

# Social Sustainability in Ecotourism: *incorporating local and indigenous communities*



Dr. Lea M. Scherl  
lea.scherl@bigpond.com





# Why do we need to address social sustainability in ecotourism?

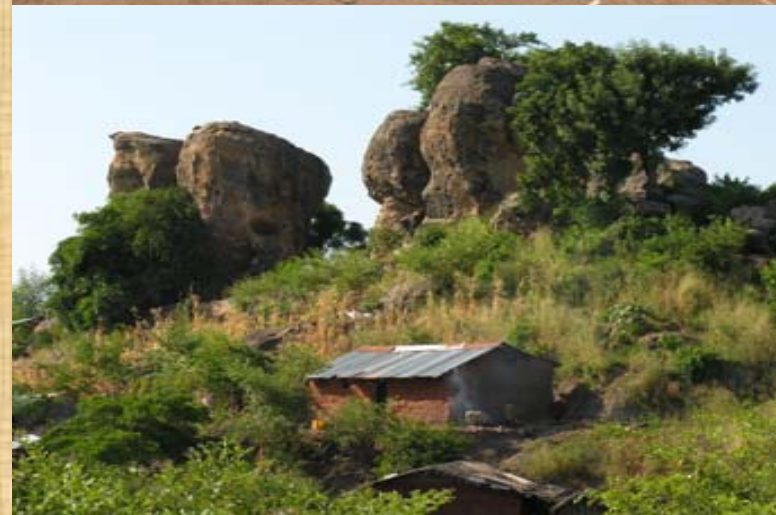
- **Ethical Reasons**
- **Practical Reasons**



# Ethical Issues

- The principle of “at least do no harm” and respect for human rights must be observed
- Development of ecotourism ventures must do as much as possible to contribute to the livelihoods and well-being of local and indigenous communities and at least it must not make them worse off

*Principles also inside Rec. 5.29 of the World Parks Congress 2003*







## Practical Issues



- **An ecotourism venture is not an island – it exist inside a social, cultural and economic context with national, regional and international influences (we have to take all of those into account)**
- **Ecotourism co-exist with local and/or indigenous communities *oftentimes in rural environments* – we need to find a mechanisms to deal with such co-existence**

# How can ecotourism contribute to the livelihoods of local and indigenous communities?

*Applying the notion of social justice in conservation and in ecotourism (approach)*



*From: Scherl (2005)*



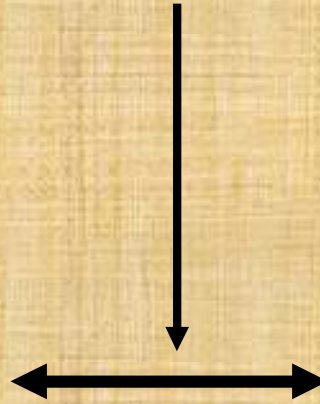
# What does it take for ecotourism to contribute to the livelihoods of local and indigenous communities?

## *Natural environment*

- Environmental Services
- Species Diversity
- Cultural and socio-economic values

## *Local/indigenous communities*

- Employment/greater resources
- Empowerment/rights
- Capacity-building



**Table 1.** Ecotourism management models and local and indigenous communities

Facets of the relationship between Indigenous and local communities and natural environments	ECOTOURISM MODELS		
	Community-based	Private sector / Government / NGO	Joint venture
Governance (empowerment/rights)	At community level	At corporate, government or NGO level	Collaborative management, community and other stakeholders
Economic benefits Livelihood security Capacity-building	Mostly returned to community	Minimum contribution to the community, benefits leaked via staff from outside area or non-local companies	Shared
Cultural, spiritual and educational values	Increase when community feels sense of ownership	Generally decrease as community well-being not a management priority.	May increase or decrease, depending on power sharing arrangements and other factors

*Adapted from: Scherl and Edwards (2006)*



**An important thing to consider!**  
***Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) which can attract ecotourism***

“...natural and modified ecosystems including significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values voluntarily conserved by concerned indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means...”





# Examples of a range of community conserved areas (CCAs)

**Sacred sites and species habitats**



**Sacred Forest of Chizire**  
*Zimbabwe*



**Sacred crocodile lagoon, Mali**



**Sacred Lake, India Himalaya**

Range of community conserved areas...

**Sustainably managed reserves of natural resources (water, medicinal plants, non-timber forest products, fisheries...)**

**Rekawa Lagoon, *Sri Lanka***



**Hushey Valley, *Pakistan***



**Marine Extrativist Reserve, Canto Verde, Brazil**





Range of community conserved areas...

indigenous territories and cultural landscapes/seascapes...

**Caribu crossing  
site in Inuit  
territory, Canada**



**Alto Fragua Indi-wasi National Park, Colombia**



**Paruku Indigenous PA, Australia**





## *How do we incorporate local and indigenous communities along the process?*

- 1) We discuss any preliminary idea with them.
- 2) We involve them in planning.





*How do we incorporate local and indigenous communities along the process?*

- 3) Once the ecotourism venture is happening we involve them in activities and when possible in the management.
- 4) We continue periodically to discuss with them how everything is going.



*How do we incorporate local and indigenous communities along the process?*

5) We consider all the time how to maintain the natural environment and the livelihood of the local and indigenous communities in good condition for future generations!







Thank You!

Pictures worldwide are from a number of professionals, including the author, members of the *Strategic Direction on Governance, Equity and Livelihoods* of the IUCN Commissions (World Commission on Protected Areas – WCPA, and Commission on Environment, Economics and Social Policy – CEESP) with also some contributions from Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH), Australia, and from a professional photographer Chico Carneiro.