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en breve

Responsible Tourism Series



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TOURISM AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES - LESSONS FROM RECENT EXPERIENCES IN ECO AND ETHNO TOURISM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN by Dorte Verner

The trend toward new tourism niches in Latin America and the Caribbean (hereafter, LAC) has brought benefits, but also costs to the region's indigenous peoples. As the World Bank social and environmental portfolios in LAC¹ reveal, work with indigenous groups has frequently favored tourism as a strategy for empowerment. At the same time, urban, rural development and infrastructure projects have also increased tourism opportunities, including visits to indigenous communities. Bank experience indicates the increasing need for dialogue and greater understanding of the issues involved in these cases. This *En Breve* offers an overview of the concerns generated by "ethno-tourism" and, through consultation with three experts who have worked with indigenous groups in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia, proposes approaches recommended to reduce negative impacts.

¹ Recent projects include: The Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon –PIMA part of a rural development project in Peru, The Bio-Itza Maya Community Management Project in Guatemala- Peten, Indigenous Community Development in Argentina, Tourism Development for Lake Titicaca in Bolivia, and Local Economic Development in Vilcanota Valley, Peru.

Tourism can benefit indigenous communities

Of the 54 communities participating in the Indigenous Community Development Project in Argentina (see Box 1) an impressive 40 (75%) chose to invest in tourism for one of the two projects financed by the project. Clearly, this majority saw benefits from tourism. As cited by Jorge Nahual, of the Coordination of Mapuche Organizations, tourism can increase community and personal income, and bring empowerment and self-confidence to traditionally subjugated peoples. A companion *En Breve*, focused on local economic development and tourism, discusses the exemplary cases of Chalalan and Solar de Uyuni in Bolivia, where tourism has provided two indigenous communities with a means of survival and development. Egido Guerra, director of the FIEC Social Responsibility Institute of Brazil (see Box 2) adds the spiritual and political gains tourism can bring for indigenous peoples. In general, the experiences in Latin America have led to greater respect for the indigenous groups on the part of national and local authorities and to their active incorporation in development planning for tourism as respected players.

Andres Barona, delegate from the Galiván Tatatao EcoTourism Monitoring Program (See Box 3) points to the frequent justification for eco-tourism as a means to benefit indigenous communities without detrimental social or environmental consequences and to increase incomes for tribal communities while also lowering pressure on natural resources. Barona and his colleagues confirm that tourism operators are becoming more environmentally and socially aware, and increasingly motivated by eco-tourism.

But tourism also has downsides for indigenous peoples

As part of its program to work with indigenous peoples, the Vice-Ministry for Tourism in Colombia consulted with the Kogi of the Sierra Nevada about developing ethno-tourist circuits. The Kogi, who command some of their country's most beautiful landscapes and pre-Colombian treasures (including *La Ciudad Perdida*), flatly refused to become a tourism destination. The Vice-Ministry of Tourism, respecting their preferences, is implementing a policy to protect the Kogi from tourism. What motivated the Kogi?

For one thing, suggests Andres Barona, the direct economic benefits from tourism are rarely as great as hoped. At the Ywae Visitor Center (YVC) in the Colombian Amazon, he points out, while the communities receive around 10% of the YVC's net income as equity partners and twenty community members enjoy full time employment, the community pays a high cultural and environmental cost. The number of visitors to YVC has doubled in the past four years, which means more pressure on natural resources to produce crafts and food for tourists. Visitors also expose indigenous communities to a new level of consumerism ('they've got NEAT STUFF'), and for better or worse, the economic benefits also lead to new needs: flash lights, schools supplies and "stuff". In only five years the younger generations are showing a new and marked disinterest in using the Tikuna language, and in being or looking Tikuna. Barona cites increasing participation in the cash economy and decreasing bio diversity in the Colombian Amazon resulting even from a sensitive and responsible tourism sector.

Jorge Nahual also described the tension created in Mapuche communities, whose values emphasize cosmic links and spiritual questioning, by the appearance of consumer society. The "Che", or the person in Mapuche, finds his self image diminished. In more direct terms, Amanda Stronza, Professor of Applied Biodiversity at Texas A&M University, has carried out a long term study of an indigenous community in Peru and its self-managed tourism program. Indeed it has led to an overall increase in income, but not necessarily to shared income growth. Incomes are concentrated now among the town's new "caciques" - tour operators and tour guides who no longer take part in traditional production. The tour operators have purchased pieces of the protected forests to raise cattle. Thus the traditional tribal structure and bio-diversity have been dealt a blow from the tourism.

Reduce negative impacts of tourism on indigenous peoples and bolster benefits

Despite these negative impacts, the same experts report that positive, sustained experiences of tourism do exist, and have recommended strategies for both government, and communities to follow.

Box 1 Tourism Arises from Empowerment of Indigenous Communities in Argentina

Jorge Nahuel is the designated spokesperson for the Mapuche in Argentina, appointed by the XIX Parliament of the Mapuche people of Neuquen. He is the founder of the Coordination of Mapuche Organizations in Puelmapu, Argentina. He is the director of Peoples and Natural Resources for the National Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development for Argentina. Jorge coordinated the World Bank Project "Indigenous Community Development" in six provinces in Argentina between 2003 and 2007. This project was not planned to develop tourism, as it supported 52 indigenous communities to discuss their own needs and to come up with their own development proposals. The project then financed two priority works for each community, as long as the community managed the purchase of materials, contracting, construction, and maintenance.

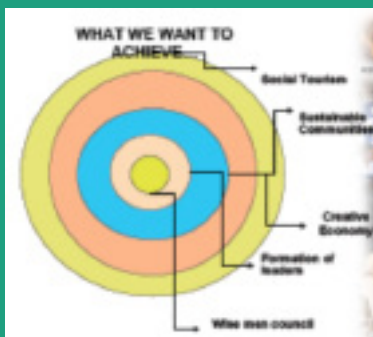
As it turned out, a full half of the communities opted for local tourism projects, among others: a handicrafts production and sales center at nature parks in Misiones, community guide programs, home visits (bed and breakfast); a tourist welcome program in Salta; and camping sites in Tucuman. The tourism investments have led to a new and sustained source of income for the indigenous communities. More important, perhaps, as the communities include with their welcome messages some instruction for the tourists in both what to expect in indigenous communities, and in what their indigenous hosts expect of them, the programs have also led to the empowering of the local communities who remain in charge of their visitors, and in tact. The Argentine government has adopted the local-management and empowerment approach and has requested two major follow-on projects which may build a new concept of tourism in rural Argentina.

Jorge Nahual presents the following seven principles recommended by indigenous organizations for government programs and policies to ensure the sustainability of indigenous communities and minimize adverse impacts on them. The first and central principle is the recognition of sovereignty for indigenous lands and territories, and with that the recognition of indigenous organizations as the sole interlocutors. Second, tourism should operate within a framework whereby indigenous peoples can reap the full benefits of the value chain of the tourism industry. Third, comprehensive planning should build tourism into the land use plans, but always under indigenous management. Fourth, indigenous groups should also track impact evaluation and monitoring of tourism's environmental and cultural impacts. Fifth, any and all use of natural, biological or genetic resources from indigenous territories should be subject to a signed agreement signifying the consent of the indigenous groups. (In Argentina a model agreement has been developed as the "*Consentimiento Libre Fundamentado Previo*".) Sixth, government should provide support as requested by indigenous groups for planning, information exchange and capacity building. Seventh, and finally, the

national government should help to build indigenous capacity to take up the key decision making role concerning cultural knowledge and practices, and the biodiversity in indigenous territory.

Box 2 Indigenous Support Programs turn to Tourism in Ceara, Brazil

Ashoka Fellow, Egidio Guerra is also a founder and director of FIEC, Federation of Industries of Ceara (FIEC), which has launched a series of programs for social investment in the province of Ceara, including a broad program to promote Indigenous culture, with groups from the Tremembé, the Jenipapo, Piaguary, Tapepa and Kanindé peoples. The program has begun by working with each ethnic group to discover marketable products. Thus far workshops and sales have been developed for products ranging from herbal and traditional medicines (from the Tapepa) to sculpture, ceramics, painting and embroidery with native materials.



The program plans to build on this first phase to assure indigenous participation in all the linkages supporting an indigenous tourism business. Three cultural centers are planned for indigenous communities along with a National Culture Fair for Indigenous Crafts. Long term, the program hopes to develop an integrated framework for sustainable “social tourism” bolstered by formation of leaders among the indigenous groups and built on sustainable communities, and economic creativity, as the diagram shows

Egido Guerra urges a five point methodology for working on tourism programs with indigenous groups. First, he cites the words of Paulo Freire, “Pautada no principio dialógico”, to focus the need on continuous dialogue. Second he cites the need to understand and appreciate different knowledge groups. In dialogue with each ethnic group he stresses the third point to bring out, share and keep a constant reminder of each one’s needs and anxieties. Fourth, any project requires equal partners to build together – defining together the lines of action in tandem with the profile of each ethnic group. Finally, Guerra says, “Celebrate the results together.”

From the Yewae Visitor Center of the Colombian Amazon, Andres Barona reports the Amazonian experience has led indigenous groups to urge full monitoring and continued discussion of social and cultural traditions. The Yewae model emphasizes the use of the Maloka and of the Chagra (and minga), keeping traditional practices alive beyond the tourist visits. Barona recommends that any tourism program should be accompanied by strengthening cultural ties through education. Traditions and culture should be included in school curriculums, for both indigenous and non-indigenous as well. Practices shared with tourists should “maintain and reinforce the use and transmission of traditional knowledge that sustains cultural identity and regional biodiversity.”

Yes, Barona says, bathrooms and running water are a positive contribution, but new technologies should be adopted with care. “Develop mechanisms and adopt those for which no traditional solutions exist and which are consistent with local cultural and environmental conditions – for instance, safe drinking water and waste water management.” Barona points to the Tikuna town of Puerto Nariño which has a visitor interpretation center, but has banned the use of wheels. He also says that women “seem to have a better perception of sustainable management,” and should be the guardians of tourism projects.



In this Amazon setting, the Tikuna peoples are rediscovering themselves through tourism.

Box 3 The Tikuna Experience with Eco Tourism

Andres Barona one of the founders of Fundación Entropika, in Leticia, Amazonas, Colombia, graduated from Los Andes University in Colombia as a biologist. His interest in ethnobotany, drew him into the Amazon region where he

has worked with local, indigenous communities, and has participated in the monitoring of the Calderon River and in surveys of the Amacayacu National Park in Colombia. He reports on the 20 years of Amacayacu experience with tourism, and with its native Tikuna community.

Following the destruction of the last Tikuna malokas in the Amacayacu National Park in the Colombian Amazon and the onset of the drug bonanza in Colombia during the mid to late 1970's, the Colombian government recognized the Tikuna rights to their territories in the National Park. In 1985 the government and the Tikuna joined forces to initiate an ecotourism program in the protected area. The construction of the YAWAE visitor center following the design of a traditional Tikuna maloka, set the trend for an ecotourism program with the indigenous communities. Indigenous interpreters were promoted and trained to organize ecotourism activities in the park. In 2004 the Gavilán Tatatao monitoring program began tracking impact on biodiversity and on local culture, with the objective of defining the carrying capacity for each ecotourism activity in the park. In the subsequent five years the number of annual visitors rose from 4,575 to 8,857, and the number of tour operators in the area from 16 to 28.

In 2005, the YAWAE center came under the management of the country's largest hotel chain (Decameron) and largest travel agency (Aviatur), but agreements have assured that in the long term YAWAE ecotourism services will be operated entirely by the local indigenous communities. On the one hand, the local communities are counting the benefits of the tourism boom in terms of running water and sanitation, school supplies for children, construction and maintenance of the malokas for Tikuna tradition, and for sharing with tourists. On the other hand the population boom, coupled with ballooning numbers of visitors, have increased pressure on the area's ecosystems.

Crafts, foods, shelters, mean cutting down more trees and increased hunting and fishing. Barona's experience makes a clear case for monitoring the impact of tourism on the local environment, and on the local cultures.

Tread with care

World Bank specialists in socially sustainable development have concluded that tourism can benefit indigenous communities when it is well-managed, and when the following guidelines are respected:

1. Project scale – keep the project small, the community should stay in control;
2. Project type – stress participation in community activities - eco tourism will bring in more “responsible tourists”;
3. Market tourism by relating directly to conservation efforts and to sustainable biodiversity;
4. Develop tourism as part of a livelihood strategy for individuals and for the community;
5. Develop tourism hand in hand with the revitalization of indigenous culture;
6. Assure management and control of tourism throughout the region by indigenous organizations; and
7. Consolidate indigenous demands of territory, identity and autonomy in any and all tourism projects.

As the Mapuche say, “The forest is of no use without the knowledge of its inhabitants.... If the forest is gone, all will be lost”

About the Author

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About En Breve...

“En breve” is a regular series of notes highlighting recent lessons emerging from the operational and analytical program of the World Bank's Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

In this special series on Responsible Tourism, we present the lessons learned by the different sectors in their various tourism-related projects regarding socially responsible and environmentally sustainable tourism. Forthcoming notes in this series will include: (I) An overview on tourism; (II) Crime, violence, at-risk youth and tourism; (III) tourism and indigenous peoples; (IV) local economic development and tourism, (V) Macro-Economic Impacts of Tourism – – A Case Study from Panama, and (VI) Tourism's Energy Challenge.



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