an example of the dual goals of poverty reduction and conservation.

4 *The community agrees to help other nearby communities after their project has achieved economic success;*

The discussion about this issue will often assure that they intend to, but the reality is that just a few if any of the people will assume this role. This issue gets people thinking about helping others, and lets them see that they must agree to do something to get this assistance. In many areas, however, a number of community-based initiatives can successfully exist at the same time. If the community agrees to issue 4, it can allow you to bring in people from other communities for the training programs provided by the original project.

5 *If funding is not available, stress that you can make no promises other than that together with the community, you will seek funding.*

Make no mistake. If this project does not have the funds it can only start in the most basic ways, and will not likely succeed. It is unlikely that one can secure funding if a project is not economically viable and likely to be both successful and profitable, with conservation a result. Still, one needs to accurately evaluate the potential of a project, then make the initial site visits which include sounding out the ideas of community based ecotourism before writing a project to get funding, and the community must understand that while trying to get funding we have no guarantees. This needs to be clear to avoid problems should the project not get off the ground.

c. *Holding the meetings*

Start the meetings as soon as a funding source is confirmed, or there is the reasonable expectation that funds will be available. Advertise at least two weeks before the meetings to enable enough people to make plans to attend. Have the meeting in a large enough venue so that no one will be turned away. Have the proper sound system. Have water and bathrooms available. These are the basics that need to be covered in advance. In the first meeting have the community leaders, already in support of the project, explain it to their community, and introduce the other partners in the meeting. Allow each person to have his or her say. Don't ask for a resolution at the end of the meeting, but assure the community that you want them to make an informed decision as to whether or not this is the path to follow for economic development. Set up the time for another

meeting at the end of this meeting, and be prepared that several more meetings might take place before the community reaches a decision.

d. *Concepts, management*

At these meetings be sure to always explain the concept, near the beginning, and state that the meeting is about discussing and coming to a decision, and there will be others. Recognize that we are in the infancy of community development that creates a professional natural history tour business that in turn raises funds for community chosen purposes. It can take several explanations for the community to fully understand the project concept.

Discuss management of the tourism program. Explain that the community can hire outside management for lodges in particular, as management is so important to the successful operation of the tour program. The manager would work for the community, as an employee with the goal of training locals to enter into management over the next few years. A well-funded project can include university grants to allow some community members to gain the necessary management skills. Governments are often able to secure grants for students to attend government run universities.

The Work Plan

The Work or Business Plan is a standard tool in business development, and community base ecotourism is a business. For a community to start and manage a business takes motivation, and there will be much training. A successful business also takes planning, and research. A mistake made early on can cause the project to fail, or, at a minimum, take some time to regain an advantage. Planning in a Business Plan can cause you to think things through, and build a business that will help reach the goals we want through community based ecotourism

A business plan is also a necessary tool to seek funding, as it shows major funders that you have a business sense. The business should work on paper, and if it does not, there is little reason to proceed, and little reason for a donor or funding institution to approve the project.

a. *Elements of the plan*

There is an outline of a complete business plan: Appendix 1. There is also a sample real case project outline included as Appendix 2.

b. *Funding & Partnerships*

Most community ecotourism projects require considerable funding. In most situations one or more lodges need to be part of the equation, along with other micro industries that can be started in the communities. Governments are often able to secure funding from major funding

institutions, but only if there is a credible business plan showing that the project is well thought out and has a good chance for success. Donors and other funding institutions want to see tangible results, and sometimes a return for their money. There is increasing competition between countries or even regions within the same country. As in other development sectors, community based ecotourism is also under pressure to show results in poverty reduction. This is necessary as this is a new sector of tourism for the banks, and it must prove itself.

Donors are looking for projects that have high impacts for poverty reduction and to a lesser degree, conservation. They also want to see strong indications of sustainability, with strong local ownership and adequate training program/capacity building to be able to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

Partnerships can include non-profits, universities, corporate donors and others. Look carefully at these options as they can also benefit the partner more than the community.

Lodge Design

The majority of community based ecotourism projects will need to include accommodations. Some programs, near a substantial tourism destination, can provide day trips that do not need a lodge.

a. Importance of Design

If a ecotourism destination is going to be where one spends the nights, the lodging needs to be not only comfortable, but fun! People will spend more time, and come back more frequently, if the lodge and program is fun. While a 5 star hotel is not necessary, 5 star comforts, from the bedding to the meals served, is necessary. The lodge will be important in any advertising. If it is done with recyclable materials, using solar and other alternative energy sources, and then properly marketed, visitors will come from around the world to see how this is done. Newspapers and magazines will provide coverage via articles, generating free publicity more valuable than you could pay for. One cannot afford to overlook the importance in design in the lodge.

b. Luxury versus Economical lodges

African destinations have largely gone the route of high end, high quality lodges. Costing around USD\$500/night for a double room, or much more, these lodges have little trouble finding clients. While local populations are largely unable to afford to stay in such lodges, they are the most profitable, and thus communities should have at least one high end, expensive lodge. Other less expensive lodging can be made available, and if the destination is largely a domestic market destination, affordable

lodging will need to be available. When lodges have the same number of rooms the employee costs are roughly the same for expensive or lower end lodges, but the profitability is different. High end lodges can have a smaller number of rooms, which provide a feeling of exclusivity, one of the reasons people will pay more. A variety of lodges, in design and cost, are recommended to maximize on the market.

Profit Distribution and Transparency

a. Economic Planning and Design

A community owned and operated ecotourism business is structured in such a way that all employees receive a fair wage for their work, but the profits go to community funds. In much of the western world this would be the city coffer, and elected officials would oversee the funds. Community members, however, should vote on the spending of the funds. Hopefully these funds will be used to improve water facilities, build schools, support students, etc., where they would have the greatest benefit for all the community. Transparency is important to the success of the project. In a public place, but out of sight to tourists, a chart should be maintained that shows incoming funds and costs for each tour, with a running balance showing the profit from the ecotourism business. Transparency can reduce or stop corruption, and creates a feeling of trust amongst community members. It also helps silence those that might not support such a program. It will show plainly where the economics of the ecotourism business are and leads to accountability. The project will need to work with the people involved at all stages here, as the project will be judged as successful only if the profits arrive and are used to help the community.

b. Developing other community businesses

Recognizing that corruption exists and is a risk to the success of the project, all steps must be taken in addition to transparency. Key among these are other community development projects which will spread the profits from the tourism program. If a community is to be developed so that poverty will be diminished and the most people will benefit, the development should include the building of restaurants, bars and coffee houses with Internet connections, souvenir shops and souvenir production plants. These should be designed to employ the most people and be in line with conservation plans. Most will require additional business plans, but should be included in the funding proposals, as part of the project.

Training Program

Much of the work in terms of time and importance are addressed in the training programs. Individual businesses will have their own training programs, and there are some that need to be taught to the communities as a whole.

a. Gender Equality

Far too often the men in a program are the ones that have most of the contact with the tourists. They are the drivers, the guides, the boatmen, the baggage handlers etc. The women are far too often the low paid cooks, maids, dish washers, etc. This is social inequality, and a project can and should address gender equality, equal opportunities, and equal work for equal pay. If a project is to get funding a statement about a commitment will attract attention and be a welcome part of a proposal, helping to separate it from others, where this topic is rarely addressed.

b. Language Programs

English is the standard language for tourism, and should be taught first, or at the same time as other languages. Occasionally volunteers can be found for this, but are not the best route as they usually cannot stay teaching the length of time necessary to reach conversational English abilities. If the students are dedicated, and the English is taught daily, it will take about 4 to 5 months to have basic language skills, and after a year they will speak adequately to work with English speaking clients. This is also where we can find out who is really interested in and able to work with this project.

c. Environmental & Conservation Education

This is where the environment and conservation of biodiversity come together most obviously. On a larger scale, the basics of conservation are addressed, as well as biology of the major or special species present. We want the community in general to be able to speak intelligently about the environment, how it benefits them, how they are protecting the environment with this project etc. The guide training program will go much deeper into these topics, but we want the community in tune with the conservation goals of the project, so the basics including threats, endangered and endemic species in the region, and the ability to explain the project to others are necessary.

d. Customer service

Tourism is a service industry. In the field of nature-based tourism, Africa has taken the lead in providing comfortable lodges and high levels of service. Everyone who works in a lodge should quickly learn each guest's first name. This is accomplished with studying the names of clients before they arrive, and then quickly putting the face with the name. After this everyone, from the maids to the managers, address each client by their first name daily. Vehicles that are used need to have clean windows, and be cleaned thoroughly every night before clients get in them the next day. At meals there need to be enough waiters to keep glasses full and quickly remove plates that are no longer in use. Rooms must be impeccably clean, and refreshments stocked. There are many areas where customer

service is important, and is often lacking in regions where these projects can occur. It is often all that separates one operator from another.

e. *Ethics*

Definition: Of or relating to moral action and conduct; professionally right; conforming to professional standards.

Honesty, doing what you say you are going to do, when you say are going to do, and treating everyone with respect, will get you farther than almost anything else. An ethical business is fair to everyone. Here are the steps we use to train communities.

1) *State position, philosophy or belief.*

In our training program we announce that this community ecotourism project has adopted a specific position and philosophy regarding the fundamental values or principles which all involved in the project use as the basis for business decision making. We stress that this philosophy is integral to the identity of the organization and to be applied without exception, by every decision-making employee.

2) *Create formal organizational systems*

We create and implement the formal systems, policies and procedures that clearly define expectations for employees in their day-to-day decision-making. Examples of these systems include statements of values, codes of conduct and ethics policies discussed and publicly posted for the community to see, were the transparency tables are.

3) *Communicate expectations through informal (leadership) systems*

Leaders at all levels of the organization explicitly and implicitly communicate their expectations regarding employee behavior, reinforcing the explicit organizational expectations detailed through the formal systems and structures. This includes the visible use of the ethics systems in their own decision making and the requirement that subordinate employees do likewise.

4) *Reinforce policy through measurements and rewards*

We reinforce our ethics position and philosophy by including adherence to the associated guidelines and policies an integral part of how success is measured and rewarded.

5) *Implement communications and education strategies*

We include a strategic communications and education campaign to ensure that community employees understand the stated position

and the behavioral expectations, as well as have familiarity with the systems and structures that have been put in place to facilitate employee fulfillment of those expectations.

6) Use response to critical events to underscore commitment.

Senior leadership uses critical events in the business to underscore their commitment to the stated position, philosophy or belief. They make their adherence to the position explicit and use the critical event as evidence of how the highest levels of the organization are accountable to the same standards as are imposed throughout the organization.

7) Avoid perceptions of hidden agendas

One of the most critical, yet least controllable, shapers of any organization is the ethical culture is employees perception's of the motives behind senior management's adoption of the stated position and philosophy, and suspected hidden agendas. All levels of the project need to pay attention to any action that can seem to be self serving, or for some other selfish motive.

We thank the Ethics Resource Center, <http://www.ethics.org>, for their assistance with our Ethics education program.

f. Short and Long Term planning

We teach leaders in the community, which include the guides, how to plan, with both short and long term goals. This includes setting attainable goals, and measuring success.

g. Health Education

Depending on the community and its current amount of education, this can start with basic hygiene. We also cover nutrition, sexually passed diseases with a strong AIDS/HIV element, other diseases, and basic first aid.

h. Choosing Guides

Guide selection can be both critical and political, and this is an area where ethics come into play. Being a guide is one of the most important, and most enjoyable, roles to play in community ecotourism. We need guides that are outgoing, motivated, pleasant looking, hard workers and fast learners and interested in the natural world. Where language is needed to be taught, the students that work the hardest to learn are often the best choices. We also look to have equal numbers of males and females as guides. It is necessary to find people that are committed to the project and committed to the community, as trained guides can often easily find work elsewhere. A contract between the community and the guide, if enforceable or persuadable, can be useful.

d. Conservation public speaking skill development

An important link between the community development and conservation is the ability of the guides, and others, to speak publicly and persuasively about conservation. This is a learned skill, and we cover a number of topic and subjects, as well as have each guide speak to the rest of the group and eventually to others, encouraging them as they improve.

e. Emergency medical procedures

As the guides will be with the clients and most likely present should someone need emergency medical air, the guides need more complete emergency training than the community at large. We bring in outside trainers for this course, usually from the local hospital. We also make sure the guides know how to contact a doctor, get an ambulance or other rescue vehicle etc. to take care of people that need hospital or other medical expertise.

Project Staff

a. Project Director

CECD provides one or more Project Directors, which are responsible for the overall success or failure of the project. Larger projects can need two Project Directors, with clearly defined, and for the most part not overlapping responsibilities. There can also be Assistant Directors, as many as are needed. Project Directors should live at the site, although their position and responsibilities can require frequent traveling to secure supplies, set up programs, meet with funders, etc. They have the freedom to do what they need to get the job done.

b. Steering Committee

This committee provides the vision and high level oversight of the project. The steering committee would include the Project Director, members of the community, funding partners and industry leaders.

c. Human Resources Director

This Director works with the steering committee and Project Director to determine positions needed and fill these positions with qualified individuals. Every effort should be made to fill all positions with residents of the project community. In the event that there is not a qualified individual resident in the community, an outside resource will need to be considered and potential resident successors will be identified and transition plans prepared.

d. Trainers

A number of different trainers, from diverse backgrounds, provide a comprehensive training program to cover all positions required. Some positions are noted below.

- a. Government training schools for hotel, restaurant, cooking and customer service.
 - b. Alternative business instructors
 - c. Guiding Skills instructor
 - d. Cultural Difference training
 - e. Financial Management training
 - f. Health & First Aid training
- e. Organizational Infrastructure
Projects will need to include staff housing as well as vehicles and other infrastructure to successfully work with a project.

Marketing Strategy

A well thought out marketing strategy starts at the beginning of a project, and is part of the building and design of any project. As mentioned in the Lodge Design section, there are many ways to get publicity, and the best can not be purchased, but comes from the design and interest the project generates.

a. Website development

Key to marketing today is a good website. These should be attractive, easy to use, informative and easy to find. With search engines currently scanning the site to see where to put it when a search is conducted, we use a strategy of frequently repeating the same words in the site that people are likely to search for. This will get our best coverage.

b. FAM tour, press coverage

A well designed familiarization (FAM) tour, with the proper people invited, can do much to bring the project to the attention of the world, and groups of tourists to the site. If the lodge/s is/are designed and built with alternative energy, recycled products, etc. as mentioned early when discussing the lodge design, this will go far in making these FAM tours successful. FAM tours should have carefully chosen participants. The pool includes tour operators, travel agents with many individual travelers, journalists from major travel magazines and newspapers, guide book writers, etc. They typically will pay something, but a reduced rate, and the airlines will usually partner with these FAM tours, as they will benefit from the increase in sales these tours bring, if well done.

c. Marketing Partnerships

Marketing partnerships can occur with tour operators, non-profits, government tourism departments, universities etc. Lets look at a few of these.

Tour operators can send several clients a year to a project. If negotiating a marketing partnership, where each of you pays part of the costs of

advertising, trade shows, etc. the tour operators is likely to ask for exclusivity, where only they can bring tours to the project. Do not accept this! There are enough other means to find clients. There are a few tour companies that work with research projects, charging clients to help with the research, and keeping part of those funds. This would require having a research program, but it is a good way to get clients and funds for the community IF this is written into the agreement with the tour company and the researchers.

Non-profits can be an effective partner in marketing. They have mailing lists, and are often supportive of this type of project. They could be willing to send out a notice to all their supporters, and are likely to have many travelers in their organization. They could also talk about the project on their website.

Government Tourism Boards are a good source of funding for marketing. It is in their interest to increase tourism as well, and they frequently ask for nothing in return. These should be contacted.

Universities, especially those with tourism departments, can send students to study tourism or the project as a whole. They can also give credibility to the project. Universities should be contacted.

d. *Educating the clients and potential clients*

Clients are a powerful source of funding, and of marketing. If proper signage is at the tourism site, and if the guides explain the project well, many clients will donate to the project. A potential client is more likely to confirm if they know this is a community project, with profits benefiting the community.

Long Term Support Strategy

A major reason attributed to the failure of many projects designed to bring a positive change to assist poor communities is the lack of long term support. Often a community will embrace a project and it will work well as long as the project staff is still present. Lack of ownership (discussed earlier) often causes people to go back to their old ways if something breaks, waiting on the long gone project staff to fix it. Setting up regularly scheduled meetings that will continue after the project is recommended.

a. *Weekly meetings*

Once the project is near the end, we hold weekly meetings up to the time that the Project Director and other staff leave, and the project runs on its own. These are problem solving meetings, to resolve issues that need to be resolved before the project is self run, on its own. We then return at

least every six months, or as needed to help resolve problems and see that all is working to the best of its ability. We stay in touch with the community and the community will be able to contact us via e-mail as needed.

b. Transparency System

The transparency system, if working, will do more than most to insure that the project is self-sustainable and will work for the long term. If there is corruption, the project is threatened, and new strategies will need to be created to control this.

Systems should be in place at the time the project ends for the community to have a working, self sustaining ecotourism business, and actively preserving the biodiversity of the region.

This workshop is designed to provide decision makers with a thorough understanding of what it takes to create successful community based ecotourism businesses in their regions. Instructor Douglas Trent is available to meet with governments and other entities that are interested in discussing the possibility of working together to design and create community based ecotourism projects. Contact:

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