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# Women Empowerment and Community Development through Ecotourism

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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH  
ECOTOURISM – ISECHENO, WESTERN PROVINCE, KENYA

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PIM 70

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of  
Sustainable Development at SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, VT, USA

November 2012

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### Abstract

Eco-tourism is generically and broadly considered to be a trendy topic for the privileged traveler to obtain an “authentic cultural experience”. This paper aims to disprove common misperceptions and present failures the system has created. Eco-tourism is an over-exploited and under-utilized tool in the field of sustainable development. Many resorts and “cultural” tours dominant, while local people suffer economically, social and environmentally. However, in the far-reaches of the Kakamega rainforest, there is group that is filling the environmental, social and economic gap in the field of sustainable tourism. They are the Isecheno Women’s Conservation Group, empowering and educating women to become community leaders in environmental education and cultural preservation. It is also a group that embodies economic empowerment for women, enabling women to earn more income through tourism than through continuous degradation of the rainforest in which they live and depend on. By becoming role models in their community, educating their peers, and stewards for their culture, the women of Isecheno collaborated on a project to advance themselves economically. The result of the project is an on-going, collaborative and inspirational group of women who continue to expand their economic potential in environmentally conscious-schemes such as bee keeping and tree-nursery development.

Essential Questions:

- 1) How does ecotourism promote or hinder sustainable community development?
- 2) How can eco-tourism empower women in rural communities?

Case Study: The Isecheno Women's Conservation Group (CBO) Isecheno, Kakamega, Western Province, Kenya

Introduction

Tourism is now generally recognized as one of the largest industries in the world and one of the most significant sources of employment especially in developing nations. Kenya is an example of a country that presents both growth and opportunity in the field of eco-tourism. Its progression in infrastructure, education and economic development has been praised as beacons of hope in East Africa. Some of the world's most pioneering and promising community tourism projects have been launched here, for example, a new breed of safari camps has grown up that uses state-of-the-art environmental technologies and strives to employ 100% local peoples. Anne Loehr, owner of Eco-Resorts in Kenya, says the strong backing for ecotourism in the country guarantees a bright green future for Kenyan tourism. "I have travelled all over the world visiting eco-lodges and working with the best people in the trade, and Kenya definitely has some of the brightest minds working together to create a sustainable future for the environment and local culture," she says. "I think there's no better place to experience ecotourism anywhere in the world" (ITB Trade Fair, March 2002: Leading Africa's Green Revolution).

The tourism industry particularly benefits the economies of developing countries, where most of the sector's tourism jobs and businesses are being created. When done right, sustainable tourism development can be an effective tool for stimulating economic growth, alleviating poverty, conserving biodiversity, preserving culture and traditions, and creating employment opportunities for local communities. International tourism has become an attractive option for economic development for less developed countries (LDCs) in the past decade (Berno, 2001). For many LDC's tourism is an opportunistic development option offering an important opportunity for economic diversification (World Tourism Organization & International Hotel and Restaurant Association [WTO & IHRA], 1999). It is a for-profit industry that can help reverse the trends and negative effects that non-sustainable tourism has had on local economies, culture and development. Preservation of tourism resources, environmental conservation, positive economic impact, fair trade principles, and cultural heritage preservation are all essential to ensuring that the planet and its people remain healthy and are celebrated respectfully.

In addition to economic benefits, tourism may also contribute to improved intercultural appreciation and understanding both for host communities and for tourists (McNeely et al., 1991). Sustainable tourism has the potential to instill a sense of local pride to villagers and may promote or strengthen cultural heritage (Brandon, 1996). Eco-tourism projects can have a profoundly positive impact on improving the socio-economic conditions of a community. Increased income distribution, employment opportunities, education opportunities, and infrastructure development are some of the possible outcomes of a properly developed and managed eco-tourism venture (Wells, 1993). Such



perspectives emphasize the importance of involving 'members of destination' communities as stakeholders in tourism planning and decision-making.

Eco-tourism is a term that has met with a lot of criticism in the past decade or so, as a green-washing term that has expounded upon the trends of sustainable development theories, but hasn't shown the proof in the practice (Ross, 1999). "There appears to be an unquestioning acceptance that the principles and objectives of sustainable development can be applied to tourism. As a result, several fundamental questions about tourism's role and development in general, and the validity of the concept of sustainable tourism in particular, fail to be addressed (Sharpley, 2000)." This quote exemplifies the need for a course-linked capstone that examines the direct effects of eco-tourism practice and project development in underdeveloped communities. This paper will address and outline the direct implications and effects of implementing eco-tourism projects and practices into sustainable community-driven development. It will also provide insight into how women's roles in ecotourism can be created and defined within a male dominated society. Finally, the paper will outline what predictors can display successes and failures of the project from a holistic perspective.

#### Contextual Background

After spending almost a year living on the Kenyan coast, in both rural homestays and urban hostels it has become clear that there is a distinct difference between commercial and eco-tourism. On the coast, commercial tourism creates environmental problems like soil erosion and the disappearance of indigenous mangrove forests.

Culturally, many people feel animosity towards visitors, as many don't understand or respect their traditions. For example, Shimoni is a coastal town where 95% of the population is Shi'ite Muslim. Women are expected to cover their hair, arms and legs to at least the knee, while men are expected to cover their arms and legs to the wrist and ankle. However, tourists will walk through the village in spaghetti straps and mini-skirts. Tour guides are also not from the area, so they don't have incentive to bring tourists with lots of foreign money to the shops in the village, so there is no reason for the locals to welcome international visitors at all.

The local people also suffer economically, as they are either excluded from jobs, or they are subject to only the lowest-paying positions. Interviews with many local people about the issues that have been impacting their lives since Kenyan independence resulted in a paper for SIT's study abroad in 2009, titled "How Ethno-politics have Marginalized the Swahili Community", where much of the insight and inspiration for this thesis came when fully understanding what outside developers have done to marginalize local communities, economically, socially, educationally and culturally.

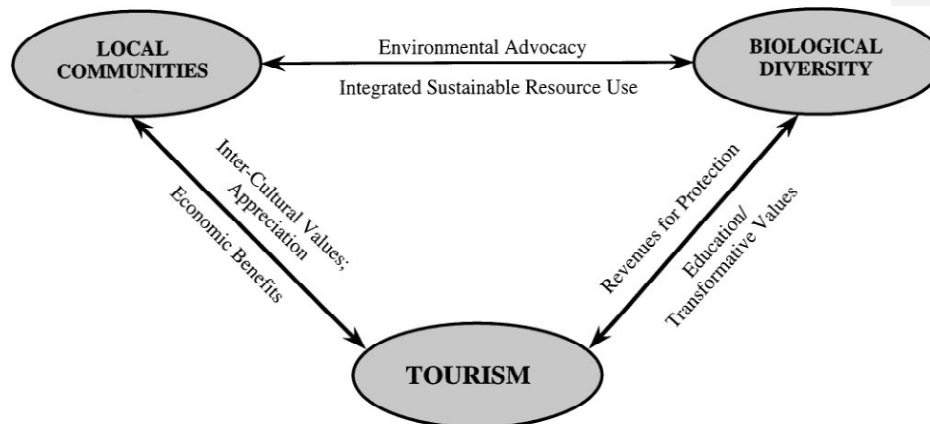
Along the Kenyan coast there are giant luxury resorts, restaurants and tour operators who dominate the physical space of the beach and the land. Low-income or impoverished villages are pushed out of view from the Western tourists coming for the novelty of a cheap, luxurious escape to paradise. The owners of these hotels are rarely Kenyan, let alone from Swahili or Mjikenda tribes local to the area. Traditional tourism ventures have created a vastly profitable market, but not for the original inhabitants of the beaches and coral reefs, which attract so many people to spend their foreign monies.

The negative impact of traditional tourism, since independence, can be found socially, economically, culturally and historically in the marginalization of the original peoples of the coast and the growing profits of those living upcountry and internationally (Barry, 2009).

This paper hopes to show the importance of eco-tourism as an avenue that creates alternative income-generating activities, increased cultural and environmental education, broader intercultural communications and a bottom-up approach towards economic development. This theory was tested through the creation of the Isecheno Women's Conservation Group (IWCG) and is an on-going project that is still a work in progress. However, the immediate influences of what the group did for the community of Isecheno is extremely significant and reflects a global trend of focusing development initiatives with women at a grassroots level. Exposure to different cultures is a two-way street, of which its importance cannot be emphasized enough in relation to global development.

Tourism is especially influenced by this trend. As Western internationals are able to visit isolated rural communities, women become more exposed to other women who are economically, socially and educationally independent in this world, and they can see those opportunities in themselves and in their own community. Eco-tourism projects are able to protect natural resources and biodiversity, generate money to finance conservation and contribute to the local economy, and educate visitors and members of local communities and, thereby, encourage environmental advocacy and involve local people in conservation and development issues. In an ideal ecotourism situation, local residents,

protected resources and tourism may each benefit the others in an interrelated, symbiotic fashion (Ross, 2002).



The above paradigm (Ross, 1999) illustrates the interconnectivity of tourism, biological diversity, and local communities. In successful ecotourism, the dynamics between people, resources and tourism are such that each makes positive contributions to the others. Indicators will be the means for the site-evaluation at KEEP. These indicators are meant to be practical, facilitate prediction, sensitive to temporal and spatial variation, and are relevant to a valid conceptual framework (Kreutzwiser, 1993). Standardized assessment and monitoring could greatly improve the understanding of ecotourism dynamics and their direct effect on sustainable community development. They will identify strengths and limitations, and, most importantly, make contributions to planning, management and decision-making by the community. The paradigm is a useful tool for looking at the overall impact that the tourism industry can have on a community and its environment. The final conclusion from analyzing and observing the impact of ecotourism on the community is that all three facets have to be working in a positive

conjunction with the other in order to be considered sustainable development.

### Literature Review

What will affect change is creating and developing something that makes sense, and that is practical, and is not only supported but controlled by the community that it is affecting. The Isecheno Women's Conservation Group is the beginning of something that is truly sustainable because of the simple fact that it is the women who are in charge of how the group is programmed and developed. They created the constitution and are responsible for meeting their short-term objectives and long-term goals. They are women who are willing to learn and expand their horizons to become successful in their community and become role models for their families. The group was also a great example of how something can be created without excessive international funding or grants.

The daily per-capita income for countries in sub-Saharan Africa is actually lower than it was in the 1970s; a clear indication that the big push toward development and structural adjustment schemes not only didn't work, but also was a force in the wrong direction source (Moyo, 2007) Aid plans such as structural adjustment propagate and negotiate conditionalities, or quid pro quo, which have proven detrimental to growth and increased income per capita in developing countries. These conditionalities include procurement of certain goods and imports, selected programs or sectors the money must go to, or creating a set of specific economic and political policies – such as democratization or increasing human rights legislations. The “big push” now is to *not* increase aid hoping that it will trickle down to the people who need it, but rather to work

directly for and most importantly *with* those people. The theory behind starting the Isecheno Women's Conservation Group relates to the bottom-up, grassroots led-project theories of sustainable development emphasized by Banerjee (2010), Damisa Moyo (2007), and William Easterly (2006).

Debunking the current model of international aid, Damisa Moyo (2007) offers a bold new road map in her book "Dead Aid" for financing development of the world's poorest countries, that guarantees economic growth and a significant decline in poverty—without reliance on foreign aid or aid-related assistance. "Despite important recent strides in the macroeconomy and the political landscape, overall the picture in terms of trends in Africa remains a challenging one. With an average per capita income of roughly US\$1 a day, sub-Saharan Africa remains the poorest region in the world" (Moyo, 2007). In another book addressing the theories aimed at alleviating the "poorest" of the world, "Poor Economics" analyzes the Western urge to "reduce the poor to a set of clichés", and thus create policy around a broad and generalized conception of who the poor are and how they got to be that way. Banerjee and Abhijit (2010) urge a new way of thinking – reduce the global generalization to small-scale, grassroots approaches of sustainable and practical thinking. Feeling overwhelmed by the great problem will not affect change, what will affect great change is giving the movement to the people that will become effected through education and empowerment.

William Easterly deposits an over-arching but important message in relation to creating legitimate and sustainable community development projects. Easterly has special contempt for aging rock stars such as Bono and Bob Geldof for soliciting money

for large anti-poverty programs, but he gets apoplectic when he talks about Jeffrey Sachs' book "The End of Poverty" - which he gave a scathing review in the Washington Post. Easterly does not believe that ending poverty is a valid policy goal. Easterly argues "the West spent \$2.3 trillion in foreign aid over the last five decades and still had not managed to get 12 cent medicines to children to prevent half of all malaria deaths. The West spent \$2.3 trillion and still had not managed to get \$4 bed nets to poor families. The West spent \$2.3 trillion and still had not managed to get \$3 to each new mother to prevent five million child deaths." The point Easterly is making is that expounding millions of dollars does not solve poverty; in fact it can reverse a lot of good work already being done. The critique of large-scale planning made in the West may appeal to free traders who call for market solutions to solve the problems associated with poverty, but in reality they do not work. The approach favored by Easterly is to examine each culture individually and offer aid specific to local conditions.

Women's empowerment is a subject that involves more than just financial independence. It also includes education that spans generations. Pitt and Khandker (1998) study the effects of microcredit loans in Bangladesh to women in relation to the percentage of girls who attend school. They find that a 1 percent increase in Grameen Bank credit to women is associated with an increase in the probability of girls' school enrollment by 1.86 percentage points. Credit from other banks or credit to men has no statistically significant effect on girls' school enrollment. In the case of boys' school enrollment, credit to both men and women have significant effects. A 1 percent increase in Grameen Bank credit to women and men is associated with an increase in the

probability of boys' school enrollment by 2.4 and 2.8 percentage points, respectively. A 1 percent increase in the BRDB credit to women is associated with the increase in the probability of boys' school enrollment by 3.1 percentage points. Many women involved in the ICWG shared that investing in women is a direct way to invest in the community, and therefore an investment in sustainable development.

The literature on women in developing countries focuses largely on the experiences of those women immersed in poverty (living on less than \$2 per day). This literature is concerned with the extent to which schooling needs to be equally accessible to boys and girls, and with addressing gender differences in literacy. 'Educate the women' is regarded as one of the best strategies for growth, and championed by aid agencies and campaigners as elaborated in the book "Half the Sky" (Kristof and WuDunn 2009). Educated women, it is assumed, will take control of their fertility, educate their own children better, and adopt better health practices. Levels of education have been shown to be directly related to level of income ([Banerjee et. Al 2010](#)), and therefore, increasing a woman's ability to control the majority of income, she and her children will be more likely to reach higher levels of education than previous generations.

As sustainability continues to drive the demand for tourism, well-managed development strategies, coupled with comprehensive marketing strategies, can successfully build "green" products and link them with the responsible travelers who seek them. It is this theory and framework that was tested in practice through KEEP and the IWCGs' eco-tourism projects and community development programs, specifically in the



Isecheno community. Work done with the IWCG showed that the empowerment of women not just affects, but strengthens the agenda for conservation and sustainable economics. Women who are empowered lead their communities and their own personal investments towards economically stimulating and environmentally conscious projects, like community fish ponds, community bee-keeping, and tree nurseries for re-forestation and carbon off-setting projects.

### Methodology

The methodology for gathering data in this paper was primarily qualitative observations in the field and interviews of participatory candidates. The primary methods included informal interviews and personal observations through active participation in the field. Secondary methods included formal interviews and surveys. Personal observations included multiple and diverse parties who were involved and affected by KEEP's ecotourism projects, and the Isecheno Women's Conservation Group tour-guide project. Parties included, but were not be limited to KEEP's Executive Board, KEEP national and international student interns, KEEP paid and unpaid staff, local business entrepreneurs, local tour operators and hotel/resort owners, international tourists, Kenyan national tourists, village elders and leaders, primary and secondary school teachers, secondary school students, hotel and restaurant employees, and local Isecheno residents.

Surveys were conducted with changing open-ended questions for each of the aforementioned parties (see appendix) and addressed the aforementioned indicators. Qualitative research methods also include personal observations of local culture and traditional practices, tourist to local interactions and relationships, level of participation

and perceived reactions towards the projects by local people. Personal sources include a daily log of activities, weekly personal objective sets, and a personal blog and journal. Indicators of success and sustainability include impacts on environment, education, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, society and culture. Data collected through observations and interviews were then applied to the aforementioned paradigm and indicators to determine the overall effect of sustainable development in the community of Isecheno, Western Provenance, Kenya.

Travelers are increasingly favoring environmentally responsible tourism providers and opportunities to travel to exotic places, while supporting sustainable development projects with their own personal funds. According to the Travel Industry Association of America (2010), within the United States alone, 43 million people are self-proclaimed "eco-tourists" who are willing to pay 8.5 percent more to environmentally sensitive travel suppliers. A survey of U.S. travelers found 87 percent would be more likely to stay at "green" properties. In addition to gaining an increased market share, tourism businesses that invest in energy efficiency technology will reduce energy consumption and utility costs, directly impacting bottom line revenues for a measurable return on investment.

There is a vast range of empirical evidence that indicates that money in the hands of women benefits the livelihoods of the children in the community, such as increased expenditures on nutrition, clothing and schooling. There is similar empirical evidence that indicates that the amount of education of a woman affects those expenditures on their child health and education (Doepke, 2010). In the article, "Does Female empowerment

Promote Development”, various studies are outlined to strengthen this argument. Two examples come from both a developed country (Canada) and developing country (Cote D’Ivoire). Hoddinott and Haddad (1995) find that an increase in the wife’s share of income is associated with an increase in the share of expenditures on food and a decrease in the share of expenditures on alcohol and cigarettes. Phipps and Burton (1998) use data from Canada and find that the share of wives’ income matters (even when both spouses work full time) for several expenditure categories, such as childcare, children’s clothing, and food. Phipps and Burton conclude that an increase in a woman’s income is directly related to increasing childcare expenditures, while a man’s is not.

Below is a table analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to poverty alleviation in Isecheno concluded through personal observation and interviews.

**SWOT: Poverty Alleviation in Isecheno**

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Prudent management of County resources	Inadequate gainful employment opportunities	Poverty Eradication Strategy	High levels of illiteracy
Effective implementation of pro-poor strategies	Inadequate resources to increase acreage under irrigation	Support From Devolved Funds	Resistance to family planning traditional cultures and practices
Promotion of small and medium enterprises	Slow adoption of new technology	Appropriate Strategies Such As Agro Forestry	Inadequate technical personnel.
Alternative Income generating activities from tourism	Increased land under cash crops-sugarcane	Diversification of farming practices.	High dependency ratios
			HIV/AIDS pandemic

Major challenges for gender equity include access and control of sectors of the economy that generate income. Most women in the county are overburdened by culturally defined roles, such as water-fetching, child-rearing and housework – all time-consuming and vital to their daily survival, however, don't generate hard cash. By creating a venue for women to generate hard cash, these gender-roles can become a thing of the past and dissolve to ease the physical burden on women. Such cultural specifications end up shaping the attitudinal orientations - the men farm and the women take care of the house. The result of this cultural orientation is that allows men to earn money, and women are caught in a cycle of necessary, but non-profitable, roles.

Internal intervention programmes have been such as the involvement of women in committees that create programs such as microfinance like the Kenyan Women Finance Trust (KWFT). Land ownership, formal collateral requirements and high interest rates on loans are constraints include women in these programs. The enrolment rate for girls and boys is almost the ratio of 1:1 in pre – primary and primary levels, however, it is important to note that as the children progress to higher levels, including secondary schools, there is a tendency for more girls to drop out of school. This may be attributed to various factors, such as apathy toward education, unemployment rates and early marriages for poverty stricken families.

HIV/AIDS has had more impact on girls and women than on men and boys in rural Kenyan society. As a result of high poverty levels, men use their earnings from sugarcane to lure young girls into early sex in order to “earn” some hard cash for their

families, which exacerbates the prominence of HIV in Kakamega. In this situation, there is a need to focus more on educating the girl child on the dangers of engaging in early sex and on protection from HIV/AIDS and other diseases. There is also a need to reduce the period of various cultural festivities such as funeral rites, *Obukoko* and memorials, which provide opportunities for indiscriminate and unprotected sexual activities in the county.

Below is another SWOT analysis, conclusions drawn again from personal observation and informal as well as formal interviews.

#### SWOT Analysis: Gender Inequality in Isecheno

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Widespread campaigns and sensitizations against gender inequality	Inadequate data on gender issues	Affirmative action	Low education levels for women
Support from Ministry of Gender and Children.	Inadequate financing of gender programmes	Promotion of girl child education	Masculine society
Capacity building of women and youth groups	Low levels sensitization and trainings on gender issues	Women and youth enterprise funds	Discriminative cultures
	Resistance of communities to change	Public service rule on 1/3 employment of women	Weak legal framework on gender issues
	Weak legal environment		

#### Findings and Analysis

Isecheno is a very small village, consisting of mostly tea and sugarcane farms and individual sustenance farming of maize and beans. The main organizational presence in

Isecheno is KEEP, a non-governmental, non-profit Kenyan organization dedicated to increasing the environmental and educational capacity of the broader community. They boast over 100 active members, and provide many jobs to the people of Isecheno, both specialized and non-specialized. They hire labor for small projects such as the Community Fish Pond, and are able to pay well. These projects are usually funded by government grants and loans, third-party private company or individual, or international organizations such as the Institute for Sustainable Development.

#### Findings from Secondary Sources

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Isecheno is a very small community in the county of Kakamega, located in the Western Province of Kenya. Kakamega, although considered one of the more fertile regions of Kenya, is not immune to widespread poverty. There are also many social, environmental and economic problems within this county. The overall poverty level in the county stands at 51.3%, which is relatively high compared to the national level which stands at 45.9% according to the Kakamega County Overview provided by the Kenya National Council for population and development (2012). This high level of poverty has implications on the county's efforts in development initiatives since no meaningful development has taken place with over half of the population still unable to meet basic needs.

The causes of rising poverty levels are diverse and include poor farming methods, overdependence on one cash crop (sugarcane), lack of high yielding livestock, high population density, poor infrastructure, inaccessibility to health facilities, low level

of entrepreneurial skills, lack of adequate capital to invest in high yielding areas and high rate of death due to HIV/AIDS and the highly increasing orphans due HIV /AIDS pandemic including the disease burden resulting from HIV/AIDS treatment and loss of productivity (KNC 2012). High interest rates on credit, low awareness on availability of credit facilities, low industrial base, lack of data bank on employment and employment opportunities, inadequate skilled manpower, untapped tourism potential and inadequate Research and Development activities all contribute to the systemic inability to create sustainable development.<sup>1</sup>

Kakamega has a food poverty rate of 51%. The county depends primarily on agriculture and most farmers grow sugarcane. Most of the food crops are grown on a small scale once per year. Most households are forced to harvest their maize crop before they mature. About 6.9% of the maize crop is harvested while still green for home consumption. This reduces the final tonnage of maize harvested thereby exposing many households to early incidences of food insecurity. Sugar growing zones of the county allocate close to 100% of their land to the cash crop. This leaves most of these families with little or no land to grow food crops. Furthermore, payment for the cash crops harvested is low and is delayed for close to a year, thus exposing the families to early(explain what you mean by early) incidences of hunger and malnutrition.

Kakamega County has many self-help groups such as women groups, community-based organizations (CBOs) and youth groups. These groups undertake specific

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<sup>1</sup> Kakamega County Overview - 2012

community development objectives including poverty alleviation, water provision, welfare and HIV/AIDS response interventions. They are estimated to be over 20,000 registered groups, however, only a few are active. The inactivity of many of these groups is due to lack of government funding for their organization's projects and no way for them to earn their own cash flow from them. There is, however, a large NGO presence in Kakamega, however mostly an international one. Active NGOs in the county include AFIA, AMREF MAANISHA, SAIPEH, One Acre Fund, Action Aid, MUMA Rural Development Forum, CABDA, WEAEP, among others.

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To earn cash, residents of Kakamega depend heavily on the local markets, although they are extremely saturated with the same products. For women, these include fruit and vegetables, but most importantly firewood collected from the rainforest to be turned into charcoal. The main source of energy in the county is firewood with 88.1% of the population using it. In Kakamega county most wage earners are found in agriculture, rural development and environmental protection. They rely on temporary casual labour such as brick making, construction, water protection and mechanical repair in order to create a small cash flow to send their children to school.

According to the Basic Report on Well-Being in Kenya of April 2007, the dependence ratio for 0-14 year in Kakamega County was 44.8%, while that of the age group 15-64 had a ratio of 50.7%. The ages of 65 and above had a dependence of 4.5%. The county on its own has an unemployment level of 22.04%, which means that the few employed family members are forced to cater to both their immediate families and



extended family members including other relatives (in a small rural village like Isecheno, this could mean a very high number of dependents). The dependency syndrome is further displayed when it comes to community projects. Most of those who participate believe that their social costs should be paid by project funds, while the aspect of community contribution has been eliminated. Most are unable to financially contribute to community projects and are forced to seek funding from government grants or international aid projects, which reduces community ownership of projects and then increases the risk of project failure. The proposed strategy of prominent community members, which includes the Isecheno Women's Conservation Group, to solve this problem is to encourage formation of community groups to create alternative income-generating activities that promotes both education and environmentalism.

Income inequality is an extremely important issue when looking at development practices that aim to increase sustainable development in a community. Economics is central to the issue of social justice, as in, it deals with the acceptance and sustainability of a given social arrangement. The phenomenon of economic justice as a facet of social justice is that it relates to economic efficiency, therefore if one person is discriminated against unjustly because of race, religion, gender, etc. then it doesn't effect the entire economy. However, when an entire race, religion, or gender, etc. is excluded, it will have an effect on the sustainability and efficiency of that economy. Increasing the capacity, range, and influence of women in small rural communities has systemic influence on the development of that community.

The Kenya National Council's report also reported that the county population is largely rural in settlement with women constituting almost 70% of the population in rural areas. The main economic activity in the county is agriculture, where women form almost 80% of the farm work force. Women, however, own less than 1% of family wealth. This is because land ownership and control over wealth within a family in the county is still controlled by men, while women produce most of the family income, which is farm production based.

#### Findings from Primary Research

The impetus for forming the Isecheno Women's Conservation Group didn't come from Global Vision, the Institute of Sustainable Development, or any other outside organization; it came from the women themselves, particularly Beatrice Asudi. Many people view Beatrice as a great leader and organizer. She had tried unsuccessfully in the past to create this group, but lacked the tools to conduct the necessary workshops. She came to me with the idea of organizing a small group of women who wanted to improve their lives and access the opportunity of an education and employment in the tourism sector. The training workshops were offered to the women in the group and the broader community through KEEP and myself, where we gathered experts in the field to cover a variety of capacity building topics. The trainings covered topics in customer care, tour guiding, organizational behavior, organizational structure, conflict resolution, and tour programming. Myself, as well as other influential and educated community members, many of whom have degrees in tourism and environmental education, led these workshops. Presently, these community leaders and educators continue to provide

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support to Isecheno Women Conservation Group as they expand their community tour program.

The Isecheno Women's Conservation Groups' are currently striving to create groups of women tour guides and other environmentally and socially conscious investments, such as bee-hives, community fish ponds, and tree nurseries. These projects all relate to tourism, as they provide ample sites on tours to showcase the progressive and environmentally conscious mentality of the community. Through these projects and investments, the women hope to convert the "traditional" tourism industry into a "sustainable" tourism industry that will have profoundly positive effects on the local community, including international interest and investment in those projects. The economic propagator for eco-tourism is the rising trend in environmentally conscious, eco-friendly, 'green' and genuine travel experiences

One of the most difficult conclusions to reach was whether or not the work of the Isecheno Women's Group was a long-term and sustainable project. Within the three months of being in the program and only four weeks working with the women, there were many positive outcomes. At the end of three months of work, the group was still very young, and was struggling with gaining the confidence to approach visitors and program tours along with them and the other tourism staff at KEEP. So, in order to objectively frame observations of the project, the following table analyzes and deduces the impact of the eco-tourism projects.

The Isecheno Women's Conservation Group was a project started in conjunction with a local community leader named Beatrice Asudi. Beatrice had expressed interest in helping organize the women in the village to engage in empowerment and capacity building activities, so we decided to combine our efforts and form a group specifically designed and dedicated to that purpose. The primary focus of the group was to offer training and education for alternative income generating schemes in which the women could participate. The initiative was created to entice women to seek alternative livelihoods from such activities as gathering firewood and making charcoal, both of which are arduous, time consuming, and illegal.

Isecheno is a small community village on the Western edge of the Kakamega National Park, in Western Province Kenya, about 8 hours north-west of the capital Nairobi, and near to the border with Uganda. It is Kenya's last remnant of the ancient Guineo-Congolian rainforest that once spanned the entire continent of Africa. The park is regulated by two government organizations: the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). They make sure that there isn't any poaching of animals or indigenous plants, of which there is a heavy fine and jail time if you are found, and they also have the authority to shoot on sight if caught in action. KFS is a very young organization, established in February of 2007. The KFS management structure comprises 10 conservancies that are ecologically demarcated, 76 Zonal Forest Offices,

150 forest Stations, and 250 divisional forest extension offices located countrywide, and critical in forest management and surveillance.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for starting the women's group in Isecheno was because many tourists, and Kenyan national visitors, were ignorant of the lifestyle of the Luhya culture and people living in and around Kakamega Rainforest. This paradigm illustrates many facets of how ecotourism impacts the local community and market, and also the environment. This describes how three very different components are linked in mutual benefits: tourists and visitors are able to have an authentic experience and feel satisfied in "traveling responsibly". Local communities are open to a completely new and diverse market, with many opportunities for alternative ways of earning income. Tourists are also quick to join the experience, as they feel as though they are getting a deal. Tours of the rainforest can cost up to \$30 USD per person, money which goes to an individual tour guide. Safaris cost up to \$5,000 USD per person, money that is going to a private company. Many visitors and tourists coming through KEEP and staying at the eco-tourism bandas looked at the village tour as a economical alternative, and were happy to pay the price and tip on top. For the women, however, the amount of money they made for one tour is more than they made in a week of collecting wood to turn to charcoal and sell in the markets (an 18 kilometer walk from the village).

Kenya Forestry Service is a parastatal organization that has provided a lot of new jobs, however, not for those who are from the community being served. The KFS

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<sup>2</sup> KFS About Us (PDF)

officers come from Nairobi and other “up country” communities, and have very little regard for the impact of their regulations on the community of Isecheno, who have depended on the forest for generations for food, income, heat, and medicine. This new dynamic has caused a major shift in many community members’ lifestyles, urging them to become more involved in tourism and KEEP environmental activities, yet they lack the capabilities to grasp the opportunities. This is where KEEP has begun to take on the responsibility to initiate and run capacity building workshops for the community to promote environmental sustainability through education.

The case study within KEEP and working with the women in Isecheno elaborated on an invaluable lesson about sustainability: that the environment and the community are intricately and convolutedly linked. You cannot protect the environment without developing the community. Making a mandate that women can no longer harvest wood from the forest to make charcoal doesn’t stop them from doing it, because they literally cannot afford any setbacks. On a good day, an average woman can make 100 KSH per day (about \$1). This is done by waking up before dawn to get their household chores done (gathering at least 20 Liters of water for the cooking and cleaning, tending to their subsistence farms, getting their children ready for school, etc. They then head to the forest, where they do their best to collect enough fallen branches (legal to carry out of the forest) to carry to the market. The market is an 18-kilometer walk one way, which they trek up to five times per week to try and sell enough to bring home some income. They have an arduous lifestyle before they even start the walk to the market; the new laws only compound their already hard days.

The IWCG had a very successful turnout and quickly organized to create a constitution, mission statement, short-term objectives and long-term goals, thanks to their motivational and inspiring chairwoman, Beatrice Asudi. Twenty-six women were admitted to the group, and the cap was made in order to ensure that their small business ventures would be profitable for everyone. Once the group is able to expand to more businesses, they would like to be able to reach out to more branches or include more women. Within the first two weeks they were able to organize themselves into an executive board and write a Constitution.

The initial impetus for the group was finding a way to increase the conservation initiatives for the protection of the rainforest, but not forcing those in the village to go without the income- they would lose from not being able to sell firewood or charcoal at the local market. There is a very high level of tourism in the area, but the economic opportunity is restricted to a few individuals (independent tour guides who are all men) or the one resort (Rondo Resort). Many women also don't feel comfortable coming to KEEP on their own to participate in the workshops and adult learning classes, because they think that since they can't speak English or Kiswahili they won't be able to participate or learn. The IWCG provides both support and translation, and because more than half of the women in the group only speak KiLuhya, they feel as though they are among their peers. The most vital aspect of the group, however, is the incentive of

income. The IWCG illustrates how eco-tourism initiatives can empower women in rural communities.

The women conducted their first village tour with a group of students from the University of New England, who had come to the area on a three-week study-abroad lab that focused on sustainable development. Many of the students were majors in Women's Studies, and were keen to learn more about the women's group, and about women's struggles and daily routines in the village. The group, only two weeks old, successfully programmed, organized and facilitated an eco-tour event in the form of a Community Village Tour. The tour was 3 hours long, and cost 900 KSH per person (approximately 11 USD). Our test-group was a diverse assembly of University of New England college students on a three-week end of course tour through Kenya visiting health, environment and development based organizations. The students were wary of cultural exploitation and getting into something as "tourists" rather than the serious students they were, many of them majoring in gender and women's studies. However, they were delighted and showed just how community tourism really isn't tourism at all if it's done right. When done well its cultural immersion with an emphasis on positive effects on the community. The students commented that it was nothing like a show; they felt like it was "a sharing".

Once the students were brought through the village, the tour stopped at the home of one of the women in the group. The students were greeted by the entire women's group (26 as of now) with traditional Luhya songs and dance. Everyone sat around and



talked for a while over homemade chair and mandazis (a sort of donut), sharing stories of each other's home country and culture. The women were very open to questions about their lives, and also continued to talk about the importance of their group and how it applied to conservation and community development. After tea, they put on a little "skit" to illustrate the role of medicine women in the village, and how to mix certain herbs, and how you usually bring a chicken with you to scare away evil spirits. Josephine (the woman of the house) spoke only KiLuhya so Beatrice translated. After the herbal medicine, the students learned how to grind millet to make the black ugali. Everyone got to try and it became the most entertaining part of the evening. When the woman professor got going all the Luhya women began singing the song that goes with grinning the millet, and soon everyone was clapping and singing! Afterwards the students moved into the kitchen and suffered through the smoke to learn how to cook ugali and mboga kienyeji, which was also shared, and create quite a humbling experience for those students from developed countries. The students had only been in Kenya for a week, and they had been staying in hotels in Nairobi and Kisumu. This was the first time they had really seen a Kenyan home and they had lots of questions, but the women handled them all with great aplomb and courtesy. During the debriefing, after the tour, the students observed that this was an extremely unique experience for them. Even after traveling to other remote areas, this was the first "authentic" experience they had felt. They also commented that it was the first time they felt their money was going directly to a project they wanted to support.

The Luhya women described the event as fun and successful, and they remarked on how helpful the workshops on customer care, leadership and tour guiding principles were. More importantly, the women left with a good amount of money in their pocket (about 500 KSH each), and the group itself saved 1500 KSH to put into an account to fund future projects. The tour also got the attention of Honey Care Africa, a social enterprise aimed at increasing the income of rural farmers through a “Money for Honey” program which trains people on how to engage in commercial beekeeping, and then Honey Care Africa buys their honey at a guaranteed price. The new possibilities of empowerment and entrepreneurship created a great sense of accomplishment and hope for the future.

Observations of Benefits to the Community through Eco-tourism

<b>Type of Benefit</b>	<b>Form of Benefit</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Economic	Increased Employment Opportunity	# Of Locals employed in tourism-related jobs (operators, transportation, construction, restaurant, arts and crafts, guides, retail, etc.)
	Entrepreneurship	# of Local Entrepreneurs
	Distribution of Revenue	Ratio of Locals to Outsiders
Infrastructure	Access to goods and services	Distance of population center to town/shops
	Access to quality healthcare/education	Distance of population center to schools/hospitals/dispensaries
	Communication	Quality of telephone lines/electricity/mail delivery
	Transportation	Quality of roads, availability and cost of local transport
Social	Socio-economic status	Education levels, graduation statistics, disposable income
	Environmental Conditions	% of protected land use, nature of livelihoods, amount

		of waste recycled
	Intercultural Appreciation	Nature of local-tourist relationship, local attitudes towards tourism/tourists
	Strengthening of Cultural Pride	Authentic opportunities to view or experience local culture

One benefit not listed was the environment, as there was not enough hard evidence to create an indicator. However, there are many mutual benefits that affect the environment and their significance should be outlined. The majority of the work that women have to do to earn an income and support their families is by gathering wood or even resorting to cutting down indigenous rainforest trees to turn into charcoal. By getting directly involved in tourism, whether that be in direct customer service or setting up a curio shop, or just by providing samosas or chapatis to hungry hikers, women are being taken out of the rainforest. This is an indirect form of conservation, but it can be extremely impactful in the long run. Women in the group, who take huge 2kg bundles of firewood from the rainforest to the market 18k away, three times a week, now only have to do this activity once in a while to supplement when tourist numbers are low in the off-season.

Conservation of the forest and indigenous flora and fauna is strengthened by the relationship between the tourists and the environment. This is done through direct education for both parties through workshops and guided tours. Visitors who come to KEEP go on nature hikes with experienced and educated Kenyan tour guides who talk in detail of the importance of the diversity of the forest and the threats that it faces. Tourists are given opportunities to contribute financially through these tours; for example they are

able to purchase saplings from the tree nursery to plant in one of the many reforestation projects going on in the area. Tourists are given the opportunity to sign up for the monthly newsletter from KEEP, so that they can keep in touch with ongoing projects concerning conservation. The most important facet of conservation is education, and secondly advocacy. Many investors and interest groups have vested interests in KEEP and their work, and in doing so continue to spread the word about the importance of the forest.

There is a major advocacy piece missing from this scheme, and that is the one of educating and empowering the local community, most importantly women. Women in the Kakamega Forest are extremely hardworking, but many have been denied education due to the cost of school as well as the opportunity of being able to stay at home and earn an income. Most women cannot speak English nor read or write. Education is a very important indicator of status in Kenyan society; therefore many women don't feel as though they have the power or the tools to move themselves up the socio-economic ladder. They fear rejection and humiliation if they attend a seminar, especially if an influential and educated man in their society, or a Westerner is leading that seminar.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon was proved by the level of participation in workshops and seminars given for the women's group.

There were many other benefits observed for the women's group as well as the Isecheno community. A greater influx of educated and respected visitors promoted a

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<sup>3</sup> Observed behavior of the women I worked with, as well as information from informal conversations

better image of Westerners for the Isecheno people. And vice-versa, visitors left with a much deeper understanding of Luhya culture. The visitors also created an incentive for those in the village to learn English, so that they could be more successful in selling their wares. Children also loved the chance to practice their English on an mzungu (European), creating a positive experience for them to continue their schooling.

Personal interactions cannot be underestimated in global development – they create understanding, empathy and connection, three very important elements in growing a stronger international bond and promoting world peace. Intercultural sharing creates a bond between people that can't be replicated through documentaries or news articles. It's a genuine relationship that will be remembered by both parties for a long time. Both parties also have the opportunity to ask questions of each other in a home setting, while sharing chai and food. The environment is welcoming, informal and non-threatening.

The economic benefits from the community tour doubled, as people are able to sell their wares such as fruit, samosas, basket weaves, soap, soapstone figures and medicinal plants right out of their home. There is no need for the women to walk the 18k to the closest market, which is already saturated with the same goods. The IWCG held community workshops for everyone to attend, including KEEP, on topics such as solar heating techniques, fishpond maintenance, bee keeping cultivation and many other income-generating activities. The women's group is an example to the community that there are other ways to make an income, and the way to do it is to become educated and creative. Even farmers are able to learn more innovative techniques, and how to truly

become organic and market themselves. They learn the practical aspects of the projects and how to get involved, diversifying their own plots of farmland or compound to have various sources of income for the year.

However, there are still challenges to be faced, and there is a lot of work to be done before the group can be viewed as successful as well as sustainable. There is still unequal footing with the men in the village and community, exemplified by the fact that many women had to ask permission of their husbands to join the group. There are cultural barriers as well. There is an idea that women can't learn as much as men, or always need help. This was observed when one man from the Eldoret University wanted to give a workshop to the women on how to ask for advice from the men in the community (even though there are many women who have positions of leadership at KEEP, the secretary and treasurer, who are both members of the Women's Group and consistently help with the organization).

There is still some inconsistency with regards to visitors and tourists, as the women still don't have a marketing plan nor a uniform or way of advertising themselves to visitors already in Kakamega. Many women still feel uncomfortable approaching Westerners to promote their group, and they feel as though their English isn't good enough. They are also still disorganized and there isn't a working system to get the tourists to program the tour, because many of the women are doing other things and they are not always notified when guests arrive. There is no secretary or point person to help facilitate the arrangement of tours and visitors.

The Isecheno Women's Conservation Group showed to have amazing potential for positive growth and development for its individuals. The 26 women who signed up for the project had a 100% participation rate, and have earned 500 KSH consistently each week since the project began almost six months ago. The women's group also recently received a generous donation from the students of Franklin Pierce University at a Half the Sky event to purchase tour guide uniforms and a small stipend for the kindergarten schoolteacher. The impact on the local level still remains to be seen, but there is hope that the group is taking steps in a positive step to becoming role models for their families, children and community. The Isecheno Women Conservation Group has become the precedent for environmental education and investment in gender equality in the region.

#### Conclusion

Ecotourism is a difficult sector to analyze, as it is not necessarily a direct causation for sustainable development. Ecotourism consists of so many factors and facets that much of the data must be inferred and observed. Ecotourism should be regarded as being more than tourism to natural areas and should be viewed as a means of combining the goals of resource conservation and community development through tourism in through a holistic approach. Within the scope of ecotourism, the goals of tourism development should be fostered alongside community development. Ecotourism also has the potential to increase gender equity and promote women's empowerment with income-generating activities and education.

Ecotourism should function under the premises that natural resources are limited

and their appreciation and protection can be fostered through education as well as empowerment. The presence of a supplementary income through the tourism industry will take away the need to exploit the forest and add to an already saturated market. Participants in ecotourism will become education as well as economic leaders in their community, creating a model micro-economy for other communities to learn from and replicate. Ideally, local populations can become promoters for protection of their natural resources and take pride in the unique surroundings that attract outsiders. Furthermore, if planning and decision-making involve community leaders and community-based organizations, than long-term implementation has a much better chance of being sustainable (Ziffer, 1989).

There are many correlated processes which influence the effect that ecotourism can have in a community. It is also a phenomenon that creates relationships between the natural environment and local people in a different perspective. The environment is a commodity that now profits from being conserved instead of exploited. Although there is no standard comprehensive method to evaluate the achievements of an ecotourism site, several approaches that assess tourism impacts by using measurable indicators have been proven useful in this paper. The framework has been presented to guide the establishment of ecotourism so that there can be harmony between the environment, people and the economy. Indicators informed by theory and then observed in the field can be useful when facilitating an overall assessment of the impact of ecotourism on a community, and thus aid in identifying existing strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to be explored.

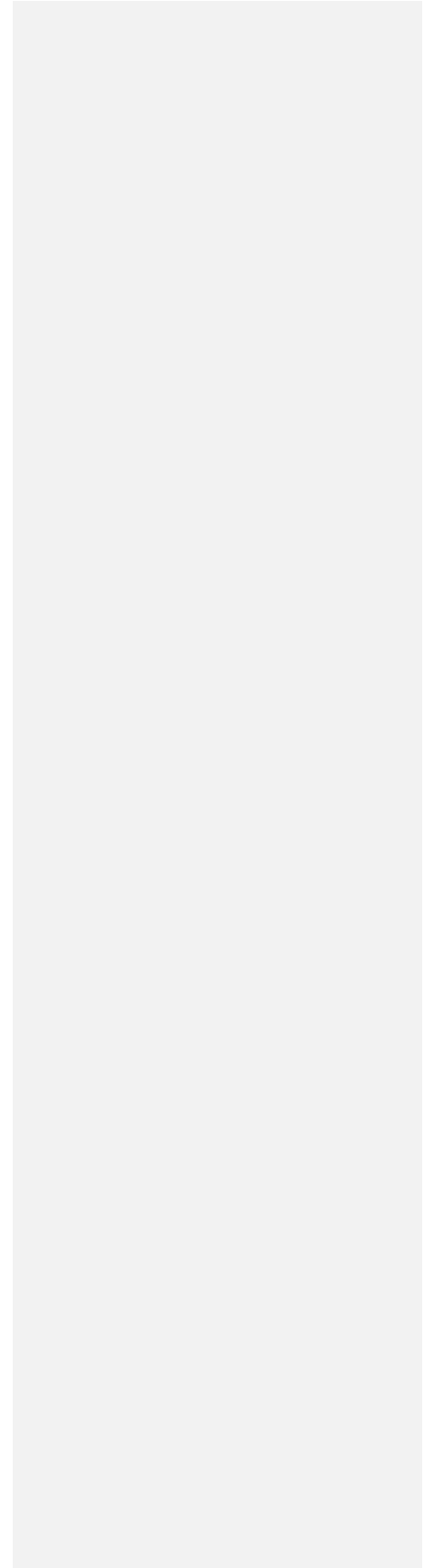
Women play a vital role within the ecotourism scheme; empowering them to



transform their lives from a high-labor, low-income lifestyle to a high-skilled position of education and cultural leadership benefits the entire community. Women spend less time walking miles to the market and spend more time with their family, they earn more cash and are able to invest in their children, and they gain a self-confidence to continue their own education. Creating a positive role for women in tourism in turn creates a positive cultural outlook and increased cultural immersion for both parties. In conclusion, the Isecheno Women Conservation Group showed to have much potential for being a positive example of how eco-tourism and women's empowerment can lead to successful and sustainable community development.

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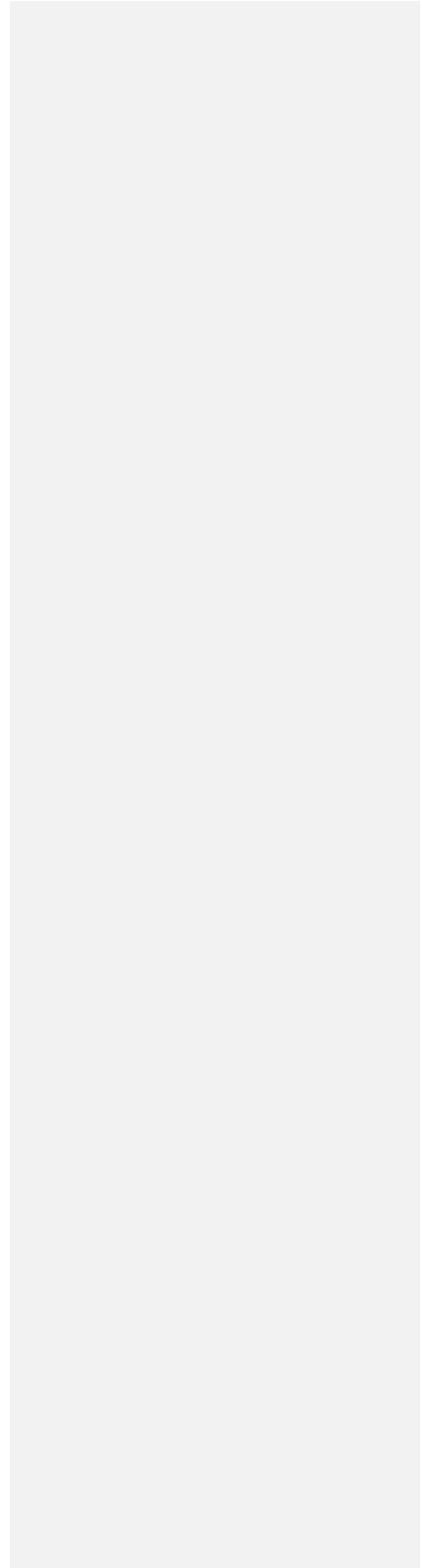
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## Appendix A

### Guided Informal Interview Questions by Interest Group

#### KEEP Members and Executive Board

- How much time, money and resources have you put into your eco-lodge and bandas (in percentages)?
- What are your current goals and objectives in relation to the eco-lodge?
- How would you define eco-tourism?
- What do you hope to gain from the eco-lodge?
- How do you think tourism affects the community? How would it affect
- What are your biggest challenges right now?
- How far along are you in getting certified as an eco-tourism lodge? What is your primary focus in the process?
- Are you aware of other certification organizations like GSTC?

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#### Community – Random sampling (Men and women, community leaders, educators, shop owners)

- What do you think are the most important things to know about the culture and history about your community?
- What do you value most about your community? What aspects of your culture are you proud about?
- What kind of effects do you think an increase in tourism will have on your community?
- What do you want to teach foreigners about?
- What comes to mind when you think about tourism?
- How would you define sustainable tourism?
- What kind of cultural norms or practices would you want tourists to adhere to?
- How would you expect tourists to behave when coming through your village?

- How accessible would you want your village to be for foreigners coming through?
- What are your biggest concerns when it comes to tourists? How would you want those concerns to be addressed?

#### Tour Operators

- Are you certified in any capacity as an eco-tourism operator?
- How do you advertise yourself? Do you use words like 'green' or 'sustainable'?
- How do you recruit tourists?
- How do you advertise?
- What cultural excursions do you offer on your tour?
- Do you take tourists into the villages?
- Do you prepare tourists in any way? Is there any cultural education, explanation of traditions/customs/history?
- Do you offer homestays, classes or specific tours through a village?
- What is your general demographic of tourists that use your services?
- Have you heard of the GSTC?
- Are you interested in becoming GSTC certified?

#### Hotel and Resort Owners

- Are you certified in any capacity as being sustainable or eco-friendly?
- How many locals do you employ?
- What is your relationship with the local community?
- How do you promote conservation of the area that your hotel is based?
- Are you working with any local organizations that promote sustainability or conservation?
- Are you working with any international/governmental organizations to promote sustainability or conservation?
- How many guests do you have per month/year? When is the high season?

- Are you connected with any specific tour operators/guides? Who do you direct your customers to when they want to explore the village or go sightseeing?

Tourist Surveys

- Where are you from?
- Is this your first time in Kenya?
- What was your main reason for coming to Kenya (general travel, safari, hotel resort, dolphin, conservation, etc.)
- What does sustainable tourism mean to you?
- How important is learning about local culture to you? Customs, traditions, language, etc.
- What have you done so far while you've been in Kenya?
- How did you research your trip? Did you have someone organize the trip for you?
- What do you know about the surrounding villages? What do you know about the people/community/culture/history/traditions/language/ethnicity?

**Voluntary sector organizations**--This includes pressure groups such as Tourism Concern, and tourism professional bodies such as the International Association of Travel Agents (IATA)

**Appendix B**  
**Analysis of Kakamega County Issues, Causes, Objectives, Strategies And Proposed Targets**

Source: Kenya's National Council for Population and Development (2012)

Issues/ Problems	Causes	Development Objectives	Immediate Objectives	Strategies	Proposed targets
Low prices of agricultural products.	Most products sold in raw/unprocessed form	To add value to 80% of products through processing by 2017.	Acquisition of value additions processing machines.	Collaboration with donors to fund purchasing of the processing machines	Establish at least two value addition-processing plants for each commercial crop per constituency.
Lack of ready market.	High competition from competition Production of similar goods. Low incomes Poor road network affecting the transportation of perishable goods	To capture 70% share of existing market by 2017. Diversification of production by 2017. -To improve the road network by 2017.	Promotion of products & good public relations. Product advertisement	Training of management committees & members on marketing skills.	Train at least 500 businessmen/women in proper business marketing per constituency
Poor management of livestock farming.	Lack of technical skills by farmers.	To increase extension staff by 10% by 2017. To increase the capacity of the markets by 80%.	To at least reach out on 10% livestock farmers.	Increase facilitation of livestock extension officers to reach many farmers as possible. Engage private extension service providers.	Employ at least 60 livestock extension workers per constituency. To purchase at least 4 motorcycles per county ward To train at least 20 TOT on livestock extension services per county ward.
Mismanagement by cooperative management committees. --	Dishonesty in resource allocation.	Enforcement of Cooperative Act & Rules to reduce mismanagement by 2017.	Intensify extension services by the Ministry staff.	Training ministry staffs on ethics & governance issue & other legislations.	Employ and train more cooperative officers, 20 per constituency.
Poor road and communication network;	Inadequate communication devices.  Inadequate equipment for construction. Poor maintenance of roads, Inadequate trained, personnel poor soils and drainage patterns	To Improve the status of the roads from the current 21% which are in fairly good condition to 35% by the year 2017.	Sensitize the community on the usefulness of not encroaching road reserves. Regular Maintenance of the existing feeder roads.	Providing good transport network facilities to the community. Engender new communication technology and review on the old technology.	Construct at least 30 KMS of tarmac per constituency per annum Maintain at least all the classifies roads one in a year Train at least 30 community members on importance of good communications systems per constituency per annum



High rate of unemployment 70% in the County.	Lack of funds for small businesses. Lack of Land ownership & utilization abilities among the women and youth. Traditions/cultures inhibitions.	Empower youths to be self-reliant 60% by 2015. Sensitization of parents on need to provide space to youths for economic activities to reduce unemployment from 70% to 40% by 2017. Discourage negative traditional culture.	Increase funds to be loaned to youths and women for business enterprises through women enterprise fund/youth fund and other devolved funds.	Build capacities through seminars to manage funds. Increase campaigns against negative cultural practices by partnering with stakeholders.	Enhance trainings and sensitizations to farmers and youths (20 workshops per constituency) Create direct employment for at least 35% of unemployed youths per constituency per year for the entire plan period.
High incidences of malaria infections; 35.8%.	Poor drainage Low level of usage if ITN'S Poor /wrong diagnosis Cultural inhibitions Lack of adequate technical personnel's	Reduce malaria incidence from 35.8% to 25% by 2017.	Embark on malaria sensitization workshops all over the county. Supply of ITNS and sensitise on usage.	Promoting the use of information, education & communication (IEC). Scaling up the use of insecticide treated mosquito nets (ITN) & treatment. Promoting indoor residential spraying	Supply of 1 net per two members of a household. Subsidise malaria treatment Provision of yearly malarial campaigns per constituency.
Prevalence of HIV/AIDS 6.6%	Peer influence Drugs abuse. Irresponsible sexual behaviour. Early marriages Premature engaging in sexual activities	Reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence rate from the current 6.6% to 4.5% by the year 2017	Enhance counselling among peer groups. Encourage visit to VCTs. Promote home based care services	Increase supply of condoms. Funds for mobile VCTs	Increase the number of VCT centres in all constituencies.
Low transition rates to secondary schools tertiary and university	Inadequate human and financial resources	To increase transition rates to 35% by the year 2012.	Strengthen school management committees, head teachers and create county Education officers. Supervision of teaching and learning activities to	Ensure quality-learning process, which is relevant to the needs of the society. Provide support to low cost secondary education. Fight against discriminative cultural practices	Increase the leaning institutions by 10% every year and equip the existing ones. Introduce school feeding programmes at both primary and secondary levels for special schools.

			improve on performance and ensure quality curriculum delivery. Sensitize the community on the importance of educating a child	by enhancing affirmative action to gap the inequalities in vulnerable groups.	
High illiteracy levels; 16%	Low number of adult teachers No funding to construct proper learning centres. Poor information on what adult literacy really is. Inadequate funds to purchase teaching & learning materials.	To reduce illiteracy levels from 16% to 30% by 2017.	Expand access and increase participation in ACE classes. Improve quality & efficiency of ACE programmes. Disseminate policies of ACE programmes. Improve literate environment	Increase the number of learning centres in the county. Recruit more adult education teachers. Provide more teaching/learning materials. Disseminate policies on ACE programmes. Mobilize resources from other department, NGOs & FBOs. Training of adult teachers.	Increase the number of adult learning institutions by 50%. Employ at least 5 adult education management professionals per constituency
Poor governance.	Inadequate leadership skills.	Training 100% of the management committees by 2017.	Conduct seminars & workshops.	Increase management skills awareness.	Train management committees on proper management And governance skills regularly
Child neglect	Poverty Marital problems Lack of awareness on the rights of children for many parents & caregivers. Socio-cultural issues (where fathers pay wealth before they get their children	To facilitate & promote alternative care services for children county wide by 2017	Create awareness of children's rights Provide guiding & counselling for parents for parents & children. Encourage parents/guardians to start income generating activities to support their families.	Increase awareness on the rights of children at all levels in the county. Use of the child rights legislation to combat this vice.	Employ 5 children officers in all constituencies, Establish more child rescue centres in all constituencies.