CASE STUDY
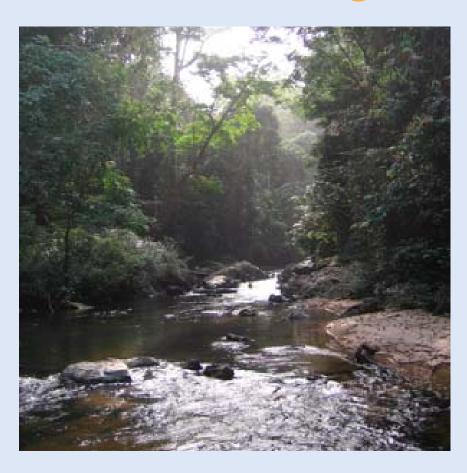
ONE SKY Canadian Institute of Sustainable Living

Ecotourism in
Cross River State, Nigeria

**Cross River Environmental Capacity Development (CRE) Project
Nigeria Canada Coalition (NCC)**

NCC *Case Studies* provide an analysis of the results and stories emerging from the CRE Project for civil society and policy makers in Nigeria.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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All case studies are reviewed by Cross River Environment Project partners.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecotourism is a leading industry in the world today. Ecotourism offers economically viable ways of protecting ecosystems while also providing jobs and supporting community development. This tri-bottom line, of *profit, people and the planet*, meets the needs of the state government, local communities and critical forest ecosystems. This case study explores the potential of ecotourism for local economic development and ecological conservation in Cross River State (CRS), Nigeria.

Cross River State is endowed with substantial regions of tropical forest that is the habitat for several rare primate species, making it a potential ecotourism hotspot. The environmental non-government organization CERCOPAN (*Centre for Education, Research and Conservation of Primates and Nature*) together with the community of Iko Esai are spearheading an ecotourism initiative worthy of consideration and replication in other areas of CRS. CERCOPAN works in collaboration with other partners of the Cross River Environment and Capacity Development Project (CRE Project) to build capacity for ecotourism. Some critical success factors of this work include:

- Working with a community-based approach to conservation and ecotourism planning;
- Raising awareness and educating on the value of the rainforest in both rural and urban areas;
- Engaging in a tri-sector approach to ecotourism planning and implementation with civil society (community-based organizations and environmental non-government organizations), government ministries and the private sector; and
- Maintaining and enhancing a cross-sectoral network of individuals and groups to support the success of this work.

The CRE Project partners and members of the Nigeria-Canada Coalition have developed evidenced-based policy recommendations for future tourism development in Cross River State (detailed in Appendix Two).

Ecotourism holds immense potential for Cross River State as a viable economic alternative and a strategy to protect its globally significant rainforests. It is a promising sustainable development initiative that would positively impact rural villages, the state government, and the flora and fauna of Cross River State.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the world's largest industries, with an estimated US$ 3 trillion in annual revenues and expanding at an average rate of 4-5 percent annually. In comparison, *nature tourism* has been increasing at an annual rate of between 10-30 percent, highlighting an important trend in tourism development.[1] Increasingly national governments and civil society organizations are seeking to more carefully plan and implement tourism development as a sustainable economic initiative and as a successful conservation strategy. In this way, ecotourism can provide economic prosperity and preserve the environment.

Great examples of ecotourism projects exist all over the world. For example, the non-governmental organization, *Conservation International*, has many ecotourism projects that address economic livelihood needs and promote biodiversity of critical ecosystems throughout the world. Some examples of their projects include: Madidi National Park in Bolivia, the Upper Guinean Forest in Ghana, the Maya Biosphere Reserve in the Petén Region in Guatemala and many others (see:www.conservation.org/xp/CIWEB/publications/factsheets/ Ecotourism.pdf). Appendix 1 lists other successful ecotourism projects, promoted by *Responsible Tourism* in the UK, which supports economic growth as well as community development and conservation objectives.

Ecotourism's ability to meet socio-economic and sustainability objectives makes it a viable option for forest communities, private businesses and the state government in Cross River State, Nigeria. Initiatives that are able to merge economic, social and ecological needs are particularly welcomed for this state in Nigeria.

The environmental non-governmental organization CERCOPAN (*Centre for Education, Research and Conservation of Primates and Nature*) offers a good example of the economic and ecological potentials of ecotourism in Cross River State (CRS). CERCOPAN is spearheading an ecotourism project that includes primate rehabilitation, education and research, working towards the larger objectives of forest conservation and community development. CERCOPAN works in close collaboration with the nearby community of Iko Esai and is further supported, in part, by the Cross River Environmental and Capacity Development Project (CRE Project). A key feature of the CERCOPAN-Iko Esai ecotourism project is the requirement that the forest area be designated "Rhoko Special Reserve" and managed collaboratively by Iko Esai and CERCOPAN.

CERCOPAN's ecotourism and conservation work with Iko Esai is an inspiring project in Nigeria. And it is also a unique one. Most of Nigeria is environmentally degraded, with less than 4% of the once-lush rainforest left; desertification is an increasing threat across Nigeria, leaving most of the country without the option of ecotourism. Ogbonnaya (2003) explains (2003):

> *Only when the last tree has died and the last river has been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize that we cannot eat money.*
> Cree Indian, 1909.

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[1] Statistics from: www.conservation.org/xp/CIWEB/publications/factsheets/Ecotourism.pdf

"The consequences of deforestation in Nigeria are evident everywhere. The most devastating consequences include erosions and desertification. While desertification has become virtually irreversible in the North, gully erosion has made parts of the region look like lunar landscapes."

Cross River State, on the other hand, is home to one of the last remaining contiguous forest stands in West Africa and is still a unique habitat for several primate species. The forest ecosystem stabilizes local weather patterns and provides water in this region of Nigeria. Ezeala (2003) argues:

"We should be able to harness the potential of our forests in the development of ecotourism and scientific research rather than revel in illegal logging and wildlife trafficking."

Partners of the CRE Project have taken up this challenge, and are seeking to fashion a sustainable development strategy that ensures the prosperity of forest communities as well as the conservation of the forest ecosystem.

Local people harvest trees to clear land for farming, and also occasionally cut trees for fuelwood.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE CRE PROJECT

The goal of the Cross River Environmental Capacity Development Project is to strengthen the capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to affect policy change and environmental improvement in Cross River State. The project seeks to build a network of long-term partnerships among Canadian and Nigerian environmental organizations that will work together to strengthen organizational capacity and environmental management.

One Sky, a Canadian-based non-profit organization, is the Canadian Executing Agency of the CRE project, which brings together a coalition of four Nigerian environmental NGOs (DIN, LENF, NCF and CERCOPAN) and one environmental network (NGOCE) as the primary stakeholders. One Sky is working to strengthen the capacity of ENGOs, which in turn are instruments to support communities and community-based organizations (CBOs) in the buffer zones of the two surrounding key protected areas – the Guinean Lowland Forest Ecosystem in Cross River National Park and the Montane Ecosystem of the Obudu Plateau – in the Cross River bioregion of Nigeria.

These protected areas represent the largest remaining contiguous Tropical Moist Forest in West Africa with the highest biological endemism in the region. Surrounding these two core biologically-intact protected areas are buffer zones, characterized as either forest reserves or community forests. The tropical high forest in and around these protected areas has been

substantially depleted and is coming under increasing pressure from slash and burn agriculture, as well as hunting and industrial activities such as logging and plantation establishment. Local communities, in particular, continue to feel socio-economic duress as the reduced environmental integrity is directly linked to reduced community health and quality of life. In response to these situations, CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) supports the Cross River Environmental Capacity Development Project, which commenced in January 2003.

CERCOPAN is partnered with Greenheart Conservation Company via a Joint Initiative of the CRE Project. CERCOPAN's focus is on community-based ecotourism and primate rehabilitation. Greenheart assists in this work by sharing its experience in building canopy walkways in rainforests around the world. Greenheart Conservation Company specializes in canopy walkway construction and ecotourism and its joint initiative with CERCOPAN includes construction of a primate-viewing platform at CERCOPAN's Rhoko Camp near the village of Iko

Esai. The future prospects for this "living canopy classroom" include education for the community members, high school and university students, as well as for national and international visitors to Cross River State to learn about and appreciate these now rare species and forest habitats.

The ecotourism potential of Rhoko Camp is high, especially considering the unique value of this ecosystem and forest species in a world that is fast losing its rainforest habitats. Yet, those involved in the CRE Project, including CEROCPAN, the community of Iko Esai and other members of the Nigeria-Canada Coalition, understand that ecotourism is a means to an end, where the real objective is a forest conservation that simultaneously provides economic benefits to local communities.

Dedicated CERCOPAN volunteers in the rainforest

3.0 KEY ACTIVITIES

3.1 Economic, Social and Ecological Dimensions of Ecotourism
Ecotourism has an inherent tri-bottom line including economic, social and ecological objectives, or "profit, people and the planet". In a sense, ecotourism exists at the interface between these aspects of a community or society. As such, it requires an interdisciplinary approach to bring forth a successful project.

For a country like Nigeria that suffers from poverty, lack of civil infrastructure and health care services (among many other issues), development initiatives that address economic growth are welcomed. Today, tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors worldwide, and ecotourism in particular has the steepest development curve of the tourism sector. Abam (2004) suggests that, "next to oil, the other natural resource that can take Nigeria out of its economic doldrums is its ecotourism wealth." Castleden (quoted in Abam, 2004, p. 5) also remarks that:

"Ecotourism holds promises of job creation in local communities, attracting funds

for protecting the richness of Cross River State's natural environment and opportunities for women to increase their participation in the market economy."

However, this economic draw can pose risks to cultural well-being and have adverse socio-economic and environmental impacts. The community of Iko Esai, for example, has had long discussions on the risks of external visitors, such as prostitution and other social problems. Workshop participants in a write-shop on policy and ecotourism, held by the Nigeria-Canada Coalition and CRE Project in December 2004, put it well:

Village boy carrying palm fronds near rainforest.

> "Ecotourism can have both positive and negative environmental socio-economic impacts. Positive impacts include income generation and employment, whereas negative impacts include soil erosion, water contamination, and loss in cultural value."

To minimize these risks and impacts, it is imperative that ecotourism development is participatory, economic gains are equitable and decision-making is inclusive. The participants of the December workshop that included representatives from all CRE Project partners, developed several key policy messages on this topic, including:

1. Where ecotourism takes place, there must be a socio-economic and environmental impact assessment with accompanying recommendations to be followed for the site location.
2. Local community members should be directly involved in the ecotourism project planning process.
3. Ecotourism projects should employee local people first.
4. Each local community should develop their own ecotourism policies in conformity with regulating bodies that will guide such activities as the number of visitors, groups, duration of stay at the site, what sites tourists will visit, potential restriction of tourists' movements during the stay, etc.
5. Any ecotourism project should build the capacity of local community members to host clients and manage ecotourism resources and activities.
6. Any ecotourism project should minimize environmental impacts and restore degraded ecosystems (trail building, signage, parking areas, viewing sites, latrines, etc.)
7. Local customs, norms and beliefs should be honoured and followed by ecotourism operators and their clients.
8. Local cultural activities/displays such as music, dance and arts/crafts should be encouraged and fostered.

3.2 Community-Based Conservation

In light of these socio-economic and ecological dimensions of ecotourism, CERCOPAN works closely with the community of Iko Esai to carefully consider the potential for ecotourism as an alternative and sustainable income-generating activity.

Zena Tooze, Director of CERCOPAN, Rhoko Camp

Prior to any ecotourism development, CERCOPAN conducted a social impact assessment to understand the impacts tourism would have on Iko Esai. Community members have participated in Round Tables and planning meetings regarding the ecotourism initiative, thereby ensuring a community-driven process. As part of this community planning process, the village head, clan head and community liaison traveled to Ghana to study ecotourism development at Kakum National Park and in the surrounding communities.

Zena Tooze, Director of CERCOPAN explains that it has not been easy working with the community, as there were some initial struggles with illegal logging. But, she explains that the community work is imperative, "it has to be community-based conservation; you can't do conservation any other way."

Ibrahim Inahoro, Senior Conservation Manager of Nigerian Conservation Foundation, affirms this claim, explaining that:

> "The issue of conservation in Nigeria is pertinent because despite efforts by individuals, organizations and governments, deforestation is still going on at an alarming rate… the problem persists because we are addressing the issue rather than the cause of the issue. The cause is the people. Until we are able to address the…poverty of the people, the issue of deforestation in the country is still a big battle to be won. Conservation must advocate raising the awareness of local forest communities and education [of] the masses to know that timber is not the only valuable resource in the forest."[2]

On this topic, there are several lessons learned through the process of working in the Rhoko Centre for Research, Education and Conservation and with the community of Iko Esai – lessons that are worth sharing with others who work towards community development and environmental conservation. To begin with, Tooze explains how working with communities often involves making compromises to a certain extent, as it requires being patient and flexible with the process, and also being empathetic to the reality of the community people. If the process

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[2] Quoted in Ogbonnaya, 2003, p. 6

falters, the conservation group cannot simply "go somewhere else" to do their work, because with a world that is becoming increasingly populated, there will always be another group of people, another community or city – to meet conservation objectives, the human dimension must be included.

In this regard, CERCOPAN has found that their work for conservation has largely included education, building awareness and fostering behavioural changes. Like other regions of the world, most changes occur first in urban settings, while rural areas are slower to take up changed attitudes and actions. Yet, the external world is entering into communities like Iko Esai, as Nollywood (Nigerian) films and motorbikes exist alongside 18th century customs and traditions. For that reason, it serves neither the community's nor CERCOPAN's objectives to be too "radical" in conservation efforts – both community development and conservation require time and patience to bring forth profound changes in how people value each other and their surroundings.

Today, before one even catches a glimpse of Rhoko Camp or any monkeys, first one drives through Iko Esai. The community protocol requires that every visitor meet with the chiefs to discuss their business in the forest and the reasons for their visit. It is also a chance for the community to share their own customs and provide a context for visitors, so as to foster a greater

Nigeria's large population requires conservation efforts to be combined with addressing socioeconomic issues and community development.

understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of the forest and primate conservation project. Then, further down the road, is the public Education Centre that focuses on the conservation of primates and the tropical rainforest. The Education Centre operates as an awareness raising interpretation centre, and also as something the community members take pride in – their community and the ecosystem are considered valuable and honoured by visitors, which in turn fosters pride and honour in the community for their cultural and natural resources.

Nicky Pulman, Coordinator of CERCOPAN, explains that changes in how the community values the forest are an important part of the ecotourism initiative. In the 3000 hectares of intact forest, in which Rhoko Camp is situated, the community of Iko Esai has agreed not to farm or log, but to continue to hunt and extract non-timber forest projects (such as bush mango and medicinal plants). Ecotourism, as such, is one of several alternative livelihoods in which the forest is seen as more valuable standing than it is logged.

In addition to this, she explains how CERCOPAN supports Iko Esai's *Community Conservation Development Committee* (CCDC), which receives a small grant every fiscal quarter as part of the ecotourism initiative. The CCDC makes decisions on how to spend this grant money wisely for the development of Iko Esai, such as microcredit loans or road improvements.

3.3 Capacity for Policy Influence – Ecotourism Write-Shop
Ecotourism is not simply a form of "ecological tourism", as it has often been misconstrued. It articulates a democratic, bottom-up and sustainable approach to tourism — distinctly different

from that of conventional tourism. It has social and cultural impacts as well. It encourages forest communities to value the surrounding forest as a living resource and not as a harvestable product. Communities that engage in ecotourism in this way, have renewed pride for their region and a sense of responsibility to steward and care for it.

An Ecotourism Write-shop was designed and carried out in December 2004, with members of the NCC and the CRE Project, to help community-based organizations and NGOs working with forest communities to build capacity on implementing ecotourism, while also focusing on influencing tourism policy in Cross River State. It was designed as a "write-shop" because of its focus on learning about and writing for policy influence.

Hard at work at the Ecotourism Policy Write-shop at NGOCE Guest House with participants from forest communities, local businesses in Calabar, CRE Project partners and Canadian partners, such as Jennifer Sloot from Atlantic Council for International Cooperation.

The write-shop was coordinated as a Joint Initiative between the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation (ACIC) and the Nigerian-based NGO Environment Coalition (NGOCE) (two members of the NCC and CRE Project) and involved representatives from each member organization of the NCC. Nigerian partners of the CRE Project have produced a draft white paper on ecotourism from the policy recommendations, spearheaded by NGOCE. NGOCE is using the draft white paper as the basis for discussion with key players in the CRS government such as the State Planning Commission and Tourism Bureau in order to advocate for policy changes that will support ecotourism development. A final draft paper with policy recommendations will be delivered to the Cross River State Government.

The goals of the workshop included: increased organizational capacity to influence policy; strengthened ability to synthesize and analyze information; improved facility in working with the government and private sector on ecotourism policy work; and increased knowledge about ecotourism challenges and opportunities in Cross River State.

The write-shop involved focused discussions and examinations of current policy, while also, facilitating policy creation through the production of a two-page document of concise policy recommendations. Participants split into sub-groups to discuss sub-themes, document the pertinent issues and draft recommendations related to ecotourism policy in Cross River State.

Workshop participants in dialogue on ecotourism policy issues.

The two-day Ecotourism Write-shop was rigorous and participatory. The long hot days were spent in dialogue about the definition of ecotourism, policy influence and various other themes related to ecotourism, including natural resource management, socio-economic impacts, finances, governance and implementation. This process brought together capacity building on ecotourism with writing for policy influence, and resulted in evidence-based policy recommendations written and presented to key sectors of government in Cross River State.

4.0 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1 Policy Influence and Capacity Development

The Tourism Bureau in Cross River State has a seat available for civil society in their decision-making process, and has encouraged the NCC to provide input into Cross River State tourism development. The two-page document produced in the December write-shop was presented to the Tourism Bureau and recommended policies for future decisions regarding ecotourism in the region. The detailed policy recommendations are included in Appendix Two.

4.2 Community Support and Networking

CERCOPAN's commitment to work collaboratively with Iko Esai for a truly community-based ecotourism project offers an example for many other groups seeking to take a similar approach

Project Coordinator of Development in Nigeria with Louis Nkonyu of Okwangwo Conservation Society

to community ecotourism development. CERCOPAN staff members explain that their work is a good attempt at community-based ecotourism, although there is still much to learn and more work to be done. It offers an inspiring example for other civil society organizations working with forest communities in Cross River State.

For example, Development in Nigeria (DIN), another NCC member and CRE Project partner, works similarly with several communities on fostering eco-villages and supporting ecotourism initiatives. Some of these are community-based organizations (CBOs) that are simply too small to receive large grants and support from international donors.

I met the Director of one of these CBOs, a man called Louis Nkonyu of the Okwangwo Conservation Society. The Okwangwo Conservation Society is based in a small enclave community situated in the tropical rainforest of Cross River State National Park. Eight years ago, at the mere age of 21, he realized that his people were struggling with adapting their forest-based livelihoods to park boundaries that they themselves had neither created nor fully understood. With few other opportunities, the community continued to extract resources in the park, such as harvesting trees, collecting non-timber forest products and hunting animals like monkeys and small mammals. While at one time this was sustainable, the population of Nigeria — an astounding 135 million — adds too much pressure on these dwindling forest resources.

Park wardens simply cannot turn a blind eye to the illegal extraction of resources by such communities. Many local people are fined or put in jail – their only crime being their struggle to adapt. Louis realized that the community needed to accept the new park boundaries and the re-drawn economic parameters while also meeting their own livelihood needs. To work towards this, he started the Okwangwo Conservation Society to promote education, training and solutions for sustainability. While his grassroots group is small, it is connected with other civil society organizations via a membership in NGOCE and receives support from DIN. Through participation in this coalition, he is able to garner further capacity building, moral and (some) financial support and the opportunity to amplify his activities and communications beyond the village, moving small efforts into larger scale impacts.

At the Ecotourism Write-shop, Louis navigated the topic of ecotourism as one of several solutions for his village. The positive impacts that such a gathering has on capacity development and networking is remarkable, as far reaching as Louise's enclave forest community, a four hour drive and an eight hour rainforest hike away from Calabar.

4.3 Awareness Raising

A key achievement of the CRE Project in the area of ecotourism is the increased awareness on the topic. Evidence of this includes CERCOPAN's work with university students in Rhoko Camp, the involvement of the Conservation Club in Calabar with forest conservation initiatives through an educational drama performed in schools, and 3000 school children marching through the streets of Calabar on World Environment Day with a brass band and staff in monkey suits. Awareness raising efforts also include working collaboratively with the state government on ecotourism related issues, recommending policies to the Tourism Bureau, and the international visitors who come to see the forest conservation effects at Rhoko – an international centre for students and researchers.

Whether at the local, state, national or international levels, this awareness raising is foundational for ecotourism success in Cross River State. For ecotourism to reach its tri-bottom line of profit, people and the planet, there must first be awareness, which then provides motivation and initiative for implementing ecotourism projects. This awareness raising may be one of the most prominent achievements of the NCC and CRE Project to date.

5.0 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Inquiring into the critical success factors of the CRE Project's work in ecotourism provides an interesting view into effective and replicable aspects of such work. The following provides a list of these critical success factors, accompanied by a commentary about how they relate to the ecotourism initiatives of CRE Project partners.

1. *Trust and transparency are necessary for collaboration; having an ENGO as a coordinating body for collaboration is a real asset for working with other NGOs (the shared culture facilitates effectiveness)*

CERCOPAN staff commented that having One Sky as the coordinating body was a key asset for the CRE Project, particularly because One Sky is itself an NGO, and thus shares a similar culture and understanding of the problems that NGOs face and the scope of objectives they assume. Since the motivation for this work was shared, it created a solid foundation for teamwork, both of which were essential for mutual trust and transparency.

2. *Project planning is reflective and adaptive to changes in strategy*

Zena Tooze, Director of CERCOPAN, comments how the partnerships developed through the CRE Project are unique from other types of partnerships CERCOPAN has had. To this end, she explains that other donors and partners simply did not get involved to the extent that One Sky and the Joint Initiative partners did; this latter approach resulted in "much more of a true partnership". Being more present in the work and its direction, assisted in reflective and adaptive changes to the project.

3. *Using 'differences' as strategic and complementary avenues for project management*

The participants of the Ecotourism Write-shop offer a good example of this critical success factor. Participants attended from government (Cross River State National Park staff), business (tourism operators), and CSOs (CRE Project partners, NCC members and CBOs). This mixed group had different skills, motivations and viewpoints, thus creating a comprehensive and collaborative team that touched all bases necessary for addressing the economic, social and ecological objectives of ecotourism.

4. *Utilizing a practical and specific capacity development approach, based on clear and comprehensive needs assessments*

In the area of ecotourism, Tooze of CERCOPAN explains how the shared NGO culture (between One Sky and project partners) enabled capacity development work to be based on the common understanding of the scope, motivations and environmental themes addressed by the NGO sector. This was inherently part of the content and process of capacity building, and was further clarified through comprehensive needs assessments.

5. *An international coalition fosters a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach*

CERCOPAN director and staff explain how a distinctive aspect of the CRE Project is its cross-sectoral approach that brings Nigerian ENGOs together into a networked and

collaborative coalition, and which has also included government ministries and local businesses. This has been particularly productive and has helped "make things happen" for ecotourism work in CRS.

6. *First steps toward a bioregional approach to environmental protection and development*

Most CSOs that work with rainforest conservation or other types of environmental protection, realize that ecosystems do not obey national borders. In the area of ecotourism, this is definitely the case. CERCOPAN and Greenheart have managed to transcend national borders to reach out to other areas that deal with similar issues. For example, CERCOPAN and select community members (the village head, clan head and community liaison) traveled to Ghana to study ecotourism development at Kakum National Park and in the surrounding communities. This is a first step toward cross-boundary and bioregional efforts for ecotourism.

7. *Recognition that sustainability initiatives require the involvement of government and civil society and need to address financial sustainability*

Ecotourism, in particular, requires a tri-sector approach, in which economic, social and ecological objectives can simultaneously be considered and addressed. Ecotourism work by the CRE Project, to date, respects this and works toward such tri-sector partnerships with the private sector, government and civil society.

8. *The need for visionary champions and early adaptors*

Zena Tooze herself is an example of an "early adaptor" — seeking to address conservation and community development issues long before funding initiatives existed to support this work. She explains how CERCOPAN had been working on a "shoestring" budget for several years before getting involved with the CRE Project. She explained that "the [CRE Project] funding was key for us", as it provided sufficient funding to double staff, improve infrastructure and create the community education centre, among other things that point to organizational growth and development. Today, their work is held up by other Nigerian CSOs as an example of ways to work toward community-based ecotourism objectives.

9. *Demonstration projects are key, especially those that build on past and current successes of ENGOs*

The CRE Project enabled CERCOPAN to build the community education center between Iko Esai community and Rhoko Camp. The centre is potentially the defining feature of the project, acting as a node for education and awareness-raising and for fostering community pride in the forest's resources.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations put forth by the Ecotourism Write-shop are comprehensive and insightful for policy makers (see Appendix Two). The critical success factors provide further suggestions by supporting and enhancing the work of civil society towards an effective ecotourism program in CRS. From the CRE Project and the NCC's experience with ecotourism thus far, some key recommendations for this work include:

1) Working with a community-based approach to conservation and ecotourism planning;
2) Raising awareness and educating on the value of the rainforest in both rural and urban areas;
3) Engaging in a tri-sector approach to ecotourism planning and implementation with civil society (CBOs and ENGOs), government ministries and the private sector; and
4) Maintaining and enhancing a cross-sectoral network of individuals and groups to support the success of this work.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Ecotourism in CRS offers a unique opportunity to address the economic, social and ecological needs of communities. As Abam (2003) eloquently states:

> "Cross River State has become a metaphor for ecotourism. From the snaky hills of the ranch resorts of Obudu to the pristine waters of the Kwa Falls and the still-in-the-works creative phenomena called Tinapa, literally translated as a place of life, the government of Cross River State has created special brands from scenic gifts that nature has genuinely endowed the state with."

Clearly, the potential for ecotourism is far greater than the economic and ecological risks of continued illegal logging and deforestation. The degree to which this becomes a reality is yet to be determined. To end with the inspiring words of Jennifer Castleden, Project Coordinator of the CRE Project:

> "Cross River State provides an exceptional opportunity for government, civil society and private sector-driven collaboration to set the international standard for ecotourism. The challenge is yours — the promises are worth it."[3]

Tropical rainforest surrounding Rhoko Camp, near the community of Iko Esai

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[3] Quoted in Abam (2004) p. 6

APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL ECOTOURISM PROJECTS

Real ecotourism holidays provide a "walk on the wild side" experience that supports conservation and the local people. In many cases, unscrupulous operators exploit the ecotourism buzzword, but doing nothing to support conservation or local people. Businesses such as *Responsible Travel*, based in the UK, carefully screen all the tour companies and lodges they promote to ensure real ecotourism holidays.[4] Some of these include:

Gorilla Safari in Rwanda
Tracking the mountain gorilla.

Andalucia Birdwatching Tours
Two of the best birding centres that cover a variety of habitats.

Botswana Safari; Lion conservation
Join in with lion research.

Trinidad & Tobago Holiday, Tailor Made Tours
Ideal for naturalists & bird-watchers.

India Tiger Conservation Holiday
Become a ranger & experience wildlife & conservation.

Snow Leopard Conservation Holiday: Ladakh, India
Explore this magnificent environment.

Chimpanzee & Gorilla Safari in Uganda
Inside the world of chimpanzees.

Kenya Bird-Watching & Game Safari
Visit this wonderful landscape with all the wildlife you can imagine.

Swim with Whales, Tonga
Swim with humpback whales in Tonga.

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[4] http://www.responsibletravel.com/TripSearch/Ecotourism/ActivityCategory100020.htm

APPENDIX 2: DRAFT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON ECOTOURISM IN CROSS RIVER STATE

Theme – Natural Resource Management

Issues:
1. Natural Resources as the mainstay of ecotourism.
2. Environmental degradation reduces opportunities for ecotourism.
3. Rural poverty works against ecotourism development.
4. Poor management of natural resources threatens the ecological wealth of Cross River State.

Recommendations:
1. The Chiefs, youths, women and other stakeholders should all be involved in natural resource management.
2. Local people should be involved in thedecision making of natural resource management.
3. Census of biological diversity (plants, animals, microorganisms) should be included in ecotourism development.
4. Local skills or technology (craft) should be developed for economic empowerment.
5. The stakeholders should be educated regularly on natural resource management.
6. Ecotourism strategies should include sustainable land use practices for agriculture, settlement, grazing, etc. to ensure that soil fertility, watershed, and climate are retained.

Theme – Socio-Economic Impacts of Ecotourism

Issue:
1. Ecotourism can have both positive and negative environmental socio-economic impacts. Positive impacts include income generation and employment, whereas negative impacts include soil erosion, water contamination and loss in cultural value.

Recommendations:
1. Where ecotourism takes place, there must be a socio-economic and environmental impact assessment with accompanying recommendations for the site location.
2. Local community members should be directly involved in the ecotourism project planning process.
3. Ecotourism projects should employee local people first.
4. Each local community should develop their own ecotourism policy in conformity with regulating bodies that will guide such activities as the number of visitors, groups, duration of stay at the site, what sites tourists will visit, potential restriction of tourists' movements during the stay, etc.
5. Any ecotourism project should build the capacity of local community members to host clients, manage ecotourism resources and activities.
6. Any ecotourism project should minimize environmental impacts and restore degraded ecosystems (trail building, signage, parking areas, viewing sites, latrines, etc.)
7. Local customs, norms and beliefs should be honored and followed by ecotourism operators and their clients.
8. Local cultural activities/displays such as music, dance and arts/crafts should be encouraged and fostered.

Theme – Finances

Issues:
1. Absence of government policies on financial institutions for tourism development.
2. Lack of specialized financial institutions for tourism development.
3. Inadequate government incentives to enhance tourism for all.
4. Inefficient utilization of taxes from tourism and related bodies.
5. Lack of coordination in generating revenues from visits to tourism sites.

Recommendations:
1. Government should compel financial institutions to provide special credit facilities for tourism development.
2. As we have special banks for agriculture, commerce, industry, cooperative banks, etc., government should also establish banks mainly for tourism development.
3. a) Government should provide infrastructure facilities such as roads, electricity, water, etc. at tourist sites.
   b) Government should make land available for tourism investors.
4. Government should utilize taxes from companies, tour operators (i.e. owners of airlines), owners of hotels and affiliates and the National Union of Road Transport Workers for tourism development.
5. Visitors or tourists to tourism sites should be compelled to pay a token fee for visiting those sites.
6. Local communities should be encouraged to produce arts and crafts that can be sold as souvenirs to tourists.
7. Hotels and restaurants should be established around tourist sites.
8. Tour operation and community tour guiding should be encouraged.
9. Travel agencies should be encouraged.

Theme – Governance and Implementation

Issue:
1. Indiscriminant logging.
2. Non-timber forest products and other natural resources are overexploited.
3. Lack of community involvement in the Obudu Ranch Resort development and in Tinapa City.

Recommendations:
1. Cross River State Government to enhance Forestry Commission through adequate financing and legislation to regulate logging activities in order to conserve the natural state of forests.
2. Forest communities to be assisted by the Cross River State Tourism Bureau and private sector to demarcate part of their land for tourism purposes in order to encourage community-based ecotourism.
3. To conduct a short-term study on the key features of ecotourism in Cross River State to be carried out by the Ministry of Trade and Investment.
4. As a follow-up on the above studies, community members will have to be trained on alternative economic activities.

5. Government to implement intervention programs such as micro enterprise development through the State and Federal Poverty Alleviation Program for improved livelihood in communities.

6. There should be a deliberate policy empowering the Tourism Bureau to enforce contractor's adherence to Environmental Impact Assessments on ecotourism projects as well as ensuring the mitigation of identified impacts.

7. There should be a committee set up with local representation with regard to further developments on the Obudu Ranch Resort Project, Cable Car Project and the Tinapa City development.

8. Communities should be involved in planning profit sharing models for ecotourism initiatives.

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