Building capacity amongst Protected Area agency staff in East and Southern Africa: lessons learned from InWEnt’s Seminars on Sustainable Tourism

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on one of the capacity-building programmes that is directed at protected area practitioners in East and Southern Africa. The German Foundation for International Development (DSE), now part of Capacity Building International (InWEnt), implemented the policy dialogue and professional training programme “Land-Use Planning: Management of Protected Area Systems to Integrate Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources” in Southern and East Africa during the period 1999 to 2003. Within the framework of this programme, the seminars on “Sustainable Tourism for Protected Area Systems” were conducted in 2000, 2001 and 2003 in partnership with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the protected agency from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The aim was to contribute to constructive dialogue among representatives of relevant protected area agencies and other land management institutions from Southern and East Africa. In so doing, the objective was to effectively advocate the linkages between conservation and development, as well as to promote sustainable measures for improving the livelihoods of people living in the areas immediately adjacent to protected areas.

2. Rationale for Capacity-Building in Sustainable Tourism

The management of protected area systems and of their interaction with their immediate surroundings is focused on the wise conservation and utilisation of natural resources. More recently, this has been enhanced through the need to promote and access the cultural heritage values associated with protected areas and their immediate surroundings. In Africa, protected areas³ have been established to conserve landscapes and biological resources, with some 134 million hectares now under formal conservation in some 700 sites. Of the seven countries in the world that have more than 10% of their land committed to protected areas, five of them are located in Africa (DSE 2000).

Many of these protected areas, however, are subject to a variety of pressures, including inter alia, the demand on natural resources, the demand for new tourism destinations, and decreased government

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³ Formally proclaimed, community-owned or private reserves. Includes national parks, forest reserves, wildlife management areas, biosphere reserves, and so on.
funding. These pressures have resulted in tourism being promoted as an alternative income-generating activity for both the conservation agencies managing the protected areas, and for local communities and other interest groups impacted by the protected areas in one way or another. In this regard, conservation agencies are defining multiple-use objectives for their protected areas, and in so doing, have to balance the conservation imperatives and development pressures associated with protected areas and their immediate surroundings. This continues today, with the World Parks Congress 2003 focusing on the key theme of "Benefits beyond Boundaries" i.e. that protected areas cannot continue to function in isolation from their immediate socio-economic and ecological context.

Sustainable Tourism in Protected Area Systems

Sustainable tourism has become one of the world’s leading industries and an important economic sector for many developing countries, and in this regard the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) identified tourism as an important target for sustainable development. Various examples world-wide have shown that tourism, if managed wisely, can provide substantial economic, social and environmental benefits. In so doing, ecotourism is an important option for sustainable resource use in rural areas. Protected areas play a significant role in tourism world-wide (Eagles et al 2002), as they are an important destination for some of the fastest growing tourism segments, namely nature-based and culture-based tourism and ecotourism. The major attractions associated with protected areas are intact and diverse nature, landscapes, biodiversity, and increasing in prominence, cultural and historical values. However, it is recognised that tourism can be a potential threat to and an opportunity for the achievement of conservation goals for these protected areas. The World Parks Congress in 1992 (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996) and the IUCN’s WCPA Best Practice Guidelines document on Sustainable Tourism (Eagles, et al 2002) both emphasised the need to minimise environmental impacts, whilst enhancing the significant benefits of tourism for both conservation agencies, as well as for the traditional and private communities living in and around protected areas. In addition, the UN International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) in 2002 highlighted the importance of ecotourism or sustainable nature-based and culture-based tourism for conservation activities and associated community development programmes.

However, there are concerns about the ability to manage for these impacts or to optimise the potential for tourism to contribute to national economies and to the funding of conservation agencies and the local communities surrounding protected areas.

Emphasising the Need for Capacity-Building

Tourism consists of a highly complex system of activities and services with numerous interconnections to other sectors on different spatial levels. As such, tourism has a very significant multiplier effect on a country’s economy (Eagles et al 2002). If tourism is to be effectively developed and managed in any given protected area, it presupposes a fundamental understanding of the complexities and characteristics of tourism as an economic system. However, conservation agencies and their respective protected area managers are often not sufficiently qualified or experienced to deal with the tourism in the professional manner that it requires. This is especially the case in developing countries (Strasdas 2002a).

In this regard, capacity-building, education and training have been identified as the most significant measures to ensure that planning and management frameworks are established to promote the long-term sustainability of tourism in protected areas. Even though this priority is part of international conservation and development co-operation programmes, the promotion and management of sustainable tourism is relatively underdeveloped and often disorganised. This is linked to the lack of tourism expertise amongst many donors, technical co-operation organisations and international conservation NGOs. Hence, as much as there is a need to build capacity amongst protected area agencies, the very programmes that

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4 It is risky to establish a dependency relationship between biodiversity conservation and tourism initiatives. This is due to the fickle nature of tourism as an industry, in that funding from tourism could be severely limited in times of political instability, for example.

5 Reference should be made to the draft Durban Accord, summarising the proposed deliverables for World Parks Congress 2003.

6 These key characteristics of tourism have also been recognised within the framework of the Conventions on Sustainable Development (CSD) and Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as by Agenda 21.
are being designed to assist them need the support to effectively plan and improve the effectiveness of the capacity-building programmes related to sustainable tourism management\(^7\) (Strasdas 2002a).

Whilst only a few conservation and development agencies have offered in-depth ecotourism training in a systematic manner, there is a growing demand for capacity-building in ecotourism for conservation agency staff. In this regard, there are four target audiences for such training and capacity-building programmes (Strasdas 2002a), namely:
- Nature conservation professionals and staff of government and non-government institutions responsible for managing protected areas in developing countries at the local level;
- Conservation policy-makers and programme directors responsible for protected areas systems at the regional or national level;
- Staff of development agencies (government or non-governmental) who wish to plan, finance or carry out training workshops on sustainable tourism in protected areas;
- Tourism professionals using protected areas as resources for their products.

As mentioned above, InWEnt has already implemented a number of seminars and courses seeking to address this priority for capacity-building.

3. **The Role of InWEnt in Capacity-Building in East and Southern Africa**

Capacity-Building International (InWEnt) was established through the merger of the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) and the Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft e.V. (CDG) in October 2002. InWEnt is, in collaboration with international and national partner institutions, implementing a policy dialogue and professional training programme in Southern and East Africa from 1999 to 2003, namely “Land-use planning: Management of protected area systems to integrate conservation and sustainable use of natural resources”. This programme resulted from a series of DSE training courses and seminars that were conducted from 1994 to 1998 with partner institutions in Africa. These courses and seminars emphasised the need to link conservation and sustainable development in protected areas and their surrounds and, as a result, in 1999, professionals concerned formulated their motivation for continued DSE support in capacity building. This has resulted in InWEnt supporting, through dialogue and training, innovative planning and management concepts and processes that link goals for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources in a regional and transboundary context, while considering the legitimate interests of local people in surrounding areas.

Part of the programme has focused on the theme “Sustainable Tourism for Protected Area Systems”, and as a result, seminars were conducted in 2000, 2001 and 2003. The first two seminars resulted in the development of “The Ecotourism Training Manual for Protected Area Managers” (Strasdas 2002a)\(^8\). In addition, Corcoran & Petermann (2002) produced a document highlighting the lessons learned on the training methodologies employed and country experiences shared during the seminars. The 2003 follow-up seminar thus focused on implementing the results of the evaluation, and hence the key themes of community-based tourism and product development and marketing were adopted for this seminar.

4. **Defining InWEnt’s Approach to Seminars on Sustainable Tourism**

The Sustainable Tourism Seminars in 2000, 2001 and 2003 aimed to increase skills and knowledge and to contribute to dialogue among relevant institutions in Southern and Eastern Africa on how sustainable tourism can be effectively planned and managed within protected areas and their surrounding rural areas. This was facilitated by an intensive exchange of experiences and information available in countries and

\(^7\) More information can be found in “Ecotourism in Development Co-operation” (Strasdas 2002b).
\(^8\) Note that an addendum to “The Ecotourism Training Manual for Protected Area Managers” was brought out, entitled “Training Manual for Community-Based Tourism” (Häusler & Strasdas 2003)
institutions of the region, and by discussing and practising the relevant steps for ecotourism development and management that involve local communities. More specifically, the main tasks were to:

♦ Define the basic concept and principles of sustainable tourism;
♦ Analyse opportunities and constraints for developing sustainable tourism in protected area systems;
♦ Establish how to enhance the involvement of rural people and communities in ecotourism;
♦ Analyse the institutional framework for sustainable nature tourism;
♦ Review planning approaches and principles for ecotourism development and management.

The following major issues were identified as the conceptual framework for the seminars:

♦ Managing for environmental impacts and benefits;
♦ Ecotourism products, demand and marketing, income generation;
♦ Visitor services, information and interpretation;
♦ Community involvement.

**Methodology**

The InWEnt programme is aimed at human resource development to strengthen government agencies or other local actors that have a mandate for planning and managing PAs and their surrounding rural areas. Therefore, adult learning methods and tools are applied to facilitate lasting and effective learning processes. As a result, the approach to these seminars is based on the premise that adults will learn best by building upon their own experiences. This principle is best reflected as follows:

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<tr>
<th>what we see - we forget</th>
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<tr>
<td>what we hear and see - we remember</td>
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<td>what we do - we know (and understand)</td>
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<td>what we know – we can apply</td>
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There is an emphasis on learning by doing, learning from each other and on joint learning. This is best achieved through group work, for example by presentation of country-specific experiences, mixed work groups on a specific issue or case study, practical planning exercise in country groups, and so on. Planning for tourism is understood as a process and a dialogue between different stakeholders with potentially different interests. Thus, the training method focuses on process-orientated learning, based on practical examples, “hands-on” experience through resource persons and during field trips, and on a planning case study that simulates different planning steps from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

Overall, the capacity-building experiences can be summarised as participatory and interactive learning, which is based on the following principles:

- Nobody knows everything, Everybody knows something.
- Every resource person is a participant and every participant is a resource person
- Every participant can make a contribution
- Different experiences are equally important
- Participants take responsibility for their own learning experience

Visualisation is an essential element of the programmes that InWEnt co-ordinate, as this method:
- increases retention rates, i.e. enhances understanding;
- improves communication (i.e. makes group discussions more effective, makes thought processes of the group more visible, and makes contributions during the discussions more visible for documentation); and
- allows everybody to actively participate and to express himself / herself.

Furthermore, moderators play a key role in stimulating discussion, and in assisting in the process of learning and interaction. These visualisation and moderation techniques enable effective communication and hence enhanced learning experiences. In addition, the combination of plenary sessions with lectures, presentations on country-specific experiences, discussions and brainstorming, group work, 

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9 The trainers, moderators and resource persons are practitioners with an international background.
practical planning exercises and field trips is tailor-made to specific target groups\textsuperscript{10}. The application of up-to-date planning methods in combination with case studies from participant’s own experiences provides a link to the daily work environment.

5. \textbf{Lessons learned regarding training methodology employed during seminars}

Tourism needs to be undertaken in a professional manner in order to ensure its viability. This involves taking advantage of free-market mechanisms and hence acknowledging that tourism is driven by the private sector, in which competitiveness and operational profitability are both the core purpose and the prerequisite for its very ability to function. However, protected area managers and conservation experts are not used to thinking in these terms, as they have historically viewed economic activities as something to be regulated, rather than something from which to benefit (Strasdas 2002a).

As a result, the Seminars on sustainable tourism were focused on building capacity amongst various conservation and development agency staff in order that they might participate more effectively in tourism planning and management processes. The rationale is that such staff should not be developed as the key drivers for tourism in their protected areas, as tourism requires specific professional expertise to ensure its viability. In this regard, it is vital that the appropriate expertise is brought into the relevant conservation agencies and their protected areas to facilitate the business side of tourism. This can take the form of a number of models, including \textit{inter alia}:
- Total outsourcing of every component of the tourism product, with the protected area agency taking on the capacity to manage these concessionaires according to their contracts, lease conditions, codes of conduct and environmental management plans (e.g. Zambian Wildlife Agency, Zambia);
- Partial outsourcing of the tourism product, with some tourism product retained by the relevant protected area agency if the capacity exists (e.g. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, provincial conservation agency, South Africa);
- NGO manages conservation and tourism for specific protected areas (e.g. Protected Areas Conservation Trust, Belize).

In general, the Seminars were based on a good approach and methodology, as they focused on the needs and make-up of the participants, and in so doing facilitated the active participation of most participants. There is scope, however, to improve upon certain methodologies and to explore some new options for inter-agency and intra-agency co-operation. These include:
- The development of a 3-4 week training course;
- The implementation of advanced programme planning to ensure focused input by resource persons at key points in the programme for the Seminar;
- Criteria for the selection of participants appropriate to the subject and level of training being offered;
- More focused field trips, with more time for dialogue with local communities;
- Seminars targeted at local communities themselves, sharing experiences on community-based tourism;
- Effective follow-up of course participants;
- Employing two full-time moderators, with one being from the local partner institution.

6. \textbf{Evaluation of the Country Experiences Shared during the Seminars}

Sustainable tourism in protected area systems in Southern and East Africa is subject to the vagaries and complexities of tourism in Africa and globally. The case studies provided by the seminar participants highlight that tourism, in the context of protected areas, is playing an increasingly important role in the economies of the relevant countries in East and Southern Africa, due to the multiplier effect of the industry. However, it is yet to realise its full potential, in terms of beneficitation to conservation agencies\textsuperscript{10}.

\textsuperscript{10} Photographs detailing the methodology and approach of the InWEnt seminars will be part of the WPC workshop presentation.
and to local communities. Many of the projects mentioned, especially in the field of community-based tourism, highlight the need to ensure beneficiation to and active partnership with local communities. However, many have yet to be proven as successful business ventures, often due to the lack of tourism business expertise in these ventures. Finally, it is noted that PA agencies are still in process of implementing the necessary checks and balances to ensure the ecological and social sustainability of ecotourism in the context of PAs.

Other key issues highlighted from the country experiences shared during the seminars include:

- The references in the papers were mostly pre-1995, with very few references to more recent research and publications on sustainable tourism in protected area systems;
- Information was focused more on the need to increase tourism flows rather than on the management of visitors and their impacts;
- Participants, in having a background in wildlife and conservation management, were not as confident in tourism as a topic, and hence were prone to focus their presentations on their experiences in conservation management and wildlife;
- There was much focus on the theory of how to “do tourism”, and very little detail on the success and failures of promoting sustainable tourism in the protected areas of Eastern and Southern Africa. It remains to be seen whether the conservation agencies, and the government legal and policy framework within which they operate, can ensure sustainable and viable tourism in the medium to long-term;
- In the end, the success of tourism in funding conservation and local communities will be dependent on the effectiveness of establishing community-public-private partnerships (CPPP) with the aim of dealing with tourism as a business in its complexity. Part of this process must involve managing expectations with regard to how tourism can actually benefit local communities and protected areas (e.g. Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal, which has 600,000 people living within a 10km radius around the Park).

In reflecting on country experiences, the following recommendations should be considered for implementation in further capacity-building programmes:

- More effective guidelines for papers could result in better-focused papers;
- There should be a follow-up of the case studies mentioned in the papers, so as to determine their short- to medium-term success in terms of viability and sustainability;
- There should be an investigation of the risks associated with the self-sufficiency goal of most conservation agencies, in terms of the development of potentially high-risk dependency relationships between conservation and tourism.
- Further studies should be undertaken to gather empirical evidence on the effectiveness of proposed or newly established tourism initiatives.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Tourism, as an increasingly significant economic sector world-wide, has the potential to generate income for protected areas and local communities, but equally it has the potential to destroy the very attractions on which it depends. In this regard, there is an urgent need to build capacity amongst conservation and development agency staff, such that they can effectively participate in tourism planning processes and hold tourism operations accountable at the local level. As such, it is proposed that local protected area managers are not trained to “do tourism” themselves, but instead are trained to understand the industry so as to ensure effective visitor management frameworks (i.e. to enhance experiences and to minimise impacts) are established for their respective protected areas. This is even more so in developing countries that rely on international markets, where it is proposed that tourism in protected areas should preferably be developed and operated by organisations that can bridge the divide between local realities and the international markets.

In addition, capacity-building programmes in sustainable tourism should be established for local communities, through bringing different local communities together for dialogue and training.
Furthermore, local communities, government agencies and the private sector should be brought together with the aim of discussing the potential of community-public-private partnerships as a mechanism for the establishment of sustainable and viable tourism projects in local communities.

InWEn’s policy dialogue and training programme on sustainable tourism is just one example of a capacity-building approach for protected area agencies and their staff. In this way, it is recommended that protected area practitioners and trainers consider the principles of InWEn’s methodology and approach for application to their specific needs and context.

Note:
Reference should be made to the materials available on the website [www.dse.de/zel/landinfo](http://www.dse.de/zel/landinfo), where further details are available on the “Ecotourism Training Manual for Protected Area Managers” (Strasdas 2002a), the “Training Manual for Community-based Tourism” (Hausler & Strasdas 2003) and the “Evaluation of the DSE Seminars on Sustainable Tourism” (Corcoran and Petermann 2002). These documents will also be made available at the workshop itself.

References


