

Introduction

EEIU Nabuur has been successful in securing a 'Small Research Grant' from the Leah Foundation for a project entitled 'The impacts of Climate Change on Eco-Tourism in Kenya.'

Objectives

The aim of the project is to evaluate the existing and potential impacts of climate change on ecotourism in Kenya. The project has the following objectives:

- To enhance the sustainable development of ecotourism Kenya
- To enable the further conservation of biodiversity Kenya
- To reduce the vulnerability of ecotourism stakeholders and communities in Kenya through increased awareness and knowledge of the impacts of climate change;
- To enable the future design of appropriate and pragmatic avoidance, adaptation and mitigation strategies for the local ecotourism industry and stakeholders in Kenya.
- To cooperate with the media and utilize its role as an effective educational tool for promoting accurate and informative reporting of ecotourism, avoiding green-washing, raising the profile of the sector, and encouraging adherence to the principles of ecotourism.

Methods

- Consultants collected and reviewed relevant literature that informed their work forming the core of an important, required product of the study, a comprehensive bibliography of documents related ecotourism and climate change.
- Consultants conducted a series of focus group discussions to ensure that the research is representative and reflected the experiences of geographically diverse communities (including rural populations), ethnic and religious minorities, women, and other vulnerable groups.

Results

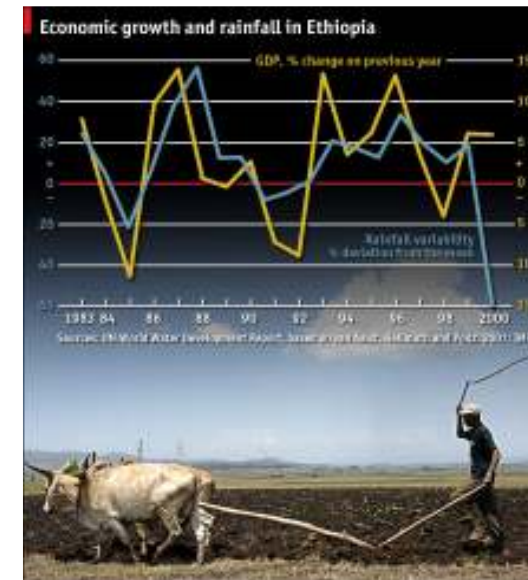
- Climate change has increasingly become a major threat affecting the very resources on which ecotourism depends – natural areas and local and Indigenous communities around the world. This has helped raise awareness of the contribution of current and future tourism operations and services to global climate change.
- The role of tourism in supporting sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, notably the alleviation of poverty, has become recognized as a critical industry responsibility.
- Many of the world's natural areas remain under threat; there has been a further loss of biodiversity and resources for conservation remain inadequate.

Ecotourism creates an impact on natural ecosystems but more importantly, it offers a way to

- promote conservation in ecologically fragile regions
- benefit the economies of local communities
- provide the public with a nature-based education experience
- introduce visitors to local culture

In most cases, ecotourism follows two important principles of sustainability:

- to promote conservation of the natural ecosystems
- to support local economies



Generally, impacts of climate change on tourism may be due to change of destination by travelers, but aside from the business impact, the next box shows what impacts our biodiversity will witness. Noting that unpredictable weather makes planning and product development difficult for operators

Following are some examples, in brief, of the climatic, environmental and biodiversity issues that can occur as a result of climate change which in turn impact on ecotourism:

- The survival of rare and isolated populations in fragmented habitats.
- Endemic species being highly sensitive to change are therefore more vulnerable.
- Animal populations may be affected by environmental stress or indirectly through changes in vegetation.
- Coastal areas are especially vulnerable to natural disturbances; habitat fragmentation and biological invasions.
- Rising sea levels will have impacts on coastal ecosystems, land loss and salinity.
- Ecosystems already under stress.
- Shifting and changes in seasons.
- The number of invasive species and their dissemination.
- Corals showing a high sensitivity to minor increases in sea temperature.
- Drought, desertification and extreme flooding.
- Increased frequency and magnitude of extreme events

Discussion:

- Tourism management is nature oriented (including control but not limited to Heritage Attractions, Arts and Cultural Attractions, Industrial Attractions, City Based Attractions, Retail Attractions, Natural Attractions) which could easily be destroyed by drastic change in weather patterns.
- In order to respond to climate change, we must embrace sustainable tourism, which is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.

