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COMMUNITY TOURISM: THE WAY AHEAD FOR AFRICA

PAPER PRESENTED BY MR JH DE VILLIERS BOTHA EXECUTIVE MANAGER -
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES - DEVELOPMENT BANK OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

I am grateful for the opportunity to address this second African Conference on Peace through Tourism. The topic - community tourism - gateway to poverty reduction is of particular relevance to both South Africa and the rest of Africa, and I look forward to some very interesting presentations and discussions. I have been requested to address the conference on community tourism, the way ahead for Africa.

In order to contextualise tourism in Africa, my paper starts with a brief overview of development in Africa, which highlights the development challenges that Africa faces. I will then discuss tourism in Africa, and the potential of the tourism sector to contribute towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, and the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Based upon the involvement of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) in supporting community tourism, I will then move on to highlight some of the lessons that the DBSA has learned in promoting community tourism projects. My paper concludes with a few ideas on the way ahead for Africa.

DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Africa faces enormous development challenges. It is the poorest continent on earth, with slow economic growth, high levels of inequality, uneven access to resources, serious health and education backlogs and limited access to infrastructure. Apart from the socio-economic crisis, Africa faces a "political" and "nation state" crisis, compounded by ongoing conflict in large parts of the continent.

I would like to draw your attention to a few of the key development indicators for Africa (DBSA, 2003).

The total **population** of Africa in mid 2001 was estimated to be 814,8 million.

The average **annual growth rate** between 1980 and 2001 was 2,7%.

It is estimated that between 2001 - 2015 the average annual population growth rate will decline to 1,7%.

In terms of the **population age composition**, in 2001 42,3% of the population was below the age of 14.

The average life expectancy in 2001 was 50 years. This figure however is coming down due to the high prevalence of HIV / Aids - particularly in Southern Africa. In Africa, it was estimated that 6,7% of the total population was infected with HIV/Aids in 2001. In some countries in Southern Africa i.e. Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana, this figure is over 30%.

In terms of the structure of the economy, agriculture accounts for 35% of the continents GDP, 70% of its employment and 40% of its exports.

North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia) do not share many of the characteristics and problems that are considered to be typical of other African countries. The figures presented below thus only pertain to sub-Saharan Africa. (DBSA, 2003)

In 2001, 67,7% of the total population was classified as rural.

Approximately 48% of the population remains in extreme poverty, living on less than 1 US dollar a day.

Between 1990 and 2001 the average annual percentage growth in GDP was 2,6%. The average annual population growth for the same period was 2,7%. It has been estimated that in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, Africa must have an annual average growth rate of 7%.

In terms of education, the gross enrolment ratio as a percentage of the relevant age group in 2000 was 86,3% for primary education, 26,6% for secondary education and 3,6% for secondary education.

29,5% of adult males and 45,7% of adult females were illiterate in 2001.

In terms of access to infrastructure, 58,1 % of the population had access to an improved water source, 53,4% of the population had access to improved sanitation facilities, and 24,6% of the population had access to electricity in 2000.

In terms of nutritional indicators, 32,9% of the population was undernourished between 1998 and 2000.

TOURISM IN AFRICA

Significant literature exists on the potential contribution that the tourism sector can make in promoting economic growth and development.

The Canary Island Declaration on Tourism in March 2001 concluded that for a large majority of Least Developed Countries, tourism development could be an avenue to increase participation in the global economy, to alleviate poverty and to achieve socio economic progress. 49 countries in the world are classified as Least Developed Countries by the United Nations. Of these 49 countries, 30 are in Africa, and seven are within the SADC region.

The potential of the tourism sector to reduce poverty is based on the facts that: Tourism has become one of the major contributors to GDP in many African countries, replacing traditional and declining sectors such as agriculture and mining as the lead economic sectors.

It is labour intensive. Tourism is often a leading source of employment particularly for communities with a low skills base, women and the youth.

Tourism attractions are often built on natural or cultural assets that are consumed on site. Tourism thus represents a development opportunity for rural communities, in areas where poverty is severe, and there may be few other options for development.

Tourism has lower barriers to entry than other economic sectors.

Tourism has the potential to stimulate a range of economic linkages with other sectors, thus stimulating further economic growth and development.

Tourism provides a potential catalytic role for infrastructure investment, where new infrastructure (i.e. roads, piped water, electricity and communication) is developed to open up and service new tourism attractions and opportunities. The new infrastructure often benefits the tourism attraction as well as surrounding local communities, by providing basic services, as well as stimulating local economic activity.

Tourism can be a valuable instrument to promote local economic empowerment and transformation, through promoting local ownership and enterprise development. Tourism often contributes to land reform, where tourism may provide a viable economic option for many communities to generate an economic return from their land

Moving from the potential of the tourism sector, to current realities on the ground, data from the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) shows that Africa lags behind other continents in fulfilling its tourism potential. In 2001, it accounted for only 4,1% of global international tourism arrivals. Tourism receipts were US\$ 11.7 billion. This represents only 2.5% of global tourism receipts. However, between 1990 and 2000 tourism in Africa grew at an annual rate of 6,2%, well above the world average of 4.3% (WTO, 2002).

Despite the poor performance of tourism in Africa in the past, Africa is ideally positioned to capitalize on new emerging international tourism trends. The World Tourism Organization's Tourism 2020 Vision study presents an optimistic picture for the tourism sector in Africa in the quarter century from 1995 to 2020 (WTO, 2000).

The basis for the above global average growth rate forecasts in international tourist arrivals is research conducted in major tourist generating markets for the WTO study which indicates that tourist markets are increasingly:

- Looking for new destinations;
- Wanting to "build" their holidays around the natural and cultural resources of the destinations; and
- Are prepared to travel long distances to find such destinations.

International tourism in Africa is characterized by a strong polarization, with the north-eastern and southeastern countries receiving the greater part of the arrivals.

Four countries alone, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt account for 60.6% of all tourist arrivals in the region (WTO, 2001). Approximately 95% of all arrivals are concentrated in 20 of the 53 African countries.

The source markets for international tourism in Africa are predominantly interregional. In 2001, Africans counted for 40% of all international tourist arrivals in the continent, followed by Europe (36%), the Middle East (4%), and the Americas (4%) (WTO, 2002b).

If figures relating to domestic tourism are included, then approximately 75% of all arrivals

are generated within Africa.

Africa has the ingredients to make it a leading tourism destination in the world. It has rich natural, cultural and historical resources. It has a diversified and authentic product offering. The challenge for Africa is firstly how to ensure the realization of its tourism potential, and secondly how to structure the tourism sector so that it promotes socio-economic development, and directly benefit the poor.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY TOURISM?

Community tourism can take various different forms. With respect to terminology, tourism practitioners that essentially refer to the same concept use various terms. Common terminology referred to in Africa describing essentially the same concept includes Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), community development tourism, village tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, and responsible tourism.

In South Africa, various actions have been undertaken to promote community tourism. A significant initiative is the Poverty Relief Programme of the national

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), which provides grant funding for the development of community based tourism projects. DEAT has further produced guidelines for the implementation of CBNRM projects (2003), as well as developed responsible tourism guidelines (2001) to guide product development in South Africa. The National department of Trade and Industry has established the Community Public Private Partnership Programme, which aims to develop best practice in promoting partnerships. The tourism sector is recognized as one of the key focus areas of this programme.

In response to the need to achieve pro-poor growth, an approach to tourism, pro-poor tourism is being actively pursued in South Africa, as well as numerous other African countries.

Pro-poor tourism is different to community tourism, as it focuses on an approach to tourism, rather than a type of tourism. Pro-poor tourism is defined as tourism development that generates net economic, social and environmental benefits for the poor. Pro-poor tourism place people and poverty reduction at the heart of the tourism agenda, and thus focuses particularly on opening opportunities, including employment and entrepreneurial

opportunities, for the poor to benefit from the tourism industry (Ashley et al, 2000). Community tourism thus may be, but is not automatically pro-poor.

For the purpose of this paper, I am defining community tourism as any tourism initiative that places the community at the heart of the initiative. The community is thus the key beneficiary of the tourism initiative.

SOME KEY LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE

Based upon the DBSA's experience in the tourism sector, I would like to highlight the following lessons that we have learned, and that could be considered by others involved with the planning and implementation of community tourism projects. These lessons of experience are based upon our involvement in projects financed by the DB SA, as well as from our experience in the various agency programmes that we support, such as the regional Spatial Development Initiative Programme, the Community Public Private Partnership Programme and NEPAD

A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

In South Africa, the most successful community tourism projects have been projects based upon the community's ownership of an asset. The asset which often takes the form of land, but which could be other assets such as a cultural or historical attraction, can be utilised to extract tangible economic benefits for the community. Communities with clear and uncontested rights can utilise their asset to extract increased socio-economic commitments and obligations from investors, and enter the tourism industry as partners, and not only as workers or recipients of corporate responsibility benefits.

COMMUNITY TOURISM AS ONE LIVLIHOOD OPTION

Communities usually have more than one option for earning a livelihood.

Tourism is one option. There may be various other options such as agriculture, mining, the harvesting of natural products, craft production etc. It is essential that communities themselves select tourism as an option. This may require external impartial advice, on the various options available to the community.

Once the community has selected tourism as the preferred option, due to the fickle nature

of the tourism industry, the community should be encouraged to not become overly dependent on one initiative. In the tourism sector, the saying of "not having all your eggs in one basket" is particularly relevant. The community should maintain a variety of different ways of earning a living, in order to minimise the risks associated with fluctuations in the tourism industry.

ONGOING CAPACITY BUILDING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Community tourism projects are difficult projects to implement successfully. There are no quick-fix solutions. Ongoing capacity building and skills development from the conceptualization phase, through to project implementation and operation - are essential for the success of community tourism projects. This is a resource intensive process, in terms of finance, expertise and time. Ongoing capacity building and skills development usually require outside technical and financial support. In the planning of community tourism projects, adequate resources need to be made available to ensure that the necessary capacity building and skills development can take place.

APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

Appropriate community structures need to be set up to manage the planning, implementation and operation of community tourism projects. It is essential that the community structure is representative of all interest groups in the community. Depending on the nature of the project, the community structure may need to be set up as a legal entity, with the capacity to engage with the private sector, conservation agencies and other stakeholders.

PARTNERSHIPS

It is very difficult for a community to develop successful community tourism project entirely on their own. Partnerships with a range of outside stakeholders, including government and the private sector, are often critical to the success of the venture.

In order to build successful partnerships it is essential that firstly all parties have something to contribute to the partnership, and secondly that the capacity of the community is developed to the extent that they can enter the partnership as equal players.

CONFLICT MEDIATION

In most communities, conflict and power struggles will emerge. Conflicts may occur at any stage of the project, but especially when the project starts to deliver benefits. From our experience, the best way of dealing with conflict is to expect it. In the planning phase, start to anticipate possible areas of conflict, and build in conflict management and resolution

mechanisms that everyone agrees to follow.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Technical practitioners supporting community tourism projects need to be realistic about what the project can do for the community. It is essential to be realistic about the impacts of community tourism on development and economic growth. Community tourism should thus not be regarded as the panacea for development, but rather be a component of a larger integrated development programme for the area. A good business plan, which indicates if the project has a good chance of succeeding and articulating realistic goals and benefit flows, is essential prior to embarking on any community tourism project.

REAL BENEFITS

It is essential for community tourism projects to demonstrate real benefits to local communities, both in the short and long term. These benefits may take the form of economic, social, cultural or spiritual benefits. A clear plan, with appropriate management structures to distribute communal benefits to the community needs to be agreed upon by all stakeholders at an early stage of project implementation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to share a few of my thoughts about community tourism the way ahead for Africa or not?

Firstly, the strength of African tourism lies predominantly in its natural and cultural resources, as well as the diversity and authenticity of its product (Gerosa, 2003).

Communities in Africa are often the custodians of these assets. The utilization of these assets by communities, as tourism assets represents a significant development option for many communities in Africa.

Secondly, community tourism on a scale that is required to assist in alleviating poverty on the continent will not just happen. Tourism thus needs to be recognized as an important economic sector, with the potential to contribute to economic growth and development. It is essential that African countries develop tourism strategies, with community tourism as

an integral component of these national tourism development plans, if they would like to realize the potential gains from community tourism.

Thirdly, based on the development indicators presented previously, the majority of Africa's population derives their livelihood from agriculture. Community tourism projects must not displace the role of the agricultural sector, but rather be viewed as an additional vehicle to promote local economic development.

Fourthly, in order to promote the growth of the tourism sector in Africa, broader developmental constraints such as a lack of infrastructure, low human skills base, health, safety and security issues need to be addressed as part of a development strategy for the continent. The success of NEP AD as a strategy for achieving sustainable development on the African continent is essential for the further development of the tourism sector, and thus community tourism in Africa.

Finally, in Africa, economic growth is regarded as essential for the economic development of the continent. However, growth alone is not sufficient to stop the marginalisation of the continent, and improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. A pro-poor approach to community tourism projects is necessary to ensure that benefits of projects accrue to the entire community, including the very poor.

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