HIGH-END ECOTOURISM AS A SUSTAINABLE LAND USE OPTION IN RURAL AFRICA: THE ROLE OF EMPLOYMENT IN POVERTY REDUCTION & SOCIAL WELFARE

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Our Journeys Change Lives
INTRODUCTION

Rural Communities characterised by:
- Remote locations
- High levels of poverty & unemployment
- Low level of skills & education
- High dependency on natural resources for survival

New threat of climate change

Alternative income-earning opportunities that are sustainable

Problems:
- Declining biodiversity
- Increasing populations
- Immediate human needs
- Declining ecosystem resilience

High-end Ecotourism
BACKGROUND

**Subsistence Agriculture** – focused on utilizing the land & natural resources in the area

**Protected areas** – can result in restrictions on land use being imposed on local communities

**Climate change** is resulting in a declining ability of traditional subsistence lifestyles to sustain rural populations

Need for **diversifying rural livelihoods** to reduce the risk faced by these households, reduce poverty and to improve social welfare
METHODOLOGY

- Structured one-on-one questionnaire interviews

- Study sites:
  - **Botswana**: Okavango Community Trust, Okavango Delta & Kwedi Concession
  - **Namibia**: Palmwag concession
  - **Malawi**: Liwonde National Park & adjacent communities
  - **Zimbabwe**: Hwange National Park & adjacent communities
  - **South Africa**: Kruger National Park (Pafuri Camp) & Makuleke community
    iSimangaliso National Park (Rocktail Beach Camp) & Mpukane community
Questions on demographics, social welfare, education, employment, income, expenditure patterns, health, attitudes to conservation & tourism

All tourism study sites were located in protected areas

High-end category due to accommodation rate charged (USD 220-USD 484pppn)

Communities were chosen as a result of their proximity to the ecotourism operation and/or conservation area or as a result of a relationship with the ecotourism operator

Study sites had varying GDP per capita (USD 200-USD 10 866)

325 staff surveys conducted in 14 high-end ecotourism camps

1225 community surveys conducted in at least 30 different villages, covering more than 19 different ethnic groups
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

**Age:** On average, community respondents were older (M=39.97) than staff respondents (M=34.57). This difference was statistically significant.

**Gender:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highlights the importance of engaging specifically with women in communities in terms of education about biodiversity conservation & the impacts of deforestation, etc.

Community respondents had, on average, more children (M=3.53) than staff respondents (M=2.54). This difference was found to be statistically significant \([t(1539)=-5.52, \ p<0.05]\)
Significant difference in mean number of years of education:

**staff** mean of 9.28 years; **community** mean of 6.09 years

Respondents in countries with high *GDP per capita* had, on average, a higher mean number of years of education (M=7.33) than countries with a low GDP per capita (M=5.78), but this difference was not statistically significant.

Illustrates an important role for the private sector in assisting in rural education – building schools, crechés, scholarships, etc. – in countries with a low GDP per capita & limited government social & financial support e.g. Malawi & Zimbabwe.
HOUSEHOLD INCOME IMPACTS

Only 26% of community respondents had ever had a permanent job before. For 59% of the staff respondents their current job in ecotourism is their first permanent job.

Importance of high-end ecotourism employment in remote rural areas in term of employment, skills training, development & empowerment.

For 95% of the staff their salary from ecotourism is the MAIN source of income in the household & for 63% of them it was the ONLY source of income in the household.
HOUSEHOLD INCOME IMPACTS

No significant difference in the number of household income sources (M=1.00 for community & M=1.51 for staff)

Main community household income sources:
- salaries of employed family members or spouses
- farming
- selling livestock
- pensions (in Namibia)
- social grants (South Africa)
- casual labour/piece jobs (Zimbabwe & Malawi)

Security of one permanent income source gives households financial security & allows them to invest in non-essential goods and services, such as higher education, better homes, generators, etc. Clearly evidenced in an analysis of the expenditure patterns

Improved access to transport, communications, access to markets, etc:
- Motor car in the household: 22% of staff; 7% of community
- Mobile phone in the household: 80% of staff; 49% of community
### HEALTH ISSUES

Respondents Aware of HIV Status:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Health Status - Community respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Status</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Answer</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Health Status - Staff respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Status</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ATTITUDES TO TOURISM & CONSERVATION

Problems with wild animals
79% of community respondents & 61% of staff respondents
  76% of women had problems with wild animals
  75% of men had problems

Tourism camps create jobs for local people
65% of community respondents & 90% of staff respondents

Tourism camps help to reduce poverty in the area
80% of staff respondents & 54% of community respondents

Results indicate:
✓ that employment in high-end ecotourism has a positive effect on perceptions of conservation & ecotourism
✓ Widespread belief that tourism does help to create jobs & reduce poverty in rural areas associated with the conservation area
ATTITUDES TO TOURISM & CONSERVATION

86% of community respondents feel that conservation is important & 8% said that it is not important.
99% of staff respondents feel that conservation is important & only 0.9% said that they feel it is not important.

Reasons given for the importance of conservation included: for tourism, jobs, income, animals provide meat, trees are life, trees bring rain, get meat from animals & firewood from trees and for the future/children.

The tourism-related reasons given for the importance of conservation highlight the fact that the community & staff respondents DO value tourism as a land use in their area & perceive that there are benefits that can be derived from it.
PAFURI CAMP – MAKULEKE CONTRACTUAL AREA

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PAFURI CAMP – MAKULEKE CONTRACTUAL AREA

Size: 20 tents
No. of beds: 52
Permanent Staff: 52 - more than 85% of which come from the Makuleke community

Average number of dependents: 6.18

More than 270 people impacted by the employment at Pafuri Camp

73% of respondents had never had a permanent job before

Importance of skills training and development

Staff at Pafuri Camp spend the majority of their salary on food (30%), accounts (10%), savings (8%), casual labour (6%) and education (5%)
Community Livestock:
Average number per household:
- Cattle: 0.94 (min. 0; max. 51)
- Goats: 0.66 (min. 0; max. 25)
- Chickens: 3.2 (min. 0; max. 36)

Community main household income sources:
Government grants (47%); family/spouse (24%); job (12%); piece jobs (6%)

% community respondents who would like to visit the Park
92%
March 2008-March 2010 (2 financial periods)

- Makuleke bednight levies: R1.42 million
- Total staff costs: R7.5 million

- Total contribution to the local economy/communities: **R9.95 million**

**Improved social welfare:**
- HIV testing for staff – increases awareness
- Balanced/regular meals at work
- Ability to build better houses
- Afford tertiary education for children & other family members
- Children in the Wilderness programme & Environmental Clubs
- Community infrastructure – Makuleke B&B; Hydroponic tunnels
- Pack for a Purpose
CONCLUSIONS

Limited employment opportunities in many rural communities due mostly to the remote nature of the areas, lack of development & lack of infrastructure these are the qualities appealing for high-end ecotourism

Poverty & unemployment levels in these areas are often very high & the consequent opportunity costs of using the land for conservation and high-end ecotourism are also very high

It is therefore critical that rural communities receive tangible benefits that outweigh the costs that they have to bear: loss of livestock & crops to wild animals & loss or limitation of access to natural resources & land for agriculture

Results have shown that rural communities are relying heavily on the market economy in the form of high-end ecotourism for financial, and from there, social support.

Importance of education in securing permanent employment & from there creating a greater possibility of having a higher household income.
CONCLUSIONS

- Amongst other things, the results indicate that countries with a low GDP per capita and a high population density, such as Malawi, would benefit greatly from projects relating to education: scholarships, stationery donations, environmental talks, etc.

- Participation of associated communities in development is critical to the long-term success & sustainability of any land use.

- Accountability on the part of the ecotourism operator, as well as the communities involved, is also essential to sustainability.

- Management of community expectations, as well as the empowerment of local people, is critical to sustainability.
High-end ecotourism’s role can be extended beyond only an employment impact to include *more households* & a *greater reduction in poverty* through:

- the use of local suppliers (expanding the multiplier effect)
- selling of crafts
- philanthropy of tourists
- sustainable community development projects that impact directly on social welfare

**Results show that high-end ecotourism does have the potential, if managed correctly, to assist in poverty reduction and in the improvement of social welfare in rural Africa.**
THANK YOU

Data in this presentation is currently unpublished. Please contact Sue Snyman (sues@wilderness.co.za or 011 257 5145) should you wish to cite any of the information in this presentation.