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The purpose of these *Key Sheets* is to provide DFID Natural Resource Advisers with an easy and up-to-date point of reference on issues relating to development in the natural environment.

The sheets are designed for those who are managing change and who are concerned to make well-informed implementation decisions. They aim to distil theoretical debate and field experience so that it becomes easily accessible and useful across a range of situations. Their purpose is to assist in the process of decision-making rather than to provide definitive answers.

The sheets address three broad sets of issues:

- Service Delivery
- Resource Management
- Policy Planning and Implementation

A list of contact details for organisations is provided for each sub-series.



Overview of the debate

Over the past 5 years, the debate on tourism in development has focused on:

- Definition of principles for 'responsible' tourism and fair trade in tourism, which will maximise benefits for destination countries, and minimise negative environmental and cultural impacts.
- The need to operationalise these principles through integrated tourism policies at national, regional and local levels, which incorporate enabling investment frameworks and the promotion of intersectoral linkages.
- The contribution that tourism can make to improved rural livelihoods and community-based conservation, and the capacity of local communities to manage and engage with tourism in rural areas, including parks and other protected areas.
- The need to establish mechanisms for promoting improved standards within the tourism industry and to sensitise tourists and the tourist industry to the need for such mechanisms.

Key issues in decision-making

Tourism is frequently cited as the world's fastest growing economic sector, currently the world's largest employer and soon to be the world's largest industry. As many developing countries have a comparative advantage in forms of tourism which value a wide range of unspoiled natural environments, tourism is promoted for its potential revenue benefits and as a means of attracting foreign direct investment. In some developing countries, especially small island states, it is now the dominant economic sector. However, the economic impact of tourism varies enormously:

- Is there an enabling investment framework which promotes responsible tourism?
- Do the domestic private sector and local communities have access to the capital and appropriate management and marketing skills to invest in and benefit from the tourism sector?
- Are profits from tourism reinvested in-country?
- Are local staff being trained for new roles in tourism or are they by-passed in favour of outsiders?
- Are goods and services demanded by the tourism industry domestically produced on a sustainable basis? Are local suppliers competitive in terms of price, quantity, quality and timeliness?

If the overall impact of tourism is to be positive and sustainable it is vital that the sector operates within an integrated economic framework in which inter-sectoral linkages are actively promoted from the local to the national level.

- Which other sectors are most closely linked to tourism (agriculture, fisheries, trade etc.)?
- How can inter-sectoral coordination be institutionalised so that decision-makers from relevant sectors contribute to the development of national tourism policy and opportunities for inter-sectoral linkages are fully exploited?
- What types of forum can be established to enable government authorities and other stakeholders (donors, private sector, NGOs and local people) to improve coordination and develop linkages?
- Which forms or combinations of tourism (small-scale *vs* large-scale, up-market *vs* mid-market, mass *vs* alternative) are most likely to have positive net impacts for destination countries, and under what conditions?

In rural areas, well-managed tourism, even at low volumes, can make a significant impact on livelihoods. Tourism development should aim to build on and complement existing economic activities rather than replace them. However, local communities must have legal rights over land and other resources if they are to invest their own effort in tourism and attract partners for development. Communities also require access to the skills, resources or external contacts to enable them, first, to understand the implications of encouraging tourism in their areas and, second, to secure maximum benefits from tourism.

- In the absence of full-scale reform of land and resource tenure systems, what options are there for conferring binding rights over particular resources for set periods of time?
- What support can be provided to communities whose existing rights are being usurped by powerful, outside investors?
- How can communities be supported to assess the pros and cons of opening up their culture to tourism development and to assess whether tourism is a realistic option?
- What kind of training courses might be provided to local people to enable them to develop the skills and expertise to participate more fully in the tourism business (eg. guiding skills and small enterprise development courses)?
- How can financial resources be made available to local communities to enable them to invest in tourism? Can donors help establish links with banks or other financial institutions?
- Would an association comprising communities involved with tourism, supporting NGOs and

DFID financed research

- African Wildlife Policy Consultation (1996)
- Tourism, Conservation and Sustainable Development (DICE – start 1994)
- The Environmental Impacts of Wildlife Tourism (IIED - start 1995)

DFID project experience

- Zambia: Mpika District Tourism and Wildlife Development Project (start 1993)
- Brazil: Lake Mamiraua Ecological Reserve Project (start 1991)
- South Africa: Madikwe Community Wildlife Management (start 1997)
- Slovakia: Development of Sustainable Tourism in Tatra Region (start 1996)
- St. Helena Tourism Masterplan (start 1996)

UK and other expertise

- **Action for Conservation through Tourism**
- **Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology** (Harold Goodwin)
- **Environment Business and Development Group** (Richard Tapper)
- **Green Globe**
- **International Institute for Environment and Development**, Environmental Planning Group
- **Overseas Development Institute**
- **Tourism Concern**
- **University of Reading**, Department of Geography (Erlet Cater)
- **Voluntary Services Overseas**

Tourism continued

other stakeholders (similar to the CAMPFIRE association in Zimbabwe) help in terms of information sharing and provision of expertise?

- Can local communities be financially supported to employ their own 'consultants' to assist them in solving their own problems?

Tourism is often promoted as a means of financing the conservation of wild areas. However, while nature tourism is often assumed to be inherently benign, recent research has highlighted its potential for negative environmental impacts in the absence of careful management.

- Are regulations in place to ensure that sufficient nature tourism receipts are reinvested in conservation and local development?
- Have conservation managers adopted pricing policies which maximise the returns from tourism without exceeding tourism carrying-capacity?
- Are local communities involved in tourism-financed conservation activities? With what impact?
- Is the linkage between tourism revenues and conservation clear to local people?

It is clear that tourism will continue to have mixed development impacts until standards/performance targets for responsible tourism are established and achieved. Most tourism is currently 'self-regulated' but it is evident from the poor quality of employment, disregard for local people living around areas of (especially mass) tourism, and severe adverse environmental impacts in some places that this is not always adequate. Although, in some cases, industry practice could be improved through effective collective action, in others, additional mechanisms to improve performance must be identified.

- Is it possible to define widely acceptable national or international standards or codes of practice? If so how can these be promoted (through independent action, self-regulation, external enforcement or a partnership approach)?
- To what extent would 'education' of potential tourists in their home countries and on arrival (through tourist guidelines) contribute to 'demand-led' rises in standards?
- Is a sound land-use planning and decision-making framework in place which requires comprehensive environmental impact assessments, including social assessments using public participation, for all major developments?

Tourism is largely driven by the private-sector, but external interventions may be necessary to enhance its positive impact and limit the negative effect. Donors can assist with developing awareness and understanding of the potential impact of tourism at all levels, through cross country exchange of information about best practice and approaches to be avoided, and through training and education. Donors should also support further research and monitoring of the economic, social and environmental impact of tourism on different stakeholders. It will be important to develop a domestic resource base specialising in the impacts of tourism on sustainable development which can support motivated communities and entrepreneurs in developing countries. Given the increased donor interest in tourism as a livelihood option for people in developing countries it will also be important to promote mutual learning across donors.

Seminal literature

- Ashley, C. & D. Roe (1997) *Community Involvement in Wildlife Tourism: Strengths, Weaknesses and Challenges*. A contribution to the Evaluating Eden Project. Mimeo. IIED.
- Eber, S. (ed.) (1992) *Beyond the Green Horizon: Principles for Sustainable Tourism*. Tourism Concern, Godalming: World Wide Fund for Nature (UK).
- Esprit, S. (1994) 'Dominica; Managing the Ecotourism Option'. *Rural Extension Bulletin* 5, 3-10. Reading: AERDD, University of Reading.
- Forsyth, T. (1996) *Sustainable Tourism: Moving from Theory to Practice*. Prepared by Tourism Concern, Godalming: World Wide Fund for Nature (UK).
- Goodwin, H.J. et al. (1997) *Tourism, Conservation and Sustainable Development*. DICE Final Report to the Department for International Development.
- Wells, M.P. (1997) *Economic Perspectives on Nature Tourism, Conservation and Development*. World Bank Environment Department, Environmental Economic Series No. 55.

Key Sheets are available on the Internet at: www.odi.org.uk/keysheets/ or through DFID's website

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