OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS
OF
2005 NATIONAL ECOTOURISM CONFERENCE
THEME: “RETRACING THE ECO-PATH”
SILVER SPRINGS HOTEL, NAIROBI, KENYA
1\textsuperscript{st} - 3\textsuperscript{rd} November 2005

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Report:
Observations, Recommendations & Resolutions of 2005 National Ecotourism Conference

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OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

One hundred and thirty six participants from five countries gathered in Nairobi (Kenya), from 1st - 3rd November 2005, for the 2005 National Ecotourism Conference organized by Ecotourism Society of Kenya. They represented community based organizations, non-governmental organizations, tour operators, hoteliers, donor agencies, conservation organizations, civil society organizations, government departments and quasi-government organizations.

Conference Objectives:
The following were the objectives of the conference

- To review the character and growth of ecotourism in Kenya
- To explore the connection between the communities, the visitor and the environment
- To delineate the critical success factors/best practices
- To identify gaps and lay roadmap for further development of ecotourism

Themes and Sub-themes
The main theme of the conference was: “Retracing the Eco-path”, with three sub-themes namely:

- “Making the community connection”
- “Making the visitor connection”
- “Making the environment connection”

Documents
The main working documents for the conference were

- The conference background paper
- The conference programme
• Reports from regional ecotourism workshops

OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Tony Clegg-Butt, Chairman of Ecotourism Society of Kenya gave the conference opening remarks. Jake Grieves-Cook, Chairman of Kenya Tourist Board and Major (Rtd) Kamunge, Chairman of Kenya Tourism Federation gave keynote speeches.

The conference used the participatory method to ensure that the resolutions and recommendations would be relevant to current practitioners of ecotourism and serve as guide for further development of ecotourism in Kenya. Community representatives and other practitioners gave presentations on selected topical issues based on their experiences. The presentations were followed by panel cum plenary sessions, which explored critical issues under each sub-theme through question and answer. The outcomes of the sessions provided bases for conference resolutions and recommendations as presented herein. The sessions also provided bases for delineation of best practices in ecotourism, exposure of character of contemporary practice and identification of gaps, all necessary information for further development of ecotourism.

The conference also reaffirmed that ecotourism is a partnership between local people, the environment and the visitor, where the visitor is represented by the business. However, this partnership was constantly under threat—threats arising from lack of polices to protect the vulnerable partners, lack of operational guidelines to nurture growth, uncoordinated training and lack of skills by local people, poor marketing resulting in poor revenues, replication of products without regard to USPs and undeveloped standards to guarantee quality.

However, whilst acknowledging the threats, it was also the general view of participants that ecotourism is still the way forward for Kenya’s tourism. All stakeholders—communities, tour operators, investors, donors, civil society
organisations and government were therefore challenged to re-evaluate their commitment to ecotourism and to work towards achieving wider participation by all. Participation it was observed, should yield both qualitative and quantitative benefits, and help ecotourism respond to needs of all partners.

It was also reiterated that the ESOK Eco-rating scheme, a pioneering voluntary certification scheme, was the way forward in branding ecotourism as a distinct product. The participants wanted the scheme to help address the problem of “white-washing” where conventional tourism uses ecotourism in its promotion material without regard to ecotourism principles. There was concern that this can damage the image of a destination.

The conference also concurred that Kenya has some of ‘best practices’ in environmental conservation, product innovation and community participation. Notable among the ‘best practices’ include; contribution by tourism businesses to conservation of species and ecosystems and widespread use of sustainable technologies like solar power, wind energy and dry toilets to reduce environmental impacts. Others are the introduction of a new brand of activities for the ecotourist as an alternative to the mini-bus-game-viewing image, emphasis on quality interpretation through training, certification and employment of local guides, and the preference of community/private partnerships to empower communities to benefit from tourism. Yet there was concern that ‘good practices’ were costly and if the costs could not be transformed to opportunities, then practitioners would get discouraged. ESOK, tour operators and marketing agencies were challenged to find means of transforming the costs of “best practices” to value products and package them to give Kenya an edge over its competitors in the global tourism market. The meeting reaffirmed that ecotourism gives guarantee to visitors seeking a close encounter with nature that they can do so without impacting negatively on the environment and local communities.
The conference concluded with remarkable resolutions on how to advance Kenya’s ecotourism. Key among the resolutions was the definition of what ecotourism. Participants unreservedly concurred that whereas there are many definitions of ecotourism, the essence of eco-tourism is good business with social, cultural, and ecological responsibility operating in an ethical environment where legislative framework is a necessary, but not sufficient, requirement. The conference resolution elevated ecotourism above conventional tourism.
**Sub Theme 1: Making the Community Connection**

The four topical issues discussed under this sub-theme were empowerment, participation, benefit sharing and partnerships. It had emerged from the conference background paper that the different players in ecotourism variously interpreted the concepts of participation and empowerment and that the manifestation, implementation and sustenance of the same was problematic.

**Approaches to Community Empowerment**

The conference observed that in contemporary practice, economic empowerment is emphasized more than other forms of empowerment, empowerment is not planned for in many ventures and that empowerment is not gender sensitive; women have been largely ignored. The meeting saw empowerment as a process of increasing the ability of the community to innovate new ways of resource utilization and livelihood diversification. Empowerment is therefore manifested in improved decision-making leading to new micro-investments, access to capital, increased household income, better farming/agricultural practices etc.

*The conference noted that:*

- Empowerment is a process; it should be continuously negotiated.
- For empowerment to be effective, it should be based on the needs of the community. These needs should be profiled or categorized, and where possible informed by technical expertise, so that, empowerment responds to the needs of the local community.
- Empowerment should include the ability of the community to identify problems, develop interventions and expand opportunities, through creation of opportunities.
- Empowerment should address vulnerabilities associated with reliance on a single income source, and dependence on external sources.
Empowerment should go beyond the material, monetary reward; it should instil confidence and generate a momentum for initiatives in the ecotourism venture.

It was noted that information flow and exchange is critical for informed choices, and participation of all members of the community.

The conference noted that best empowerment practices include

• Giving local people priority in employment.
• Diversifying income sources to reduce pressure on conventional revenue source like entry/conservation fee and bed night fee.
• Training local people to improve their skills in management of their resources and ecotourism facilities.
• Making information available in a way that can be understood by local people, to help them make informed choices/decisions.

The conference recommended that

• Technical support should be provided to communities in assessing their needs and negotiating for empowerment with partners.
• Tools/guidelines/policies are developed to help communities when it comes to drawing partnership agreements to ensure that empowerment is part of partnership agreement.

The conference underlined that a lot of work still has to be done in the area of training and skills development for communities with fear that many community ecotourism enterprises would not survive if their partnership agreements were to be terminated. Further, it was stressed that while economic empowerment underlies other forms of empowerment, empowerment should enable various groups in the society: women, youths
and age groups, and vulnerable groups to share in the benefits of the ecotourism venture

**Community Participation**

The conference observed that poor governance and lack of transparency, honesty and accountability to community members was responsible for low levels of participation. Yet participation was seen as key when it comes to cultivating trust, ownership and sustainability. It is a continuous process, which should lead to generation of benefits and equitable distribution of benefits. Participation should be appreciated and rewarded accordingly. As much as possible, individual and collective contributions (both in cash and kind), should be properly recorded/documentated for audit purposes. Participation allows members of the community to familiarize with their project/product and with each other. This is essential because they are the first marketers of the product. Through participation community members can learn how to turn the community wealth into cash

**The conference noted that**

- Participation of communities in ecotourism enterprises entails communities having a voice, a role (stake), a responsibility (commitment) and a share in accruing benefits.

- Participation is a continuously evolving process, not an event, and should be negotiated from time to time, in response to emergent needs and challenges. As a need driven exercise, or process it is a means to specific ends

- There can be disparities between business decision-making methods and models, and community development approaches that require participation and community consensus building which can be time consuming. This can lead to conflicts between investors and local people over how much participation is necessary for business.
The conference noted that in contemporary practice

- High expectations about immediate benefits pose a major challenge to participation.
- Where participation is effective, it yields qualitative benefits such as broad ownership of initiatives, conflict management and equitable sharing of benefits, which are essential for the success of the enterprise.

The conference noted that best practices include

- Allocating funds for capacity building for local communities, given the low levels of education among most of the participating community members.
- Pragmatic use of local structures and institutions to reach community members, especially given that members often inhabit widely dispersed settlements.
- Harnessing local community leadership structures (e.g. use of local elders) when introducing the project idea contributes to winning the hearts and minds of community members and significantly speeds up consensus –building and their ownership of the venture.
- Encouraging everyday participation as an informal auditing process by maintaining registers of how members are participating and rewarding them accordingly.

The conference recommended that

- Participation should be structured within the enterprise rather than be an ad hoc and incidental event.
- There is need to define limits and forms of participation, clearly stating what issues can be delegated and what must be collectively decided.
• Participation should be socially inclusive, promoting and recognizing the participation of women and youth.

The conference underlined that importance of participation by observing that communities can be a threat to ecotourism projects if they are not meaningfully involved.

Partnerships in Ecotourism

Partnerships play an important role in filling up technical and financial gaps facing communities. The technical assistance should address, among other issues: business development, product development, enterprise management, product marketing, benefit sharing, training (skill development) etc. It emerged that single sourcing of partners was impacting on quality of partnerships. Communities were encouraged to allow for competition through bidding when sourcing for partners. It was possible that some investors were experimenting with communities as they had no previous experience in tourism or had little knowledge of managing joint ventures. These kinds of experiments had proved expensive for communities and were a threat to ecotourism.

The conference noted that

• The way partnerships are structured greatly influences the scope for empowerment that the community is likely to enjoy i.e in terms of how much say they have over the resources they are investing in the venture, (e.g. land, and labour) and other social and opportunity costs, as well as the price of their product.

• Given the differences in the level of competencies of the communities on one hand, and the private investors on the other, which often favours the investor, it is important for the communities to seek technical support from specialists such as a lawyers, economists, environmental scientists, social scientists etc, in the partnership bargaining process.
The conference noted that in contemporary practice

Many communities are often exposed to fraud and exploitative partnership agreements. This is because communities have limited competencies to discern the complexities associated with ecotourism businesses.

The conference noted that best practices include

- Partnership agreements that provide for conflict management structures and periodic review and renewal to avoid suspicion building between partners
- Partnership agreements that are flexible
- Partnership agreements that avoid exclusive clauses and include exit clauses, in order to buffer communities against risks and vulnerabilities associated with rigid agreements.
- Partnerships agreements that are written in a language that can be easily understood by majority community members

The conference recommended that

- Communities explore partnership agreements cautiously and ensure that all members understand the details of the agreement. As much as possible the agreement should be availed in the local language and community members given time to debate any sticky issues before finalisation.
- To minimize risks that may arise in case of withdrawal by a single partner, it is important for communities to engage in multiple partnerships that make up for the capacities they lack, and which address the multiple aspects of the ecotourism enterprise.
- ESOK should develop guidelines on how to negotiate partnerships, and provide a link (marriage bureau), with reliable partners who can provide technical advice to the CBOs.
• ESOK and other stakeholder’s explore innovative ways of making the process of selection of partners a competitive process e.g. through tendering.

Benefits Sharing in Ecotourism

High expectations and over reliance on limited sources of revenue has made benefit sharing a ‘nightmare’ for many communities. The high expectations are a result of poor participation. The first step in benefit sharing is for community to know their needs and decide on how best to address them. The meeting observed that benefit sharing requires transparency and that the best strategy for satisfying all members is to invest benefits on communal projects. It was also observed that the many committees and sub-committees involved in management benefits was confusing and had become sources of fraudulent expenditure of benefits.

The conference noted that

• Equitable benefit sharing provides an important incentive for participation by community.

• While women were involved in benefit sharing, they mostly participated conditionally or, by default.

• Women mostly benefited from secondary activities (diversification by-products of or collateral to the mainstream enterprises).

• Since the major input in ecotourism ventures by communities is community owned land and related natural resources, (largely a common property resources) which often is threatened with degradation (owing to overgrazing, overexploitation of protected species, etc), benefit sharing regimes must strive to address all needs i.e. socio-economic and environmental needs.
• Benefits sharing should take cognisance of the key partners in ecotourism namely, environment, the community and the business (representing the visitor)

The Conference noted that in Contemporary practice

• Most enterprises invest benefits in social development projects, which generate long-term multiplier effects, rather than distributing accruing benefits in form of dividends. The most common areas of investment include building and furnishing of schools, dispensaries, water projects, school fees bursaries, environmental conservation and addressing human wildlife conflicts. Sharing benefits in this form minimizes distributional conflicts.

The conference noted that best practices include

• Planning for benefit sharing and having systems and structures of keeping records/minutes on agreements reached during meetings
• Transparency in the disbursement of funds, according to approved budgets
• Making information on disbursements available to members in places and forms that are convenient to all. This should include information on how profits are to be shared and which projects should benefit, and how much should be re-invested in the business.
• Good book keeping and regular auditing of books of accounts by independent
• Sharing the benefits must be based on prior-agreed formulae during planning meetings

The conference recommended that

• To avoid conflicts in sharing of benefits, community groups should have a structured division of labour. This will to address issues of equity in
distribution of benefits among community members, and achieve meaningful involvement of women and youth, thus minimising conflicts.

• The conference underlined that creating awareness about the need for a long-term approach to benefit sharing should be encouraged to avoid pressures of high expectations and demand for immediate gains.

SUB THEME II: MAKING THE VISITOR CONNECTION

The four topical issues discussed under this sub-theme were destination marketing, product development and packaging, communication and interpretation, traveller’s philanthropy and division of labour. These topical issues were discussed against the premise that many communities did not understand the nature of the ecotourism product, they had little knowledge on the needs of the consumer and how to package what they had to attract visitation. The discussions exposed the challenges of making the visitor connection, highlighted best practices and made recommendations on the role that government, donors, and national tourism associations like ESOK and KATO could do to help transform the best practices into products that could give Kenya a competitive edge in the global tourism market. When this happens, the conference noted, ecotourism would make significant contribution to reduction of rural poverty.

Ecotourism Marketing

Marketing ecotourism is a challenge not only to communities but to national marketing agencies as well. It involves changing people’s perspectives. It requires good knowledge of product, continuous research and communication with consumers. The main challenge in marketing ecotourism is to convert the environmental and social programmes (good practices), into sellable products. It
emerged that the best way to overcome the challenge is to have standards that will act as guarantee to consumers and secondly to go for destination marketing as opposed to individual property marketing. Many communities’ perceived marketing as an expensive and complex exercise, and saw this as reason for their products not reaching the market place (low visitor numbers). The meeting observed that a major reason for the products not reaching the market place was lack of information on the products and a fixation about what marketing entails.

*The Conference noted that*

• Marketing need not be approached as a very expensive activity. It emerged that there are various cost-effective ways of reaching the target market.

• Maximizing visitor satisfaction and personalised service delivery, provides ecotourism with a competitive edge over conventional tourism.

• Like other service products, marketing ecotourism requires that the product be well-defined product, and that information on the product be simple, reliable and easily accessible.

• Marketing information should be accessible to would-be visitors through various media including websites, brochures, flyers, newspapers, travel magazines, documentaries, etc.

• Marketing information should cover: location, facilities available, unique product qualities, nature and experience of host community, activities available, rates charged, modes of transport to location and contact information about the enterprise.

*The conference noted that best practices include*

• Maintaining an annual budgeting for marketing so that it is a continuous activity throughout the year.
• Seeking exposure through all available channels including hosting local journalists and tour operators, printing and distributing promotional material, attending and /or participating in trade shows, international conferences accessing embassies, UN agencies, research organisations
• Good interpretation of product

*The conference recommended that ecotourism establishments*

• Strive to over-deliver and not over-promise. They should strike a balance between product quality and promise. This will act as a guarantee to visitors and will encourage repeat visitation
• Should take advantage of their unique social and environmental programmes and seek networks and partnerships with UN organizations, research organizations, learning institutions, development agencies, conservation organisations, private foundations etc. This networks will enable them get exposure at minimal or no costs.

**Product Development and Packaging**

The conference noted that in contemporary practice there exists a gap between product development and target markets. Many products are a duplication of successful ventures and little regard is given to other critical factors that support ecotourism product development like land tenure systems, community participation, uniqueness of area (biological diversity), consumer needs etc. This has led to oversupply of particular products such as cultural villages lowering value and standards which has affected revenues.

*The Conference noted that*

• Most community-based organisations have difficulty in defining their eco-tourism products in the market place
• Like any other products, eco-tourism products have a definite life cycle. Putting up accommodation facilities, and establishing a partnership agreement should not be an end in itself; continuous product design or redesign and rebranding through pro-active creation of demand is key critical for sustained command of the market niche.

• The development of a certification scheme, the ESOK Eco-rating Scheme, marks a contemporary effort of developing eco-tourism as a distinct, exclusive and authentic product in the market. This is important to pre-empt potential threats to standards of practice posed by conventional tourism claiming an eco-label, merely to make profits.

• “Green washing” can be a disincentive to genuine eco-tourism practitioners, leading to cut-throat competition in the industry.

• CBOs and small investors face enormous difficulties in accessing funding support for product development. The risky and long-term nature of ecotourism projects makes them less attractive to commercial lenders.

The Conference noted that in Contemporary practice

• There is a tendency to replicate initiatives that have succeeded elsewhere. This, it was noted, leads to high expectations and pressures for quick gains; hinders innovation, long-term product development and investment. Consequently, while recognizing the importance of learning from others, it was suggested that CBOs should take note of the limits, relevance, and ability to replicate the successes of successful models.

• There is over-commoditization of cultural products, leading to mass production and counterfeiting which undermines the authenticity of products.
The conference noted that best practices include

- Innovative and creative use of locally available resources to come up with unique and cost effective products.
- Integrating environmental, ethical and social concerns in developing the product.
- Recognising the high level of competition within the ecotourism market segment; product development should pay attention to Unique Selling Points (USPs) that provides value for money and an edge over competitors by integrating a range of activities that maximize visitor satisfaction.

The conference recommended that

- ESOK spearhead efforts to assist CBOs and SMEs seek for alternative funding sources for product development, since conventional commercial lending institutions are not accessible to such prospective investors.
- ESOK should provide assistance in product development and linking communities to various markets/promoters.

The conference underlined the holistic nature of eco-products (linking community, environment and the market) that maintains eco-integrity and standards.

Communication And Interpretation: The Role Of Guiding & Design

Communication and interpretation are key to ecotourism because the ecotourist is as much of a learner as a holiday maker. The emphasis in ecotourism is for the ecotourist to get as close as possible with nature and culture, but not to negatively impact negatively on the same. Guides must therefore be properly trained and government should come up with --- training modules that will ensure maximum visitor satisfaction and minimum socio-environmental impacts.
Communication /interpretation can also be achieved through design of facilities and programmes. A well-designed eco-lodge will clearly communicate aspects of local peoples culture including their architecture, their décor, their environment as well as environmental issues threatening the area. This is not always expensive as is perceived by many communities and investors. There should be consistency in interpretation, from design to promotion material and guiding

The Conference noted that
• Interpretation through design, information and guiding constitutes an important element of the ecotourism product package.
• Guiding is taken for granted by many ecotourism practitioners and standards are not harmonised
• There should be national standards for guiding.
• Good guiding involves maximising visitor experience while minimising ecological impacts
• Where guiding is unregulated e.g. in forest/mountain areas, the guides earn less that their counterparts in formal employment

The conference noted that best practices include
• Use of trained local guides with knowledge of local flora and fauna as well as local cultures.

The conference recommended that
• Government come up with standards for guide training and accreditation as a quality guarantee
Travellers’ Philanthropy

The conference observed that there are many travellers who wish to support needy projects in the areas they visit. However, traveller’s philanthropy remains an untapped opportunity in Kenya. This is partly because of lack of preparedness to tap into the opportunity and lack of awareness on how to sustain support. The meeting cautioned that operating without a structure is a threat to traveller’s philanthropy. Structures must be put in place to manage the support provided and to ensure feedback to donors. While many community projects had benefited from travelers philanthropy, most do not understand its dynamics because it is in the domain of private sector partners who are the direct contacts with visitors.

The conference noted that

- The principal motivation for travellers’ philanthropy is the desire to make a difference in the communities visited the visitors make contact with.
- While travellers’ philanthropy can significantly contribute to community well being, it needs to be structured and administered through appropriate mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency. Only then can it achieve tangible results among intended beneficiaries.
- Unstructured delivery of philanthropy can lead to travelers’ disappointment and apathy among beneficiaries.
- Overexposure to philanthropic need can spoil visitor experience.

The conference noted that in contemporary practice

- Travellers prefer to deal directly with beneficiaries owing to mistrust of delivery mechanisms.
The conference noted that best practices include

- Ensuring feedback to donors on the progress of projects supported by them.
- Transparency in the administration and channelling funds to target beneficiaries.

The conference recommended that

- Travellers’ philanthropy should not be prompted by the host enterprise. Instead, it should be voluntary, and visitors should be allowed to make choices of where, what and whom they want to support, with guidance from the enterprise.
- Travellers’ philanthropy should address realistic expectations of both the donor and the recipients, and should be directed towards common facilities such as schools and bursaries.
- Travellers’ philanthropy should be socially responsible to avoid interference with social life of local people.

**SUB THEME III: MAKING THE ENVIRONMENT CONNECTION**

Conservation and sustainable use of physical and cultural resources are key to ecotourism. The meeting observed that in Kenya ecotourism is closely associated with conservation to the extent that many communities with purely conservation programmes use ecotourism in their business names. For ecotourism to make the environmental connection (minimise threats and maximise opportunities), it is critical that policies/laws/standards/codes of ethics/guidelines be formulated to guide planning, implementation and practice of ecotourism. It is also critical that good practices be identified and shared among practitioners.
Threats and Opportunities
Like conventional tourism, ecotourism too can be a threat to cultures and environment if it is not properly planned, implemented and regulated. Regulation, both voluntary and legal, was therefore critical in the management of threats and maximising of opportunities. To minimise threats and maximise opportunities, ecotourism ventures should operate above the legal framework should be minimum requirement. Voluntary certification schemes like the ESOK eco-rating scheme should be encouraged and supported as they help to raise performance benchmarks. The conference underlined that best practice in addressing threats from ecotourism is the ability to turn threats into opportunities. There was need to strengthen existing institutions to support the growth of ecotourism.

The Conference noted that

• The location of most of the eco-tourism ventures outside the protected areas means that they lack a governing institutional authority to address the complex challenges of enhancing environmental integrity, and managing human-wildlife conflicts.

• Research-based information is key to translating threats into opportunities.

• The threat of escalating energy costs and environmental pollution could be transformed into an opportunity through the application of principles of energy management. The application of energy management principles in developing a venture’s environmental policy also helps in clearly defining the distinctive features of an eco-tourism product.

• There were environmental threats arising from livestock over-grazing, as a result of more cattle acquisition, from ecotourism earnings.

• Waste management in a venture can be translated into livelihood opportunities for the host communities, by involving them in waste-disposal, for a fee.
There are a number of resources that communities can tap into to minimise the threats that could arise from involvement in ecotourism. These include:

- The existing resource centre managed by ESOK for information.
- Access to technical assistance in planning and implementation of ecotourism through networking
- Promotion opportunities available with travel magazines, local media, joining conservation organisations that offer membership, embassies
- Funding opportunities e.g. the Tourist Trust Fund (TTF), EU-BCP
- Existing NGOs that work in the field of ecotourism
- Existing environmental legislation like EMCA
- Existing local and international voluntary certification schemes like the ESOK Eco-rating scheme
- Research information produced from sites by researchers.

Role of Government and Other Agencies/Organisations

The conference recommended that

- **ESOK** (Ecotourism Society of Kenya) should establish an information resource centre, which should act as reference point to all communities and ecotourism practitioners in Kenya on all aspects of ecotourism.

- **ESOK** should develop a national eco-destination map, which highlights different products available across the country. This should help communities (CBOs) complement each other’s products and create different product combinations in order to maximize visitors’ satisfaction and generate more revenue for communities.

- **ESOK** develop an ecotourism circuit to be promoted as a marketing strategy separate from conventional tourism. Funds should be allocated for the same by TTF and KTB.
• **The GOVERNMENT** should establish an information desk, reliably administered by adequate personnel, who shall offer accurate and reliable information on eco-tourism, and products available. Whereas the essence of ecotourism practice is socially, culturally and ecologically responsible business, based on ethical principles where the legislative framework is only a minimum requirement, the government should actively participate in leading the way by developing a strategy for further development of the sector. It was recommended that the draft national tourism policy should subjected to public debate by relevant stakeholders to ensure it addresses ecotourism. Policy should be comprehensive and holistic to reflect the complexity, risks and challenges facing environmentally sustainable business.

• **TTF (Tourism Trust Fund)** should streamline and simplify its grant making procedures to enhance accessibility by CBOs and SMEs. It was observed that TTF’s activities are limited to the organisations life. The implication is that there will be a significant funding gap once TTF winds operations in 2007.

• **ESOK** also seek for alternative sources of funding for eco-product development, marketing and capacity building, to bridge the funding gap

• **UNIVERSITIES** should partner with actors in the sector to build capacity in areas such as product development and design, community needs assessment, market research, dissemination of research findings on best practices, training and capacity building (with respect to marketing, customer care, accounting practices, training in foreign languages, interpretation and communication skills).
CONFERENCES RESOLUTIONS

Conceptualization of Ecotourism
The conference noted that whereas there are many definitions of eco-tourism, the essence of eco-tourism is good business with social, cultural, and ecological responsibility operating in an ethical environment where the legislative framework was a necessary but not sufficient requirement.

Guidelines and Standards
A national policy or an adoptive document on eco-tourism should be developed. This document should address key issues including facility development and standards, partnership, benefit sharing, marketing, conservation, training etc. This will streamline the operations of all current and future projects in Kenya. The document should also identify linkages between government and the community.

Community Participation

- The conference resolved that participation should yield qualitative and quantitative benefits, which are essential to enterprise’s success. Participation should further respond to ownership needs, promote equitable sharing of benefits and enhance the tourism product quality.
• Participation should be negotiated from time to time in response to emergent needs and challenges. As a need driven process, participation is a means to realizing specific needs

Benefit Sharing

• It was observed that since the single largest input in ecotourism ventures is land and other communally shared resources, benefit sharing regimes must address restoration of the quality of the environment

• Benefit sharing should meaningfully involve all members of community including women and the youth and address intergenerational equity to avoid conflicts

• Creating awareness on the need for long-term approach to investment and returns should be encouraged to avoid high expectations, and demand for immediate gains.

Empowerment

• The conference resolved that empowerment should enable various groups in the society: women, youths and all age-groups, including vulnerable groups, to share in the benefits of the venture

• Economic empowerment is only one form of empowerment. Others are cultural, spiritual and knowledge empowerment. The conference acknowledged all these forms and resolved that a good ecotourism venture should plan for all forms of empowerment

Ecotourism Marketing

• Good marketing should strive to deliver and not over-promise. It should strike a balance between product quality and promise
• Good marketing must be budgeted for in each year's operation costs and it must be continuous.
• Maximizing visitor satisfaction and better service delivery provides a competitive edge over conventional tourism

Partnerships
• Partnerships are critical to ecotourism because that play an important role in filling technical and/or financial gap facing communities
• Partnerships agreements should be flexible and avoid exclusive clauses in order to buffer communities against risks and vulnerabilities associated with rigid agreements.
• In view of the differences in levels of competencies between communities and private investors, communities should seek technical support during partnership bargaining process

Traveler's Philanthropy
• The principal motivation for travelers philanthropy is the desire by visitors to make a difference in the communities they make contact with
• The conference noted that while travelers philanthropy is important, it needs to be structured, and administered through appropriate mechanisms that are accountable, and transparent, in order to achieve tangible results among intended beneficiaries

Good Practices in Ecotourism entails
• Giving priority to locals in employment and capacity building
• Good governance, transparency and accountability. These help build trust and ownership.
• Structured/ institutionalized, participation in a way that each actor’s role is well specified and acknowledged.

Threats to culture

• The conference noted that whereas culture had great potential as an ecotourism product, poor practices, distances between affected community groups and the lack of institutional mechanism for addressing collective bargain has hindered the development of cultural tourism. There was need for relevant organizations to come up with programmes to bring together affected community groups with a view to establishing communication channels, setting implementation and operation standards as well as pricing regulations.

ESOK Role in Promoting Ecotourism

• Come up with information/resource centre where communities and other stakeholders can make reference on all aspects of ecotourism
• Maintain inventory of ecotourism sites and pursue possibility of developing a eco-circuit
• ESOK should take the center stage in harmonizing the operations of the eco tourism establishments to ensure standards are observed
• ESOK prioritize and assist in policy development collaborate with Government
• ESOK should come up with a body to oversee the marketing of community ecotourism products
Government’s Role

- Government should be proactive and lead from the front by creating enabling infrastructure that facilitate (ecotourism) responsible tourism development
- Establish, jointly with ESOK, a department for auditing ecotourism ventures to ensure fair election and good governance of tourism project