



RURAL TOURISM FOR PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWEAN RURAL COMMUNITIES: PROSPECTS IN BINGA RURAL DISTRICT ALONG LAKE KARIBA

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Abstract: *Rural tourism has been hailed by many authors as a pro-poor strategy of choice against the backdrop of a contrived collegiality between the high tourism activity in rural areas and extreme poverty. Authors agree that rural tourism can be used to reduce extreme poverty in remote rural areas in developing countries. This research assesses the potential of rural tourism as a tool for pro-poor development in Binga district, Zimbabwe. A qualitative case survey was used in Binga rural district, one of the poorest districts in Zimbabwe, yet one which has abundant tourism resources. The research concluded that there is a ripe situation in Binga district for the introduction of rural tourism as a pro-poor development tool.*

Keywords: *Rural tourism, development, pro-poor tourism, Zimbabwe*

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INTRODUCTION

Rural areas are defined as less densely populated places that are marked by their distance from large population centres and traditional reliance on primary industries (agriculture, fisheries, forestry) for existence (Wilkinson,1991). Rural tourism includes activities like trekking, fisheries, nature-based tourism as well and cultural and heritage tourism. Although many countries have adopted tourism as a development tool of choice (Reid,2003;67), there has been a growing advocacy among authors for the need for tourism benefits to accrue to the poor (pro-poor tourism). Pro-poor tourism, is tourism that generates net benefits to the poor a perspective that prioritises poverty issues explicitly and to enhance the overall contribution of tourism to poverty reduction (Ashley and Roe (2002).

Rural tourism is one of the many pro-poor strategies which have success stories in reducing extreme poverty. It is credited for poverty reduction in Uganda (Lepp, 2004), South Africa (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005), Namibia (Ashley, Boyd and Goodwin (2000), India and Philippines (Ashley et al, 2000). Rural tourism is particularly relevant in Southern Africa given the challenge of economic and political transformations currently taking place in most Southern African countries (Ashley and Roe, 2002).

Certain characteristics of tourism makes it a development tool of choice in the rural areas; it is labour intensive, inclusive of women and informal sector based on natural and cultural assets of the poor and suitable for poor rural areas with few other growth options (Ashley and Roes,2002, Mafunzwaini and Hugo,2005).

BACKGROUND

Rural development has been at the top of Zimbabwean government agenda since independence in 1980. The development of growth points, the irrigation schemes and recently the introduction of Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE), programs were efforts to reduce poverty in Zimbabwean rural areas. The strategies had limited success due to their lack of full and effective participation of the locals, with the rural elite and the educated benefitting more at the expense of the very poor and uneducated members of the community (Garrod, 2003. Rural development through tourism in Zimbabwe, CAMPFIRE, was nature-based and emphasised conservation (Hasler, 1999). The program did not fully utilise all resources available in the rural areas which could be exploited for tourism purposes (Muchapondwa, 2001). A possible product of



village tourism which could have been exploited, was not fully developed under the program. The program also fell prey to external control and resulted in 'involvement' instead of 'participation' of the local communities (Garrod, 2003). Ashley and Roe (2002), concur and affirm that although CAMPFIRE's original aim was to increase the net benefits from trophy hunting to the poor, benefits accrued to institutions rather than households and spin-off opportunities created were limited.

DEVELOPMENT IN BINGA RURAL DISTRICT

Binga rural district is regarded as one of the least developed in Zimbabwe. It covers an area of about 15,000 square kilometres and is situated along Lake Kariba in the North-West of Zimbabwe. It is marked to the North and East by the Lake Kariba and Zambezi river, to the South by Mzola Forest and to the West by Chizarira National Park (Zimbabwe Surveyor General's Office, 2007). According to the Batonga Museum (2007), the BaTonga people existed since the 18th Century and used to live along the flood plains of the Kasambabezi River (Literally "where only those with knowledge can bath"), now Zambezi River. The river gained the name from the fact that it was crocodile infested. The livelihoods of the BaTonga people were basically based on agriculture, fishing and hunting as well as trading with other people. The riverbanks were fertile, because the river would flood every year, thereby replenishing the fertility of the floodplains. The BaTonga would cultivate twice a year. The river did not represent a boundary, but a form of nature, so the locals could cross the river to cultivate, to visit each other and to attend traditional ceremonies. (BaTonga Museum, 2007).

In 1958, the BaTonga were resettled for the construction of Lake Kariba. Those on the Zambian side of the river were settled in Zambia in Sinazongwe District, while those on the Zimbabwean side were settled in Binga rural district further afield from the lake, in areas characterised by sandy soils and very poor rains (BaTonga Museum, 2007). This movement caused a loss of contact between the Zimbabwean Tonga and their Zambian relatives, contact with their River God Nyami-Nyami as well as access to the river, which had come to be known affectionately as Mulonga ('straight') (www.mulonga.net).

Generally, the agricultural potential for traditional food in Binga district is limited, the climate is hot, the rains are sparse and erratic and perennial water sources are few. The yields of food are grossly insufficient to meet the rural families' need and most of the



households depend on food hand-outs throughout the year. The district has recorded the highest level of malnutrition (30%) in Matabeleland North province (Ministry of health, internal records, and 2005).

The BaTonga people have not yet benefitted from the proceeds of wildlife, which is abundant in the district, their culture which is unique and the Lake Kariba which caused them to be removed from the fertile flood plains for the Kasambabezi River. A pro-poor development strategy is needed in Binga district to amend the anomalies created by the construction of Lake Kariba, which is one of the major tourist attractions in Zimbabwe.

RURAL TOURISM PRODUCTS IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS

Rural tourism products are defined as goods and services provided to visitors in rural areas (Cabrini, 2005). Agri-tourism, cultural tourism and heritage tourism are identified as some of the rural tourism products. Cabrini (2005) identifies traditions and customs reflecting cultural identity and values, traditional festivities, food recipes, music and traditional crafts as some of the rural tourism products. Traditional architecture and private collections found in rural museums are also good examples of some rural tourism products. The WTO (2002) indicates that although a massive shift in tourists towards rural tourism is not expected, the growth of rural tourism is a clear trend.

RURAL AREAS AND DEVELOPMENT

Rural areas are described as settlements with up to five thousand inhabitants (Shaw and Williams (1998). Pigram and Jenkins (2000), describe them as environments with a characteristic agrarian landscape or natural values. Williams (1973), notes that rural areas are largely described in terms of qualities which are absent from urban life which include serenity, nature, culture and untamed expanses of wilderness. This expression by Williams (1973) truly represents the situation on the ground in most Zimbabwean rural areas. Rural areas are perceived either as places to which to escape from the pressures of modern intensive society or as untamed wilderness which can rekindle the human spirit, or just as large reserves of open areas suitable for space-intensive pursuits (Shaw and Williams, 1998). Therefore, the true notions of 'urbanity' and 'rurality' are to a large extent, cultural definitions.

Notwithstanding the important features of the countryside which draws urban dwellers to it, Shaw and Williams (1998) note with concern that the use of rural areas by urban dwellers



is highly contingent. Therefore, rural areas remain mostly underdeveloped. Lepp (2001), indicate that rural areas usually lag behind in terms of development due to their location far from the urban areas where development plans are made, and the inability of rural folk to raise their voices high enough to command resources for development. The falling population numbers and decreasing incomes have led to rural-urban migration, limited job opportunities and decreasing incomes, have led to a growing concern about the future of rural areas (Hyttiinen, 2000). Contrary to Hyttiinen (2000)'s observation of falling populations in rural areas, in Zimbabwe, around 80% of the population dwell in the rural areas although the main rural development plans are still made centrally in Harare, the capital city. The only consoling factor about Zimbabwean rural areas is the existence of a rural district council in each rural area which implements development plans. However, the fact that the development budget is centrally controlled renders the local authority limited in usefulness in driving development. Also, the vast sizes of most rural areas coupled with limited resources to reach every corner of the rural districts, still affirms Shaw and Williams's notion about the continual underdevelopment of rural areas.

Shaw and Williams (1998) note that rural areas have long played an important role in tourism and leisure within the developed world. In Zimbabwe, there is a geographical overlap between the major tourism attractions (Victoria Falls, Lake Kariba, Great Zimbabwe ruins, Gonarezhou National Park) with extensive rurality and underdevelopment. Clawson and Knetsch (1996) indicate that regardless of this participation of rural areas in tourism, most rural areas remain highly inaccessible except only to those who own cars. Shaw and Williams concur and point out that there is a strong social filter when it comes to the accessibility of the countryside to individuals. In Zimbabwe, rural areas are not only inaccessible due to the limited number of people who own personal vehicles but are also serviced by a poor road network only accessible in most cases by 4x4 vehicles, thus further marginalising the rural areas. Pigram and Jenkins (1999) identify the development of tourism in rural areas as a possible solution which increases direct and indirect employment of rural folks and stimulates domestic industries, thereby catalysing a diversification of local economy.



THE LINK BETWEEN TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Development is defined as an incremental, long term process of improvement understood comprehensively to include economic, socio-cultural and environmental improvement in a given area (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2002). These authors correctly note that poverty reduction and development are not usually at the heart of the tourism agenda. As such, some initiatives such as community-based tourism will have benefitted the poor, while others will have disrupted their livelihoods (Bennet et al, 1999). Community based tourism projects have not been designed or evaluated according to poverty objectives. Therefore, the conventional focus on international tourism and foreign exchange has missed the potential to enhance the benefits of tourism for the poor and failed to minimise costs on the poor (Bennet et al 1999).

In Zimbabwe, the most popular community based tourism initiative CAMPFIRE's heavy reliance on consumptive (hunting) tourism, focus on wildlife and control by the local authority which is a government controlled arm lend it vulnerable to overreliance on international tourists and foreign exchange, limited its reach to the domestic tourism market and exposed it to bureaucratic channels of distribution of proceeds. Resultantly, high levels of poverty are still experienced in areas of high tourism activity in Zimbabwe.

TOURISM AND HIGH INCIDENCE OF POVERTY, A GEOGRAPHICAL OVERLAP

The poor are defined as those living on less than a dollar (US) a day (Bennet, Roe and Ashley, 1999). This definition is followed in this research where possible to consider tourism on the 'poor majority' without distinguishing between those above or below a dollar a day. Poverty reduction is not usually at the heart of the tourism agenda (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001), yet tourism is significant in many poor countries and is already affecting the livelihoods of millions of people negatively and positively. In Zimbabwe, the negative impacts of tourism in rural areas is notable where some National Parks are more fertile than the rural reserves where the rural folk have to farm for survival. That coupled with the seasonal visitation by wild animals which leave the protected National Parks when convenient, to feed on the agricultural produce of the farmers, lends the rural folk vulnerable to tourism. Schyevens (2009) correctly notes this as a case of tourism entrenching poverty. Most poverty found in areas bordering the major National Parks which are also the major tourism areas, can be partially attributed to the negative impacts of tourism. Bennet,



Roe and Ashley (1999) correctly notes that notwithstanding the fact that poverty is on the international development agenda, it is not yet driving tourism interventions.

Analysis of tourism data shows that in most countries with high levels of poverty, tourism contributed significant to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Bennet et al, 1999). Ashley and Goodwin, (2002) concur and mention that tourism is significant in almost half of the low income countries and virtually all the lower income countries found across the poorest hundred countries. In Zimbabwe, 80% of the population reside in the rural areas and coincidentally the majority of the National Parks are located in the rural areas (Muchapondwa 1992). Muchapondwa (1992) notes the existence of high levels of tourism activity in the National Parks in Zimbabwe, bringing in a lot of foreign currency, yet the rural folk still live in poverty. This ironical situation has resulted in conflicts between the local communities and the animals as rural people fail to put up with the problems brought about by the National Parks (Garrod, 1998).

Present day trends in the protected areas indicate that there is no long-term solution from an insular and antagonistic relationship between local communities and conservation areas, implying that it is no longer possible to ignore local communities and their development needs since this will only place the future of the protected area in jeopardy (Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (1998).

WHY TOURISM FOR PRO-POOR GROWTH

Advocates of pro-poor tourism (Goodwin and Ashley, 2001, Bennet et al 1999, Ashley and Elliot 2003) argue that tourism has a number of advantages compared to other economic sectors in terms of its potential to generate pro-poor growth in particular, due to its size, labour intensity, and potential for cross sectoral linkages and potential in countries with few other competitive exports. Conversely sceptics argue that tourism driven by foreign private sector interests is not an activity suited for poverty elimination, because economic benefits are not maximised due to high level of foreign ownership high leakages and few linkages (Bennet et al 1999). This means that tourism imposes substantial non-economic costs on the poor- displacement, loss of access to resources as well as cultural and social disruption. Proponents of pro-poor tourism however, note characteristics of tourism which seem particularly strong to warrant it fit for poverty alleviation as including the following



- Tourism is consumed at the point of production. Ashley, Roe and Goodwin (2001) note that tourism delivers consumers to the product rather than the other way round. Therefore it opens up opportunities for local access to markets for other goods and services which enhance potential links for other enterprises and products.
- Most export industries depend on financial, productive and human capital. Tourism depends on these but also on natural capital for example wildlife and culture, which are assets that some poor have or are gaining increasing control over, especially in cases where decentralisation and devolution of tenure are occurring (Bennet et al 1999).
- Tourism is often reported to be more labour intensive than other productive sectors and can provide the much sought for employment in poor communities (Roe et al 2004)
- There is a greater uptake of jobs by women than in other sectors although it is unknown if more jobs are taken by the poor and unskilled (Bennet et al,1999)
- Tourism is a much more diverse industry than many others and can build upon a wide resource base (Bennet et al 1999).

Against this background, it is clear that tourism has more potential of becoming a pro-poor tourism initiative than other options especially those based on agriculture.

RURAL TOURISM AS A DISTINCTIVE PRO-POOR INITIATIVE

Rural tourism and its associated business have emerged among the most popular non-traditional options for rural development because of their ability to generate income and jobs (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005). Tourism offers an opportunity to revitalise rural areas through the diversification of economic activities (Bennet, 2000) and provides a useful way of restoring regional balance in a country (Schaller, 2001). The Makuleke and Manyeleti projects in South Africa are an example of tourism for pro-poor development. In this project, the government of South Africa ran tenders to invite the private sector investors in the rural area in order to promote rural development. The communities were then empowered through employment in the Game reserve. Makuleke is an example of land within the National Park which is being returned to the community through restitution. This enhances empowerment and development in the rural communities concerned.



According to Lepp, rural tourism has become successful in Uganda, with projects featuring walking trails, village tours and park restaurants operated by rural women and man.

Rural tourism or rurally –based tourism is tourism based in the rural areas (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005). Tourism activities in the rural areas range from farm-based accommodation, small scale enterprises based on culture, curios, heritage and lifestyle (Hill et al, 2005). Rural tourism has been mentioned by a number of authors as a significant pro-poor initiative (Mafunzwaini and Hugo 2006). Tourism is a diverse sector with wide range of products including culture, heritage, lifestyle and nature (Hill et al, 2005)

Most of these productive are found in the rural areas where culture is still authentic. Against this background, many countries have adopted rural tourism as a means of alleviating poverty in most poverty stricken areas of their countries.

Roe et al (2004) and Zobena et al (2005), agree that is important to pay attention to tourism as a potential source of growth for the rural communities in developing countries. Rural tourism is one of the non-agricultural activities that ensure availability of the cultural and historical heritage and landscape qualities featuring rural environment (Zobena et al, 2005). Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005 concur and point out that in cases of declining agricultural output, rural tourism comes handy to help communities sustain a good standard of living. Lepp (2001) emphasises that rural people suffer from slow development and at times of social isolation. This affects the rate of development as their ideas take time to be considered. Rural tourism ranges from small scale lodges, farm accommodation, scenery and heritage, cultural expositions either authentic or staged, nature based activities as well aslifestyle expositions (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005).

Tourism has also been blamed for causing substantial non-economic costs on the poor through loss of access to resources, displacement from agricultural land and social and cultural disruption and exploitation (Roe et al, 2004) Hill, Nel and Trotter (2004) notice this ill about tourism and argue that participation and empowerment of the host communities is essential if any tourism initiative is to be sustainable.

Tourism is considered a good option for rural development because of a number of reasons (Roe et al, 2004)



- Tourism faces less tariff barriers and has less barriers to entry , hence can be utilised by rural people as a starting point for business development with less capital invested
- Tourism has considerable linkages with other economic sectors like agriculture, fisheries and hunting which can increase the proportion of tourism revenue retained by the host community
- Tourism may create initial demand for a good and service, which many then itself become another growth sector. For example in Kenya and Jamaica, furniture firms whose initial market was hotels grew to be major growth sectors (Roe et al, 2004).
- Tourism is naturally attracted to remote areas due to their unspoilt cultural wildlife and landscape values
- Tourism is relatively labour intensive and can provide the much sought for employment to the rural communities
- The infrastructure associated with tourism development can provide essential services for rural communities which would otherwise be excluded from the general infrastructural provision

RELEVANCE OF RURAL TOURISM TO ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe, 80% of the population lives in the rural areas (Muchapondwa, 2001). This, coupled with the fact that development in rural areas is often slow as they rely on subsistence farming, their engagement in rural tourism will help broaden their financial resource base.

Currently in Zimbabwe, a few communities who embarked on CAMPFIRE have benefitted to a limited extent from this program. However, as noted by Garrod (2003), ecotourism programs like CAMPFIRE tended to encourage 'involvement' instead of participation of locals in the programs. Resultantly in rural areas like Binga, park-people conflicts are still rampant (BaTonga Museum, 2006). This shows the limited level to which CAMPFIRE programs managed to empower the locals and make them benefit from tourism.

Zimbabwean rural communities have a wide base of resources which can be utilised for tourism purposes (Garrod, 2003). The cultural wealth, the lifestyle and the heritage available in Binga, like in many other rural communities in Zimbabwe, leaves one wondering why people in these communities are still poor. There is need for rural tourism in



Zimbabwean communities to help remove poverty by bringing the net benefits to the poor. Roe et al (2006) point out that Zimbabwe is one of the developing countries with at least 4.1 million people staying below the poverty line (that is surviving on less than 1US\$ per day). This helps to highlight the need for development of rural areas so as to uplift the standards of living of the poor Zimbabweans.

Absence of benefits from tourism has led to rural communities in Zimbabwe viewing themselves as passive participants in tourism and as objects for tourists to view (Handley, 1996). This history of community resistance has colored perceptions of both tourism and conservation in a negative frame, with rural people rightly feeling disenfranchised from tourism activities (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005). Rural tourism therefore comes on the other hand as a means of rectifying the past imbalances, by bringing some benefits to the disadvantaged citizens (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2005).

DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL RURAL TOURISM INITIATIVES

Ashley, Roe and Goodwin (2001), note the importance of policies, regulations and coordination as well as secure tenure for the poor over tourism land and assets.

The Governments of any given country should also be enthusiastic to development of rural inhabitants and thus should encourage dispersion of tourism to poor areas. In South Africa, the rural poor are benefitting from rural tourism to poor areas. In South Africa, the rural poor are benefitting from rural tourism after the government implemented Black Empowerment program which encourages the poor to be involved in small and medium enterprises with financial backing from government and with no collateral (Mafunzwaini and Hugo,2005, Ashley, Roe and Goodwin,2001, Mahoney and Van Zyl 2003). Governments should also be willing to relax the land tenure conditions for any given area if people in that area are to benefit from rural tourism (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001).

Mahoney and Van Zyl (2003) note that the poor themselves are of great importance as their ability to organise themselves at community level will determine the ease with which they can be assisted in their quest to be involved in tourism ventures.

Often, there is a third catalyst, apart from Government and the community, the Non-Governmental organisations (NGO) who come in with funds for community development and training in tourism aspects and utilise them to help the poor develop themselves (Ashley ,Roe and Goodwin,2001). Skills development is of vital importance as lack of training



is often underlined as being one of the greatest threats to potential rural tourism development (Davies and Gilbert, 1992). The NGO usually pulls out after the tourism venture has been successfully seen off the ground and the community is left to run the ventures by themselves (Lepp, 2001). This was evidenced in Uganda where women are involved in small to medium enterprises which cater for visitors, after the NGO helped them start up their businesses by training them in various aspects of tourism businesses (Lepp, 2001).

Where an NGO is not present, the private sector can play a major role by creating partnerships with the community, provide the facilities which will be run by the communities and the private company will only get a fraction of the proceeds from the tourism venture, with the rest going to the community (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001). The success of rural tourism ventures also incorporate contributions of many other participants

Tourists attitude and behaviour, host community 's level of acceptance of tourism and cooperation , level of support and guidance from tourism bodies, effectiveness of transport operators as well as level of promotion of rural tourism by the media are some of the aspects which determine whether or not rural tourism ventures will be successful (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2006). Financial institutions' willingness to support rural tourism ventures will also determine whether or not a rural tourism venture will be successful or not (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2006)

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design based on a case study of Binga Rural district was used. Although some statistical descriptions of values were used in the data analysis; they help the researcher to come up with qualitative inferences. A qualitative design was used due to the nature of data which was basically descriptive in nature. Since the research sought to assess the potential of rural tourism as a development tool in Binga district, describing the situation on the ground best brings this objective out. Among other aspects, the researcher assessed attitude, perception and knowledge, all of which are qualitative in nature. 78 respondents were used in the study. 73 household heads were included in the sample.



The researcher made use of ward meetings to collect data, where respondents were divided into small groups of fifteen members (focus groups) where the researcher asked questions. The use of Ward meetings also gave the researcher a chance to interpret the questions into the local language (ChiTonga) so that the entire respondents would clearly understand the meaning of the questions. In depth interviews were carried out with the Chief executive officer, the communication service provider and the National Parks representative. Interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed into responses as the researcher compiled the responses. During the interaction at Ward meetings, the researcher also carried out some informal discussions with some household heads to get a more relaxed response and measure underlying attitudes and perceptions about the issue of rural tourism.

Data was analysed qualitatively by looking at the significant statements in responses given by the respondents

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A variety of resources which can be used for rural tourism were found to be available in Binga Rural district.

Heritage sites

An inventory of resources available include the Lake Kariba, Hot springs (there are more than ten sites in Binga where springs are evident. Five hot spring sites, while the rest are cold springs which are used as sources of water by local households). The springs are depicted as sacred places of cultural importance. Hot springs were used in the past as sites where the chief and spirit mediums would visit and ask the ancestors for rains (Batonga Mesium, 2012). The Kariba dam is still viewed as sacred by the BaTonga, as the place where their River God Nyaminyami resides and the vast water body (still referred to as Mulonga (straight river)) is a world of spirits and sources of livelihood as most households rely on fishing for their source of income.

Culture and Wildlife

Culture, and wildlife as well as unique cultural cuisine were also identified as aspects which can be promoted for tourism. The BaTonga's diet is based on natural African foods like millet, rapoko, herbs and roots. Fish is also major in the diet although the method of preparation is more authentic with earthenware pots being used and wild herbs added to



the dish, no use of oil to preserve the natural taste of the fish and to add needed benefits from wild herbs.

Rural residents' awareness of tourism

The research found out that the residents of Binga are aware about tourism. The majority (about 85%) of the respondents expressed awareness about tourism although they had only a rough idea about the associated benefits. An expression of knowledge of a specific subject is an indication of likelihood of informed decisions regarding that particular subject. 43% viewed tourism as visitors from other countries coming to hunt under CAMPFIRE and to fish in Lake Kariba. A small number of residents however identified tourism as including visitors coming to view culture and lifestyle in the villages. This shows the proliferation of the perception of wildlife based tourism since most tourism activity in Zimbabwe is wildlife based.

Willingness to participate in tourism

When asked their level of willingness to participate in tourism activities, most respondents expressed explicit willingness to be involved in tourism activities as they had coveted this field where mostly the whites and the elite from places like Harare engaged in tourism activities. An insignificant number of respondents who were not willing to participate might be more afraid of the expectations on them if they participate in tourism. 80% of the respondents were willing to host tourists in their villages and households. This feeling may have been a result of the abundance of white volunteers who usually visit Binga to work in the Non-Governmental Organisations. Household heads have discovered in the past that those who usually host these volunteers had more exposure and would usually receive gifts from the volunteers on departure. Some of those who have hosted the volunteers before have been involved in cultural tours sponsored by the NGOs hence improving their livelihoods although this type of help did not leave a sustainable means of better livelihoods in future.

Residents' involvement in tourism activities

The community members of Binga showed that where involvement in tourism related activities or employment, their roles were repairing houseboats, repairing National Parks fence, selling curios by the road side, participating in a cultural dance group member. This shows that the involvement of the locals in tourism is still very limited as none of them are



engaged in decision making positions within the tourism industry. In an interview, the National Parks Chief Warden and the CEO indicated that the involvements of locals are as such due to the lack of necessary skills to involve them in higher positions which need more skill. This response shows that the people who are supposed to lead pro-poor development in Sikalenke, have a negative attitude towards local participation and this acts as a constraint against the employment of rural tourism as a pro-poor development strategy. Cases from Limpopo South Africa show that local communities can easily be trained in various aspects of tourism business as long as they are willing, and can contribute towards the development of their area through tourism (Mafunzwaini and Hugo, 2006). In Uganda Involvement and participation of local communities in pro-poor development strategies have nothing to do with level of scholarly education (Lepp, 2001). Their zeal for a better life and willingness to benefit from their heritage is enough to drive pro-poor development in their communities. Skills found to be available among the locals include thatching ethnic lodges, building, Craft, weaving, singing and dancing, poetry, drumming. Surprisingly, 92% of respondents indicated that they believe that they have some unique skill which they can offer for rural tourism. This is a key to motivation of the community to be involved in rural based tourism since they have faith in their own skills.

Major sources of income in Binga rural district

The main sources of income in Binga include Fishing (72%), Farming (11%) Art and Craft (10%) and odd jobs in Parks and the NGOS (5%). Fishing is the major source of income include top the Sikalenge ward's proximity to the Lake and the lack of agricultural potential in the area. In an interview, the CEO of the rural council indicated that food security in Binga remain very poor due to erratic rains and poor soils which are not suitable for agriculture.

Accessibility of Binga rural district

Accessibility to the rural area of Binga is by Road, air and water. A tarred road connects Binga growth point with the main road which runs between Bulawayo (the second largest city in Zimbabwe) and Victoria Falls (the major tourism attraction in Zimbabwe). Ferries and houseboats ply Binga-Kariba town on a regular basis. However, in an interview, the Chief Executive Officer of Binga Rural district council indicated a poor road network into the villages and to some of the tourist areas for example Chizarira National Park.



Telephone and internet accessibility is also limited in Sikalenke ward. Most telephone lines were not working at the time of the research due to failure by TelOne to amass enough resources to maintain the lines. The only internet service in Binga is through capped G3 cell phone lines and there is no broad band. The representative of the government run telephone and internet survive provide indicated that the only hope for better connectivity in Binga is the new wireless connection which was recently introduced by the service provider in other parts of the country.

Perceived benefits by local residents

Some of the benefits anticipated include better roads, better schools and clinics in the district, women empowerment, conservation of culture and food security. This shows that rural tourism can easily be utilised and promoted in Binga district since already the residents have an idea of what they are likely to benefit. However, the locals need to be made aware of the basic time needed before a tourism-related business starts giving dividends.

Locals also need training in business management, entrepreneurship, basic accounting functions and business planning and cash-flow projections. Dixey (2005) laments the lack of business management related skills as one of the major factors affecting the success of community based tourism ventures.

Recommendations for future sustainability

Tourism has brought a lot of non-economic impacts due to its reliance on wildlife, which pose a threat to the community's food security as their fields are always destroyed by wild animals before they can realise a harvest. Tourism projects should bring a substantial food – security related benefit.

The community expressed interest and willingness to participate in tourism activities. Interest is a basic measure of perceived sustainability as the community will work hard in order to make a difference to their livelihood by themselves.

The community also has commitment and determination shown by the activities they are currently undertaking. An example is a traditional food garden at Msenampongo (Literally *a place of springs and goats*). Women were allocated a piece of land where a community garden was constructed near a perennial spring and women rely on this garden to supplement food in their households and sell some of the vegetables to neighbouring communities. Cooperative work like this can be a good base for rural tourism. Lepp (2001)



reports of similar gardens which work well in Uganda and are used to produce food that is cooked for the rural tourists.

The presence and abundant of wildlife in Chete and Chizarira and nearby Sijarira forest and the Lake Kariba is another sustainability valve.

CONCLUSIONS

Rural tourism is a strategy which can be successful employed in rural Zimbabwe to help alleviate poverty in the same manner in which it was used in the Limpopo province of South Africa, in Namibia and Uganda. Evidence from Binga rural district, matches the situations which were present in some of the above mentioned areas before rural tourism was given a chance. The community of Binga, although lacking relevant skills needed to run tourism ventures, have the zeal and determination to participate in such ventures if accorded a chance to do so, against the backdrop of unavailable sources of income and harsh climatic conditions which render agriculture unpractical. The situation in Binga confirms the research's earlier proposition that rural tourism can help Zimbabwe achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in rural Zimbabwe. However, there is need for CAMPFIRE and National Parks to play a more active role in empowering the people of Binga by involving more in decisions making structure which involve wildlife, culture and heritage. There needs to be a transition from the passive participation of local community in tourism to a more active participation. Increased conflicts between National Parks will need to be minimised by working more closely with the communities. For example residents of Binga pay US\$2.00 per day to access the Lake for fishing with rods. This is prohibitive to locals who end up poaching the fish as they feel that they are the rightful owners of the resources which they no longer have access to. Pro-poor initiatives like rural tourism will go a long way in restoring the locals' pride in conserving the wildlife since the net benefits will accrue to them and their children.

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