

Integrated Rural Development and Planning

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 15 April 2019

Keywords

Globalization, poverty, communities

ABSTRACT

The pervasive poverty in rural areas has represented a continuing concern of national governments and development assistance agencies. One response to pervasive poverty has been the design of local institutions to enable rural communities to mobilize their own resources to generate growth and improve the quality of life. Programmes organized under the rubric of 'community development' were a major focus of development assistance during the 1950s and early 1960s. During the early 1970s concern about the distributional implications of economic growth again emerged as a major theme in development thought and development policy. This concern gave rise to two new development assistance approaches — 'integrated rural development' and 'basic needs' programmes. In this paper, I attempt to trace the development, accomplishments and limitations of the community development, integrated rural development and basic needs approaches.

1. Introduction

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.

Rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanization have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have replaced resource extraction and agriculture as dominant economic drivers. The need for rural communities to approach development from a wider perspective has created more focus on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentive for agricultural or resource based businesses. Education, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, and social infrastructure all play an important role in developing rural regions. Rural development is also characterized by its emphasis on locally produced economic development strategies. In contrast to urban regions, which have many similarities, rural areas are highly distinctive from one another. For this reason there are a large variety of rural development approaches used globally.

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After independence, many development programs and plans were started in India, like Adult Education Plan, Family Planning and Health Program and programs for the development of rural and, small industries. etc. But, due to the diversity of these plans and the differences in their implementation, areas and objects, there was a lack of mutual integrity and coordination due to which many difficulties and administrative problems arose. Though, the various programs had their own achievements yet due to lack of integrity and

coordination the need for a wide and comprehensive rural development program was felt.

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Rural development actions are intended to further the social and economic development of rural communities.

Rural development programs were historically top-down approaches from local or regional authorities, regional development agencies, NGOs, national governments or international development organizations. However, a critical 'organization gap' identified during the late 1960s, reflecting on the disjunction between national organizations and rural

communities led to a great focus on community participation in rural development agendas. Now, local populations can also bring about endogenous initiatives for development. The term is not limited to issues of developing countries. In fact many developed countries have very active rural development programs.

Rural development aims at finding ways to improve rural lives with participation of rural people themselves, so as to meet the required needs of rural communities. The outsider may not understand the setting, culture, language and other things prevalent in the local area. As such, rural people themselves have to participate in their sustainable rural development. In developing countries like Nepal, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, China, integrated development approaches are being followed up. In this context, many approaches and ideas have been developed and implemented, for instance, bottom-up approach, PRA- Participatory Rural Appraisal, RRA- Rapid Rural Appraisal, Working With People (WWP), etc. The New Rural Reconstruction Movement in China has been actively promoting rural development through their ecological farming projects.

2. Community Ecotourism

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." TIES is an example of a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting companies in developing ecotourism practices and promoting sustainable community development. Ecotourism provides an alternative form of travel to mass tourism. Mass tourism is the idea of visiting a place with minimal responsibility to the local community and environment. Tourism, the world's largest industry of more than 10% of total employment and 11% of global GDP, is also a quickly growing industry as "total tourist trips are predicted to increase to 1.6 billion by 2020". In order to accommodate these rising needs in the tourism industry, there must be a shift within this industry. One in particular is the need to protect the environment and respect the local culture.

According to the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism is growing three times faster than the tourism industry. This implies the already changing phenomenon occurring in traveling. Similarly, the World Conservation Union goes one step further in defining ecotourism to include enjoying and appreciating nature, have low negative visitor impact, and providing socio-economic involvement to the local populations. As ecotourism is growing, it is also focusing on especially vulnerable locations to climate change. In a neoliberalism theory, ecotourism is a win-win for both the host and tourist. This is because there is an effort for conservation when jobs are available outside of activities such as logging that harm the environment and the intrinsic value of the environment is taken into consideration. Additionally, ecotourism enhances social capital for both the host and tourist when engaging in social interaction and learning about other cultures.

However, because ecotourism is most popular in vulnerable environments, it may unintentionally exploit the community causing a serious social justice issue. The idea of community ecotourism is placing the tourism activities in the hands of the local community. It addresses the needs of the tourism businesses to minimize negative impacts and

maximize positive impacts in all three parts of the community – social, economic, and environmental. Community ecotourism resolves one issue with ecotourism in particular, the input of the community hosting the tourism. Governments and outside agencies have pushed communities into hosting tourists which can sometimes cause more harm if the community is not prepared without relevant knowledge, leadership, or capacity. An example of such occurrence is in Montego Bay in which international organizations brought tourists to already westernized sites, which harmed this degraded environment. Another example is the case of Papua New Guinea's Crater Mountain. Setting aside their ethnic tension, the clans planned a tourist lodge for two years that the government denied in five minutes. The lack of collusion among the local clans and the government created tension and failure for all parties. With community ecotourism, the community itself primarily sees the venture to success and receives the economic benefit, rather than government or third party organizations.

As a whole, the rise in demand of tourism to exotic places as they become more accessible provides an opportunity for vulnerable and economically impoverished communities. In traditional tourism, these communities are often exploited and their resources depleted. It also includes the social inequities when considering the power in the host-guest relationship. Community ecotourism empowers the relationship of the host and guest so that both can learn from a different culture and how to maneuver such differences. When addressed properly, equitable relationships blossom in the national and global sphere. Unlike traditional tourism, this alternative tourism experience enables people to engage positively in the community's way of life and learn how they interact with the environment. Community ecotourism can act as a solution to social justice issues that arise with the tourism industry in respect to the economy, environment, and culture.

3. Benefits of Community Ecotourism

Generally, success is the benefits outweighing the costs. A more concrete measure of success for ecotourism is ensuring that the tourism industry operates within the location's capacity to handle such activities in the three areas of ecotourism – economy, environment, and culture. One such form of capacity is economic capacity so that the tourism industry does not displace sustainable local economic activity already in place. Additionally, there is an environmental carrying capacity, the limit at which the environment is not degraded from tourism. This is especially important as many ecotourism locations are in locations vulnerable to climate change, such as along the coast. There is also the idea of cultural capacity in which the tourism industry remains authentic and can maintain local practices. With addressing these three capacity measures, many problems mass tourism places on the host community are resolved.

Economic

In contrast with traditional tourism, community ecotourism is often a tool for economic development to promote both capital inflow and employment opportunities to the community. Thus, it is often targeting more impoverished areas where implemented. It encourages entrepreneurship for local members to organize the community in implementing and running successful community-based ecotourism enterprises.

Both financial and social capital is placed in the indigenous community, driving further enhancements of the community ecotourism program. This capital inflow can then be used to help the development of infrastructure, education, and health practices. Community-based ecotourism places an emphasis on local businesses and reinforces supporting local endeavors. Not only does the capital increase, the intrinsic value of the environment increases. In Zanzibar, the idea of ecotourism has enabled entrepreneurs to give tours of their home villages and use the revenue to support themselves as well as give back to the community. It has also helped development in conservational ways including increasing investment in solar energy. As a whole, community-based ecotourism can overall increase the economic value of a previously impoverished area through providing dignified jobs and capital into the local economy.

Environmental

Along with economic value, community ecotourism enhances the value of the environment for both the host and the traveler. As a result, community ecotourism becomes an incentive for conservation. For the community, their environment becomes a showcase to the tourist and brings a greater desire to maintain it. In mass tourism, the average tourist holds little responsibility in the impact they have on the environment and often depletes resources. Community ecotourism gives the tourist a greater stake in conservation efforts because of their involvement in the local culture. Community ecotourism becomes a potential solution to bring social justice to those suffering from side effects of mass tourism in locations most vulnerable to climate change. The Galapagos Islands was one of the initial ecotourism destinations. As the programs have continued to evolve in combatting ecotourism issues, specifically with maintaining cultural capacity, one of the main findings from community ecotourism are the programs associated with environmental conservation. When visiting national parks, guides must be with the tourists to ensure they stay on the paths and do not harm the environment during nature walks. One in particular sets tourists on projects to help with environmental restoration, economic development projects, and biodiversity conservation. These "travel philanthropists" are more involved tourists who want to appreciate the natural beauty of the destination from a completely different viewpoint. The ecotourism model on a community-based level enables conservation efforts to come from both the tourist and the community to maximize results.

Sociocultural

The sociocultural aspect of ecotourism is that the local tourist becomes more engaged in the community and their culture. This can be from learning a religious tradition or supporting a local handicraft. Tourism can at times force more injustices on the host community. It inculcates a sense of inequality in the relationships if the tourist feels they have superior knowledge. Community-based ecotourism places more responsibility on the tourist to learn from the other culture. For example, in South Africa, community ecotourism has been especially beneficial after the apartheid because of a renewed attention towards local cultures that are selling traditional handicrafts and showing cultural tours. The community-based ecotourist is often more interested in engaging with the local

community. This can also entail building relationships and decreasing the social gap. Specifically, engagement in nationalism, socioeconomic conditions, and similar age groups can help narrow the social gap and decrease stereotypes. This leads to a more positive cultural understanding on both sides. This effect can even go beyond the tourist's journey. After visiting such communities and learning about their livelihood, studies have found that people gain a newfound activism to contribute back to the community. This socio-cultural connection with the community can in return bring about greater resources to this community to help promote education, conservation, disease prevention, and other needs. It is through the sociocultural aspect that enhances the tourist's engagement with the economy and environment to maximize the overall community-based ecotourism experience.

Criticisms

While under the neoliberalism theory, ecotourism is an overall winning situation, there are many issues associated with ecotourism when poorly implemented. Community ecotourism is a solution to many of the flaws detailed.

Inherently Flawed

Compared to responsible tourism and voluntourism, there is an added importance on respect for the environment and being environmentally sustainable while traveling. By definition, travel inherently harms the environment by getting to the location, using more resources than the location is used to, and producing more waste than normal. It adds an overall stress to areas most vulnerable to global warming, such as coastlines. One tourism spot that has struggled to implement community ecotourism is Tanzania. Tanzania practices a kind of ecotourism that focuses exclusively on the environment, also called nature tourism. In Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area, tourists come to look exclusively at the nature bringing primarily economic benefit with arguably negative impact on sociocultural and environmental factors. As a result, the environmental capacity is exhausted and little attention is paid to the culture and environment. It has created a situation in which the environment is now degraded because of tourism and the economic returns are going to organizations outside of the local economy. Community-based ecotourism helps address this flaw through working more small-scale to not expend more resources than available.

Greenwashing

Greenwashing is the idea of using an environmentally friendly label on low impact conservation efforts. These certifications are often marketing tactics that can actually promote low impact projects in which the costs can be greater than the benefit. This idea is common with certain lodging as people look for green marketing to attempt to have an ecotourism experience with minimal responsibilities as a tourist. Cox offers that small-scale, privatized ecotourism enterprises, such as community ecotourism, can avoid such downfalls of green washing. With community ecotourism, the host community has a greater involvement in trying to protect their environment to eliminate any harmful behavior to the environment. However, these low impact campaigns can cause harm to already vulnerable communities, amplifying the institutionalized poverty found in many of these locations.

Effective community ecotourism must allow the community to define their environmental needs.

Economic Downfalls

While seen as a driver in the industry, economic returns may not be as high as anticipated. Community ecotourism tends to be more small-scale and does not attract a higher income population. As a result, community ecotourism brings more backpackers and low-income travelers who wish to travel cheaply and thus do not support the local economy. It could in turn result in haggling throughout the journey to receive the lowest prices. When issues like this arise, it may cost more for the community to host tourists than the return it brings, especially when taking into account environmental and social costs. The important part for community ecotourism is to ensure that tourists are leaving an overall positive impact on the community and that capital is reinvested into the community. So, community ecotourism in practice can do more damage both to the environment and local economy while having no positive impact on the people when not properly practiced.

Furthermore, the challenge of community ecotourism is that it is balancing market objectives with both social and environmental aims, whereas competitors that offer more luxuries have primarily financial objectives. In order to lead community ecotourism to success, there must be a clear sense of leadership and direction for the long-term impact of this organization in the local community. When looking at what makes a successful responsible tourism enterprise, research has found the focus on strong leadership, clear market orientation, and organizational culture to be essential. In community ecotourism, this requires appointing a leader or board that can focus on meeting the triple bottom line. Community ecotourism can redefine the tourism industry as sustainable travel continues to have high consumer demand and thwart the harms associated with mass tourism.

Authenticity

Finally, in terms of the sociocultural aspect of community-based ecotourism, it is essential for the community to be respected for their own cultures. At times, the growing demand of tourists can cause tourist sites to adapt to the demands and expectations of the tourist. Instead of showcasing the culture, the community may have a show of what the tourist would expect the culture to be. Community-based ecotourism often eliminates this concern as well when they are responsible for showcasing their own lifestyle to the tourist.

4. Case Studies

Cambodia

One example in particular is southwestern Cambodia, which successfully runs community-based ecotourism to address such issues. First, this program targets villages of low GDP for ecotourism to help provide jobs and education for these communities. The local people in the villages determine the tourism activities available with an emphasis on showing their local culture. In fact, Reimer and Walter have found that in Cambodia, populations have limited their logging and other harmful practices because ecotourism has given a more successful industry and greater awareness to the intrinsic value

of the environment. By placing ecotourism in the hands of the local, the least amount of harm is assessed. However, it may limit financial trajectory because of mismanagement or lack of attraction. These concerns with ecotourism can be mitigated through education and careful implementation.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is known for its biodiversity with having 5% of the world's biodiversity on its 0.035% of earth's surface. In 2007, the government announced that it would support four types of tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, beach tourism, and rural community based tourism. A specific part of Costa Rica that has benefited from community-based ecotourism is Tortuguero, a turtle-nesting area surrounded by a national park with an impoverished community. Nearly the entire population of Tortuguero is working in the tourism industry, as community-based ecotourism is breeding entrepreneurs. Economically, the largest issue of Tortuguero is to maintain the community-based aspect of the tourism as they continue to resist institutionalization from the outside. Environmentally, conservation has been seen as a priority in order to motivate the ecotourism industry. However, because Tortuguero is only accessible by boat, there has been an increase in noise and pollution. Additionally, beach paths had to be inputted to avoid disturbing nesting turtles. In terms of the sociocultural aspect, training and education of the local community has become a priority to ensure their ability to continue as a community-based endeavor. The community has learned to become more organized and work together to build conservation efforts to support their community. There are now nonprofit organizations in Costa Rica that will train local small businesses to successfully run community ecotourism enterprises.

5. Future Implications

Community ecotourism becomes an issue of social justice. The communities that are becoming popular tourist sites are impoverished and are using ecotourism as a tool for economic development. These communities, especially when looking at indigenous tourism, are often lacking voices in the greater political sphere and faced with limited resources. On top of that, they tend to be especially vulnerable to climate change. This brings greater attention to the need of conservation efforts. Through success of community ecotourism, the community can have a larger voice as they show successful development and become a greater participating member in the global sphere.

As the tourism industry continues to grow, it is imperative to continue developing more sustainable avenues to participate in such endeavors. One way is making travelers aware of the potential harm their activities may have on the host culture. A continuing theme is the importance of dialogue and defining the ideals for each party. While stakeholders want the same idea of economic improvement, environmental sustainability, and cross-cultural relationships, the end goals are often defined differently. Opening a reflexive dialogue that is understandable to all is essential. Overall, the success of smaller enterprises that have thrived under strong leadership and community efforts will help tourism be a tool for economic development. Community ecotourism also opens the discussion for the purpose of land usage and the difference of

preservation now over usage in the future. Community ecotourism highlights the importance of seeing the community's usage of the land. It can bring a common goal for science and local populations alike. Community ecotourism

offers an opportunity for the tourism industry to succeed in conservation efforts while enhancing tourism efforts through a grassroots network effort.

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