Water Equity in Tourism

A Human Right – A Global Responsibility
This report argues that for tourism to be truly sustainable, its development and management must be premised upon a respect for human rights, including the right to water and sanitation for essential personal, domestic and livelihood needs. In many cases, tourism development is negatively impacting the quality, availability and accessibility of freshwater for local people, amounting to an infringement of their water and sanitation rights. This is posing risks to community health and well-being, hampering socioeconomic mobility – particularly of women – harming livelihoods, threatening food security, and undermining the sustainability of the tourism sector itself. These issues are explored and evidenced through a series of case studies from five popular tourism destinations in the global South: Zanzibar (Tanzania), Goa and Kerala (South India), The Gambia (West Africa) and Bali (Indonesia). All regions are highly dependent on tourism as a means to generate jobs and economic growth. However, tourism cannot fulfill its potential as a contributor to poverty alleviation and sustainable development while it so often causes the unsustainable depletion and inequitable appropriation of freshwater. While the challenges in each case study destination are varied and complex, emerging common themes are identified. These include shortcomings around infrastructure, governance, information and planning, coordination and cooperation, as well as issues of rule-breaking, unregulated water privatization, and low levels of awareness. Additional pressures on water resources stem from urbanisation, population growth, climate change and wider watershed degradation. These challenges are likely to be similar to those faced in other tourism destinations around the world. Opportunities for improving water equity in each destination are also flagged, along with some examples of good practice, which could provide useful learning for elsewhere. More broadly, it is argued that the inequitable and unsustainable depletion of water resources in tourism destinations is a shared problem that requires a shared solution. Stakeholders in government, the tourism sector, the donor community and civil society all have important roles to play. A range of recommendations is offered in this regard. The core components of these are captured in nine Principles of Water Equity in Tourism. In particular, governments should not allow water and sanitation rights to be compromised by tourism. Clear regulatory frameworks for tourism and water resource management, which are based upon integrated and participatory planning, should be established and enforced in this regard. As well as taking further steps to reduce their water consumption, tourism industry stakeholders need to recognise and enact their business responsibility to respect human rights, as set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNHRC, 2011). The Guiding Principles offer a valuable framework for managing human rights impacts through a process of due diligence. Approaches emanating from the CEO Water Mandate, another major global initiative, also provide useful guidance for effective business engagement in sustainable water management (CEO Water Mandate, 2010). International donors must continue to fund improvements to water infrastructure in the global South, and encourage sustainable tourism founded upon principles of participation and respect for human rights. There is a need for improved cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders with respect to the above, as well as with data gathering, information sharing, advocacy, capacity building, technology transfer, and sensitisation, including of tourists. These Principles of Water Equity in Tourism aim to capture the essential points from the recommendations of this report (see page 27). The Principles are underpinned by the notion of water as a human right. They are based on the recognition that there are shared risks to all water and tourism stakeholders if water is not managed equitably and sustainably. These shared risks give rise to a shared responsibility (CEO Water Mandate, 2010) of all stakeholders to work together to address water issues, with particular responsibility conferred to those inequitably consuming water, in positions of power and with greater access to resources.
Introduction

The right to water constitutes one of the most fundamental human rights. However, for many communities, particularly those living in the global South, this right is being compromised by tourism development.

The inequities of water access and consumption between resorts, large hotels and golf courses on the one hand, and local communities and small-scale tourism entrepreneurs on the other, are starkly played out in holiday destinations in some of the world’s poorest countries. Typically, tourism development is most intense in coastal areas and on islands, where potable water is scarce, while peak tourist seasons coincide with the driest months of the year. However, while hotels may have the money and resources to ensure their guests enjoy several showers a day, swimming pools, a round of golf, and lush landscaped gardens, neighbouring households, small businesses and agricultural producers can regularly endure severe water scarcity.

Every year about 2 million people – most of them children – die from diarrhoea-related diseases

A lack of access to clean water and sanitation both exacerbates poverty and is itself the result of poverty. Breaking this vicious cycle in the interests of sustainable development has been identified as a priority by the international community for many years. For example, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set a target of halving by 2015 the proportion of the population without access to water and sanitation (UN, 2000). However, today some 884 million people remain without access to safe water (UNGA, 2010), while every year about 2 million people – most of them children – die from diarrhoea-related diseases (WHO, 2011). In fact, more children die every year from lack of access to clean water and sanitation than die from AIDS, malaria and measles combined (UNGA, 2010).

More often than not, such water scarcity is not due to a physical absence of water, but is caused by inadequate or non-existent infrastructure, depleted or polluted groundwater supplies, and a lack of resources to secure water from other sources. The physically burdensome and time-consuming task of sourcing and collecting water usually falls to women.

In fact, just three per cent of the Earth’s water is fresh and some 70 per cent of this is frozen in the polar icecaps. Meanwhile, water demand has tripled in the last 50 years (SIWI). Changing rainfall patterns, rising sea levels and deforestation, the impacts of mining, intensive farming and other water-hungry industries, as well as rapid population growth and urbanisation, are placing unprecedented pressure on this precious resource (ibid).

This report explores these complex issues through five case studies. These illustrate how, in many cases, tourism’s consumption of water is exacerbating poverty, curtailing socioeconomic opportunities and degrading the environment, while undermining food production, livelihoods and wider sustainable development. Our research indicates that extreme pressure on water resources to supply tourist demand is, in many instances, directly contributing to water scarcity and inequity, through the appropriation of public water supplies, over-exploitation of aquifers, lowering of groundwater tables, and contamination of freshwater by saltwater and sewage.

In places, this scenario is leading to conflict and resentment among local people, while threatening the viability of the tourism sector. This also holds worrying implications given the heavy economic dependency on tourism in all the case study destinations.

Indeed, tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing services industries in the world. Global tourist arrivals are predicted to reach 1 billion in 2012 and 1.8 billion by 2030 – up from 940 million in 2010 (UNWTO, 2011). The potential for tourism to generate jobs, economic growth and foreign exchange, means it is harnessed as a development driver by countries all over the world. This includes many in the global South classed by the UN as ‘least developed countries’ (LDCs), as well as small island developing states (such as in the Caribbean).

These countries often lack major export industries, but are rich in coastlines and sunshine. Tourism is therefore keenly promoted as a tool for sustainable development and poverty reduction by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the recently formed UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development (SCTD).

However, this report argues that tourism cannot fulfil its potential as a contributor to poverty alleviation and sustainable development while it so often causes the exponential depletion, and inequitable appropriation, of freshwater resources. It is argued that for tourism to be truly sustainable, its development and management must be premised upon a respect for human rights, including the right to water.

Defining Water Equity in Tourism

Our use of the term ‘water equity in tourism’ is based on the UN definition of the right to water and sanitation. It refers to tourism development that does not infringe upon, or take precedence over, the right to water of communities in destinations for essential personal, domestic and livelihood needs. It implies the duty of states to uphold, fulfil and protect this right, including against abuses or unsustainable consumption by (tourism) businesses. Our definition also includes the responsibility of tourism businesses to respect human rights, as clarified in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (see page 6-7).
The right to water

Water is intrinsically linked to life, health and sanitation, food production, livelihoods, and our dignity and well-being as human beings. As such, the right to water is enshrined within a multitude of internationally recognised human rights standards. Some of these are legally binding on states, as well as conferring responsibilities on businesses.

This includes the right to life under Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the right to an adequate standard of living, enshrined in Article 25 of the UDHR and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and General Comment No. 15 on the Right to Water, issued by the UN Social and Economic Council (2002).

More recently, in 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution reaffirming the right to water and sanitation, while the UN Human Rights Council acknowledged that this right is legally binding in international law. These resolutions signify a strengthened recognition of the critical significance of water and sanitation to socioeconomic development, and a bid to bolster governments and the international community in meeting their commitments in this regard.

According to the UN, there are several components to the fulfilment of the right to water. Water must be sufficient, safe, physically accessible and affordable, with non-discriminatory and equitable access for personal, domestic, and essential livelihood needs.

Role of governments

The majority of governments are signatories to the major international human rights treaties. As such, they are obliged to respect, fulfil and protect the right to water and sanitation of their citizens. This means taking active measures to extend this right to all citizens. However, many poorer countries face major resource limitations in this regard. Governments are also obliged to protect water rights against abuses by corporate interests – including those engaged in tourism – such as over-extraction, appropriation and pollution of water resources.

Available water must be sufficient, safe, physically accessible and affordable, with non-discriminatory and equitable access for personal, domestic, and essential livelihood needs

Business responsibilities

As elaborated in our briefing, Why the tourism industry needs to take a human rights approach (2011), the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) set out the business responsibility to respect human rights as a global baseline norm for all businesses, everywhere. This includes the right to water and sanitation. Respecting human rights in this way is not only the ‘right’ thing to do, it also makes business sense by helping companies to identify and manage a range of operational, financial and reputation risks (UNHRC, 2011). According to the UNGPs, the business responsibility to respect exists independently of governments, because these often fail to protect – or are even directly involved in harming – citizens’ rights. Indeed, as illustrated in this report, this is the case in many popular tourism destinations, where governments sell off land and siphon off natural resources, often ignoring democratic process and without due regard for the impacts on living standards and livelihoods of local people.

A farmer in the Tourism Development Area in The Gambia gathers water from a hand-dug well. The money she earns from selling her vegetables helps pay for school fees and food for her children. However, water availability is apparently declining.

Water for leisure and tourism is taking precedence over the right to water and sanitation in destinations across the world.
Where they exist, industry water initiatives are typically limited to reducing water consumption, and ignore wider business impacts on the lives and livelihoods of local communities.

Many industry players, such as hotels and tour operators, claim to be addressing their impact on water, and a range of water-related guidelines have been devised under various initiatives. These include ‘The Tour Operators’ Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development’, the International Tourism Partnership, The Travel Foundation, and the Travelife Sustainability System Criteria (Tourism Concern & EBDG, 2011). However, such initiatives generally take a narrow approach, framing water as a purely environmental issue and focusing on water conservation measures within hotels. This includes the installation of water-saving technologies in guest rooms (such as aerated shower heads and low-flush toilets), rainwater harvesting, the use of waste (‘grey’) water for garden irrigation, as well as staff sensitisation and training, and towel re-use schemes for guests.

Although such approaches are positive and should be broadened further, they ignore the wider impacts of tourism businesses’ water consumption on the lives and livelihoods of local communities and the environment. As our case studies show, in many instances the consumption and pollution of freshwater by the tourism industry is directly contributing to the infringement of the right to water of neighbouring communities. Tourism business complicity in such infringements, even if inadvertent, extends up through the supply chain, placing companies at risk of allegations of abuse while undermining the social, environmental and economic sustainability of both the company and the destination.

Tourism businesses are also involved in direct law breaking, such as the hotels and restaurants in Goa that have been found to be pumping sewage directly into Colva Creek (see page 15). As outlined in the UNGPs, by adhering to national laws in the first instance, as well as enacting the business responsibility to respect human rights through a process of human rights due diligence (see page 24), companies can reduce the risk of culpability or complicity in such socially and environmentally harmful behaviour.

The case studies

The following case study destinations were chosen because they are all popular with UK and European holidaymakers, including independent travellers and package tourists. As such, many of the largest tour operators (such as Thomson, TUI, Thomas Cook, Kuoni, First Choice and Cooperative Travel) and international hotel groups (including Intercontinental, Choice and Cooperative Travel) and holiday Inn, Hilton, Four Seasons and Intercontinental) operate in one or more of these locations.

The case studies are selected from countries in the global South in order to link the impacts of the tourism sector’s water consumption with wider sustainable development. Tourism is being utilised as a development driver in all the focus countries. Indonesia, Tanzania, India and The Gambia are ranked among the lowest 68 in the UN’s Human Development Index. This indicates the real challenges they face in terms of poverty alleviation, sustainable development, and government capacity and resources (UNDP, 2011).

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Holiday Inn, Hilton, Four Seasons and Intercontinental operate in one or more of these locations.

However, these issues are by no means confined to the Southern hemisphere. All over the world, including popular European tourist destinations, such as Spain, Cyprus, Greece and even the UK, there is increasing pressure on dwindling water supplies due to climate change, growing populations and industrial consumption.

In each location, the same basic research methodology was applied and a core set of questions addressed. The research entailed garnering the perspectives of various stakeholders in the tourism sector, government, local communities, and from tourists.

The exception is the Alleppey case study, which is based on information provided by our local partner, Kabani. Our research focuses on coastal destinations, because this is where tourism development tends to be most intense and water resources particularly prone to salwater intrusion. However, challenges around water scarcity and inequity also present themselves in inland tourist areas, such as national parks and mountain ranges, including The Alps (e.g. see alpwaterscarce.eu) and The Himalayas (e.g. see climate4life.org).

The full research reports are available at www.tourismconcern.org.uk.
Zanzibar lies east off the coast of Tanzania and consists of two major islands, Pemba and Unguja. Tourist arrivals for 2011 hit a record high of 220,000 (ZATI, 2012), up from 19,368 in 1995. The industry has created many jobs, which have benefitted numerous sectors of society. However, despite the significant growth of tourism, 42 per cent of Zanzibar’s population remains below the poverty line (UNDP, 2011). Just half of rural residents have access to a water source (DFID, 2011). Women in particular spend significant amounts of time fetching water. This diverts them from other income-generating activities and means women face the most immediate problems when freshwater is scarce.

Zanzibar depends upon the seasonal rainfall (March to May and November to December) to replenish its underground water supplies, which constitute the principal water source for the islands. Rainfall in the east is the lowest in the islands and this region has been classed as water poor. However, tourism is concentrated around the east and north coasts of Unguja, with tourist numbers peaking during the dry season. In the villages and popular resort areas of Kiwengwa, Nungwi and Jambiani, there are stark inequities between water access, consumption and quality for local communities and the growing numbers of hotels and guesthouses. All villages are facing increasing water scarcity and many residents report a daily struggle to secure enough for essential activities.

The majority of villagers do not have pumped water. Local people also report that the hotels have not always honoured the agreement, and would prioritise their own needs over those of residents. Anger at this provoked some community members to cut the hotels’ water pipes and to hold public demonstrations. Water pressure and quantity is often reportedly insufficient for the village's needs, particularly during dry seasons. “The caves that produce water… are the property of our village, but they are colonised by the investors and they do whatever they want”, said one villager. Cane water sources are now guarded 24 hours a day by hoteliers.

Tourist perspectives Among the tourists interviewed across the three villages, less than half indicated that they were aware of water issues in Zanzibar. Although 60 per cent described themselves as committed to environmental sustainability, most delegated responsibility to their hotels.

In Nungwi

Wall-to-wall hotels and guesthouses surround the village of Nungwi. Water supply is hugely problematic. Local residents report that well water has become too saline for use. The remaining public borehole and pump are inadequate to service the area. This means most villagers must buy water transport from Chaani, a town 20 kilometers away. Meanwhile, four of the larger hotels have sunk their own boreholes. The perceived water inequality between hotels and local residents has again resulted in conflict. Hotel water pipelines have been deliberately cut by locals. This has prompted some hotels to employ guards to patrol their pipelines.

Health risks in Jambiani

In Jambiani, the majority of villagers do have access to piped water, either in their homes or through standpipes. Although the quality of water issues in Zanzibar. Although 60 per cent described themselves as committed to environmental sustainability, most delegated responsibility to their hotels. However, over half felt it would be acceptable to increase the cost of their holiday to pay for improved water infrastructure.

“the caves that produce water… are the property of our village, but they are colonised by the investors and they do whatever they want” using powerful pumps to siphon off water from the main public pipeline. Again, this is giving rise to anger and resentment among residents. One local reflected on a recent water shortage: “The hotels have huge tanks and strong pumps; it took them a while to fill their tanks while we were suffering and waiting to fill our couple of buckets for basic daily usage. It was not fair”. Another resident stated that during the three-month power cut, he approached four hotels that were pumping water using private generators. “Unfortunately they refused. In the village we discussed how our neighbours refused to offer us even a bucket of water. We were so upset”.

Positive cooperation In contrast, in the southern part of Jambiani village, there is positive cooperation between tourism businesses and the community. One hotel maintains a community pump and buys in water when this is not working. Other hotels have reportedly exerted pressure on the water department to fix broken water infrastructure quickly. In fact, there are incidences of good cooperation between hotels and villagers in each of the villages. However, while such schemes can promote community water access, they leave villages subject to the whims of the hotels. Furthermore, many hotels close during low season, potentially leaving communities without water.

With swimming pools as standard, it is not surprising that tourist awareness of water scarcity in Zanzibar is low.

Tourist education

Tourism is a major contributing factor to Zanzibar’s economy and arrivals in 2011 reached an all-time high. However, despite tourism’s on-going rapid expansion, almost half the population remain in poverty.

Insight into the tourism infrastructure and supplies to the communities are inadequate, while the over-extraction of groundwater by the tourism industry is causing salination of local wells. On average, households across the three villages consume some 93.2 litres of water per day. The types of tourist accommodation in each village varies, but average consumption per room ranges from 686 litres per day for guesthouses, to 3,195 litres per day for 5-star hotels. This gives an overall average consumption of 1,482 litres per room per day; 16 times higher than average household daily usage.

Very few hotels surveyed undertake water conservation measures. Just two practise rainwater harvesting and the majority change linen on a daily basis. A minority reported using sewage treatment plants, with most disposing of their sewage into soak pits. This widespread use of unlined soak pits means sewage is leaching into the water table, posing a threat to human health and marine ecosystems.

Conflict in Kiwengwa

Local communities are only too aware of the issues and inequities. In Kiwengwa, residents widely reported conflicts with hoteliers over water. Tourism in Kiwengwa is mostly high-end, including three 5-star hotels. Community wells have reportedly become salty since the arrival of tourism 15 years ago. Many residents say they now must buy water from private vendors who transport water in from elsewhere. However, not all can always afford to do so. In the mid 1990s, two hotels, Bravo Club and Venta Club, were granted government permission to pump water from a cave on a condition that they also supplied water to Cairo, the closest neighbouring area of Kiwengwa. The subsequent collapse of Venta Club has left Cairo residents without pumped water. Local people also report that the hotels have not always honoured the agreement, and would prioritise their own needs over those of residents. Anger at this provoked some community members to cut the hotels’ water pipes and to hold public demonstrations. Water pressure and quantity is often reportedly insufficient for the village’s needs, particularly during dry seasons. “The caves that produce water… are the property of our village, but they are colonised by the investors and they do whatever they want”, said one villager. Cane water sources are now guarded 24 hours a day by hoteliers.

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Tourism to Goa began in the 1960s and the state remains India’s beach tourism capital. However, Goa is fast becoming a victim of its own popularity and is facing huge water challenges as a result of poorly managed tourism development.

Scenically located between the Arabian Sea to the west and the Sahyadri Hills to the east, the south Indian state of Goa is known for its sweeping sandy beaches and natural beauty. In 2010, some 2.6 million domestic and international visitors flocked to its shores, exceeding the state’s resident population. However, Goa is facing serious water issues. These issues are threatening the sustainability of Goa as a tourism destination, as well as the well-being and livelihoods of local communities. These include small-scale tourism entrepreneurs, such as guesthouse and beachside restaurant owners. Tourism development is generally poorly planned and regulated throughout Goa’s coastal belt. The state government’s drive towards high-end tourism, characterised by 5-star resorts boasting swimming pools and golf courses, is seeing the increased proliferation of tourism infrastructure, with each high-end tourist typically consumes greater volumes of water (up to 1.335 litres per person per day) than smaller guesthouses (573 litres of water per person per day). The market for second homes, holiday apartments and timeshares is also booming, with new developments springing up along paddy fields and coastline.

We observed our research in the coastal villages of Cavalesim, Colva, Benaulim, Palolem and Calangute, indicate that water is being allocated to resort areas of Cavelossim, Colva, Benaulim, Palolem and Calangute, while local communities are suffering. In the densely populated areas of Benaulim, local residents complained about the lack of water for their daily needs. Calangute added: “The wells here have been contaminated for 10 years. The contamination has been partly caused by leaky water pipelines. Wells in the neighbouring village have already become saline and unfit for human consumption.” Sheela and many others are standing up to the situation, but the court cases are time-consuming and expensive. “The local authorities are hand in glove with the hotels. This makes us very bitter, because it is your own people working against you. What we are doing now is damage limitation; we need to switch to nurturing mode”, said Sheela.

Wasting away

Although a majority of hotels surveyed reported engaging in some kind of water conservation measures, including use of sewage treatment plants, water recycling and harvesting, re-plumbing and providing educational literature for guests, serious problems persist. In June 2011, a case was brought by the Colva Civic and Consumer Forum against several hotels and restaurants that were discharging sewage into Colva Creek, behind Colva Beach. This includes businesses on land owned by the Department of Tourism. A damning High Court ruling stated: “This situation, which has made the entire area very unhealthy and disgusting, has come about only because the authorities have neglected the situation.” The establishments were ordered to clean up their acts, but in November 2011 the Goa authorities recommended 20 should cease operations due to their failure to comply. As of January 2012, this recommendation appeared not to have been enforced. Along Goa’s shorelines, a seasonal proliferation of restaurants and beach-huts installs countless illegal toilets, which channel waste into soak pits. Tonnes of human sewage are absorbed into the soil, posing a huge risk of groundwater and marine contamination. In recognition of this health and environmental hazard, the Government of Goa’s Shack Owners Welfare Association sought government financial support for the use of chemical toilets. However, the government refused. “We need a solution to this issue... [but] the government is not interested in supporting our businesses. The government only wants high end tourism and big planned resorts.” The 5-star lobby, they rule, Goa,” stated a beach restaurant owner.

In Cavalesim, the wells of the community neighbouring the 5-star Leela Kempinsky Hotel were found to contain traces of nitrates, which left an oily residue on the surface. The wells have reportedly been abandoned and the communities are now entirely dependent on the insufficient public supply. The problems arguably began when the Leela dug a scenic lagoon, which caused saltwater intrusion. This pattern is repeated throughout Goa’s coastal belt, undermining livelihoods, the environment, the tourism sector, and wider socioeconomic development. The monitoring of groundwater resources and consumption is non-existent. Water infrastructure primarily benefits luxury tourist developments, while provision for local communities is limited. Meanwhile, untreated sewage is degrading surface and groundwater resources. Geraldine Fernandes, a guesthouse owner in Benaulim, said, “We are not anti-development; we want development that protects our livelihoods. There are lots of new constructions, including second homes. What do they give back to the village? But we use our resources – all the resources are from our land.”

This is a summary of Reclaiming water rights: Towards an equitable social contract (2011) by the Centre for Responsible Tourism (Goa) on behalf of Tourism Concern.

Case Study 2

Goa

Many hotels also dig their own boreholes, which directly deplete local groundwater. Others purchase water from private water tanker trucks – an increasingly ubiquitous sight on Goa’s roads. However, this growing privatisation of water apparently remains outside the law. For example, in the densely developed resort of Calangute, the government is only obliged to provide piped water to households for two hours every other day. Donna, an elderly resident, reports: “All these hotels get a good supply of water. They can afford to buy from the tanker.” There are no regulations for these. I don’t know where this water comes from. We only get water every second day from the public supply and only for a couple of hours. This is hardly enough. Luckily I’m still OK as I have my well and the water is still OK. But the water level is depleting,” said Donna. A female guesthouse owner in Benaulim, said, “The government only wants high end tourism and big planned resorts. They can afford to buy from the water tanker. But we use our resources – all the resources are from our land.”

There is a strong sense of injustice among many community members, including small-scale tourism entrepreneurs, regarding inequitable water access between themselves and large hotels. One guesthouse owner said: “Local people sometimes feel angry, but they recognise the benefits that tourism brings. But it is we ordinary people who are suffering. We are drinking this water, they are not. Some can afford to buy water, some cannot.”

Water pressure is weak because of over-demand and aged, leaking infrastructure. Furthermore, many large hotels and resort complexes reportedly attach large pipes to the public mains supply, which siphon off the bulk of the water while further decreasing pressure and availability for neighbouring communities.
The Gambia

The Gambia is the smallest country on mainland Africa and sits on the continent’s western coast. The River Gambia intersects the entire country, running from Senegal in the east to Gambia’s narrow coastline. Despite this prominent water feature, Gambia is facing serious water challenges.

Poverty levels in The Gambia are high. The country is classed as a Least Developed Country by the UN (UNDP, 2011). It has one of the highest population densities of Africa, with almost half of its 1.6 million residents living along the coast within or adjacent to the main tourism area. The Gambia is also among the top 20 per cent of countries facing the severest effects of sea level rise due to climate change. This has major implications for its tourism sector and freshwater resources.

Tourism in The Gambia

International tourists started arriving in The Gambia in the 1970s. The sector has swelled in the last 15 years, with arrivals reaching 146,000 in 2008. Tourism contributes 16 per cent to GDP, it is the prime foreign exchange earner and an important creator of livelihoods within both the formal and informal sectors. Cheap package holidays for Europeans eager to escape the winter run between October and March. Approximately half these tourists are from the UK. Tourism is concentrated along a 15 kilometer stretch of coast – encompassing almost two thirds of The Gambia’s coastline – in a designated Tourism Development Area (TDA). Tourist arrivals peak during the dry season, while the monsoon lasts just four months, from June to September. The Gambia depends upon groundwater resources, which are accessed via public piped supply, as well as private boreholes and hand-dug wells.

The expansion of tourism, as well as the diversification of agriculture and food self-sufficiency, are key facets of the government’s ‘Vision 2020’ development strategy. However, both tourism and agriculture are heavily water-dependent and there is real risk that the government’s strategy will falter if The Gambia’s water resources are not managed carefully.

Water security

Water issues in The Gambia stem from a weak regulatory framework, poor inter-departmental coordination, and lack of financial and institutional capacity to plan, monitor and equitably manage its freshwater resources. At watershed level, future water security depends upon the Gambia’s continued engagement in a cross-border initiative to manage the River Gambia, which farmers and fishers unite for crop irrigation and livelihoods. The river is also vital to replenishing groundwater. A new Water Policy was created in 2008, but there is no legal basis for its implementation. Lack of resources means that, while the government is implementing some programmes to increase water access and seems committed to promoting the right to water and sanitation, within the TDA just 25 per cent of the population has access to piped water. Here, ageing infrastructure struggles to meet the high demand. Up to a fifth of water is being lost to leaking pipes, which causes persistently low water pressure. Frequent power cuts mean that the electric pumps used to disburse water through the pipes cannot work. In Fajara, the local water treatment plant and supply station are reportedly contaminated, which means the authorities cannot provide an adequate supply to local households. Meanwhile, public supply in rural areas is minimal, and provision depends heavily on international donors.

Water free for all

In order to counter erratic supplies, most hotels and second homes dig private boreholes with electric pumps. However, this practice is entirely unregulated and unmonitored. The prevailing perception among hoteliers is that water from boreholes is “free” and “unlimited”. This is a particular concern given the need for the water authorities to increase revenues in order to improve water infrastructure. Additionally, many hotels have faulty water meters. Therefore they pay the same amount regardless of occupancy rates. Overall, hotels have little idea of how much water they are consuming (estimates varied from 20 litres per room per day, to 1,310 litres per room per day), and little incentive to reduce their usage. Most hotels surveyed, such as in the areas of Kotu and Kololi, also report filling up reserve tanks from the mains supply when available. However, because the hotel pipes are wider in diameter than those servicing neighbouring communities, they effectively siphon off the bulk of the water, apparently causing availability for residents to drop.

Low income households, which must rely upon public standpipes and have an average of 12 occupants, suffer also most from power cuts, which impede their upward mobility.

Opportunities stifled

While hotels are generally able to secure access to water, many small locally-owned tourism enterprises are struggling. This includes the fruit vendors and juice presellers who sell refreshments to tourists on the beach, as well as craft stall owners, taxi drivers and some beach bars and restaurants. Although some standpipe cooperatives among the fruit sellers are setting positive examples, most have to fetch water in 20-litre containers from other nearby businesses at a cost. None of the fruit sellers reported having access to running water, while both said that obtaining water for personal and business needs presents a daily challenge. The head of the Association of Women Fruit Sellers stated that “lack of access to running water is a barrier to the development [of the] businesses of the women.” Unsurprisingly, most of these micro-enterprises are more conscious of their water consumption. “All of the women use water wisely simply because it is so hard to get,” said the Association’s head.

Likewise, local households reported that they frequently face low pressure and water shortages due to power cuts and the appropriation of the pumped water supply by hotels. The most acute problems were reported in Kotu and Kololi. The principal issue seems not to be the price or quality of water, but its failure to flow through the pipes at all. While higher and middle-income households can better cope by installing water tanks and even boreholes, the cost of sinking a borehole is far beyond the reach of the majority of Gambians. Low income households, which must rely upon public standpipes and have an average of 12 occupants, suffer...
Bali has been promoted as a tropical island paradise for almost a century. However, despite a rainy season that extends across five months of the year, Bali is facing an acute water crisis. This would be catastrophic for its people, environment and agriculture, as well as for Bali’s tourism industry and economy.

As early as the 1930s, tourists were flocking to the Indonesian island of Bali in their thousands (Picard, 1997). By 2008, two million tourists visited, significantly swelling Bali’s resident population of 3.5 million. Foreign tourist arrivals are expected to increase 150 per cent by 2025, while Bali’s population is set to grow to over four million. Tourism is an integral part of the Balinese economy, accounting for 481,000 direct jobs (25 per cent of the workforce) and 30 per cent of the country’s GDP (BPS, 2010).

While Bali’s pending water crisis is being caused by a range of factors, rampant, unregulated tourism development, combined with poor watershed management, are arguably key. Of Bali’s 400 rivers, 260 now run dry during the dry season (Bali Discovery, 2009). Bali’s biggest natural water reserve, Lake Buyan, has dropped 3.5 meters in three years (Fogarty, 2009). Bali’s biggest natural water reserve, Lake Buyan, has dropped 3.5 meters in three years (Fogarty, 2009).

According to Bali’s Ministry of Health, over 50 per cent of infant deaths are caused by diseases related to poor sanitation, water and environment, and the island has a higher prevalence of diarrhoea (13 per cent) than the national average (9 per cent). Indeed, rural villagers report that lack of water is dominating their lives: “I cannot sleep because of worrying about water for our rice field”, stated one woman. “This is something we never had to think about [before]. At least for the last eight years we have had less water, so that every night my husband has to stay in the rice field… because [the water] gets stolen by other farmers”, she said.

Bali is enduring a vicious cycle of increasing tourism development, deforestation, water depletion, augmenting water costs, and declining agriculture.

Cultural significance of water

Water has an important cultural significance in Bali. It is regarded as critical to maintaining a harmonious relationship with God and the environment (Windia and Dewi, 2011), while water temples and traditional community irrigation systems (subak) have been key to watershed management for a thousand years (Lansing, 2000). Yet due to the diversion of water to coastal resorts, coupled with declining incomes in the agricultural sector (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2009), Bali’s iconic paddy terraces are now being lost at an average rate of 1000 hectares a year, leading local academics to warn of food shortages (Jakarta Post, 2012). One recent study estimates that the island is already short of 200,000 hectares of agricultural land needed to feed current residents and tourists (Jakarta Post, 2010). Some farmers are selling up because, despite a 2010 moratorium on new resorts due to a room overcapacity of 10,000, ongoing tourism developments are causing land values to spiral. This forces farmers adjacent to resorts to pay more tax on their fields (Bali Discovery, 2011).

Lack of infrastructure is further adding to the island’s water inequity. Although some households are attached to the water mains, supply is woefully inadequate. Some reported “catching drips all day to collect sufficient [water] to bath”, while others stated that “water flows for two hours in the morning”. Some have to collect water by hand, which can require travelling several kilometers. This involves considerable time and labour and is a task that typically falls to women. Other villages lacking piped water depend on hand-dug wells. However, these dry up seasonally, forcing people to rely upon neighbouring villagers’ borewells or to purchase bottled drinking water. However, the price of bottled water has increased 25 per cent in three years, prompting poor villagers to buy ‘refill’ water from unregulated vendors. The quality of this water can be highly dubious. Some locals spoke of increased cases of diarrhoea and reported seeing mud and larvae in the refill water.

Water shortages (Jakarta Post, 2010). Bali’s biggest natural water reserve, Lake Buyan, has dropped 3.5 meters in three years (Fogarty, 2009). Bali’s biggest natural water reserve, Lake Buyan, has dropped 3.5 meters in three years (Fogarty, 2009). Bali’s biggest natural water reserve, Lake Buyan, has dropped 3.5 meters in three years (Fogarty, 2009).

To counter the unreliable public supply, most hotels, laundries and other tourism businesses have dug wells with electric pumps. All are required to have permits and meters for their wells, and should be billed for their water consumption. However, these regulations were apparently unknown, ignored or unenforced. There is stark evidence that this widespread unmonitored extraction of groundwater is leading to its depletion. Most wells must now be dug to a depth of 60 meters – 20 meters deeper than before – in order to reach potable water. This is particularly problematic for communities relying on shallower hand-dug wells, who cannot afford to pay for mechanical diggers or electric pumps. However, most tourism industry stakeholders interviewed were unaware of the need to conserve water, or of the impacts of their activities on the water table. Similarly, very few of the tourists interviewed were aware of Bali’s water woes, with more than 90 per cent believing the island has enough water to cater for its population’s needs. However, 95 per cent of tourists also thought their accommodation should be making efforts to conserve water.

Contamination

The quality of Bali’s water is also seriously deteriorating. “The ground water and wells in Nusa Dua, Tanjung Benoa and Legian areas are so heavily contaminated that the water is unfit for human consumption,” said Ketut Sundra, a lecturer at Indonesia’s Udayana State University (Xinhua, 2007). A lack of environmental awareness among tourism businesses and residents, coupled with the absence of sufficient waste management systems, means that much solid waste and sewage is dumped in waterways. This waste ends up in irrigation channels and paddies, blocking storm drains and exacerbating flooding, while polluted run-off infiltrates the groundwater and flows out to sea.

Climate of inaction

Overarching Bali’s water issues is weak governance. Responsibility for water provision is distributed across 11 government departments, spanning national, provincial and ‘regency’ levels. However, roles are poorly defined and inter-departmental cooperation is weak. The resulting intransigence and lack of accountability means that there are numerous regulations, none of which are enforced. Many government officials interviewed seemed unaware of Bali’s water problems, which remain conveniently obscured by an absence of monitoring and information. Corruption and the power and influence of the tourism industry are also likely factors in the climate of inaction. One local contact was threatened with posting online information about luxury hotels dumping waste near waterways, while a European journalist reported that farmers were afraid to talk, having been warned off for previously speaking to our researcher.

Bali is enduring a vicious cycle of increasing tourism development, deforestation, water depletion, augmenting water costs, and declining agriculture. Socially and economically marginalised communities, particularly rural farmers, are experiencing the greatest negative impacts, while benefiting least from tourism. Bali’s pending water crisis is threatening both food security and the future of tourism itself, upon which its economy depends. If tourism collapses, then so could Bali’s economy.

This case study is based on field research undertaken by Shroma Cole of the University of the West of England (Cole, 2012).
Alleppey, Kerala

Houseboat tourism is booming on the backwaters of Alleppey in Kerala. While this provides economic benefits for some, the livelihoods and drinking water access for many local communities are being severely threatened.

Houseboat boom
In recent years, houseboat numbers have mushroomed. The state tourism board, Kerala Tourism, estimates that 1000 houseboats now operate on the backwaters, with the majority of these concentrated around Alleppey. However, the true figure could be even higher. Larger operators from other parts of India are reportedly moving in, offering ‘luxury’ houseboats (some even boat swimming pools), and buying up waterside property to store their boats. This is pushing out local operators. In the same period, poor, rural backwater communities have started to experience increased scarcity of drinking water and declining fishing and agricultural productivity as Alleppey’s waterways become increasing polluted (Harkumuar, 2005; Thomas et al., 2009).

Many houseboats reportedly dump sewage, kitchen waste and rubbish into the backwaters. There are designated locations for waste discharge, but these are commonly ignored by houseboat operators. Houseboat engines leak petrol and other pollutants directly into waterways, while careless refuelling often results in spillages. These petrochemicals dramatically disrupt the delicate aquatic ecosystems. Oil coats the gills of fish, causing their death or migration to less polluted areas. Several bird species have also dramatically declined within the last decade.

Fishing communities
Local fishermen confirm that fuel and oil pollution are affecting the quality of fish and prawn catches. “If we don’t use our fish, we burn it. We use the kerosene taste is from the fish itself. No one buys fish that tastes of petrol and smells bad… they’ve asked for water.”

Over 80 per cent of households living along or near the backwaters rely on its water for daily drinking and cooking. Less than half of these residents reportedly treat the water before consuming it. As the canal and lake waters become more polluted, locals are seeking alternative water sources where possible. However, government piped supply is limited. Few households enjoy access to piped water, and where they do, it is erratic and inadequate. Many have no choice but to depend upon contaminated sources.

Women are particularly affected by poor water quality. Lillikutte, a resident of Kainakari, said: “Earlier the water in the lake was very good, we took drinking water from there. Now it is very bad because of the pollution from houseboats and other tourist boats. There are no piped water connections. I am responsible for collecting the water and doing the household jobs. I have to go to far, by boat, to collect drinking water. This is burdening my work.”

A primary school teacher reported: “Most of our parent-teacher meetings nowadays revolve around the issues of water… Mothers and fathers are worried that the presence of tourists is a bad influence on the children. But they’re mostly worried about their children’s education.”

Agricultural impacts
Livelihoods within the agricultural sector are also being severely hit. Paddy fields are directly irrigated by the backwaters, which means that oil, sewage and rubbish from the houseboats easily flows into these agricultural units. Furthermore, farmers attribute recent incidences of ill health to prolonged contact with polluted water. A farmer of Thankamani reported: “Our paddy fields are in a very bad shape due to the pollution. We are not getting agricultural workers, because they are afraid to work in the polluted paddy fields due to health concerns. I am also suffering from skin diseases because of the long contact with the contaminated water.”

“People don’t want to drink the lake’s water anymore. It tastes of petrol and smells bad… they’ve asked for water from the city, but they don’t give enough. Every morning they worry about the water.”

Stemming the flow?
In its 2011 tourism strategy, Kerala Tourism acknowledges that houseboat pollution and density is a problem (Kerala Tourism, 2011). Its answer is to “to disperse houseboat operation and cruise activities to relatively underdeveloped stretches and regions”, while encouraging the use of improved waste management systems. However, unless it first establishes clear carrying capacities for all regions in consultation with local communities, and actively enforces and monitors boat numbers and their utilisation of waste management systems, it risks simply spreading the problem elsewhere.
Key emerging themes

The case studies in this report share many factors that are contributing to water inequity between tourism interests (particularly large hotels and resorts) and local communities, including small-scale tourism entrepreneurs.

Wider contextual issues

Besides increasing seasonal influxes of tourists and migrant labour to service the industry, all the case study destinations are experiencing strong population growth and urbanisation. This is adding to the strain on fragile coastal water resources and the broadly inadequate infrastructure. All are facing wider watershed degradation due to deforestation and the concretisation of greenbelt and agricultural land. Energy vulnerabilities and the impacts of climate change, such as rising seawater levels and increased risks of drought and flooding, are also common themes (see figure 1).

Weak governance

Weak tourism and water governance are arguably the key factors giving rise to water inequity in tourism. This includes lack of coordination between government departments, weak regulatory frameworks, weak monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations, inadequate tourism and water planning, poor accountability, and corruption. These weaknesses stem largely from insufficient institutional and resource capacity, as well as low awareness levels and political intransigence. In the gaps created by ineffective governance, poorly planned and regulated tourism development is exerting ever-increasing pressure on water resources. In particular, larger hotels and resorts use their superior purchasing power and influence to consume disproportionate and unsustainable volumes of water. The frequent improper disposal of sewage and dry waste, as well as increasing saltwater intrusion caused by groundwater over-extraction, is contaminating groundwater and waterways, forcing communities to increase dependence on erratic public supplies or unregulated private vendors. An absence of information and monitoring means there is limited knowledge of existing and future water availability.

Inadequate public infrastructure

Infrastructural inequalities mean that water is being directly appropriated from the public supply to service resorts and hotels at the expense of local people, including small-scale tourism businesses. For many households in Goa, Alleppey, Bali, Zanzibar and The Gambia, decrepit infrastructure and regular power cuts mean that piped water is only available for a few hours every one to two days. Poorer households, particularly the women, are most affected by such water shortages, and must spend considerable time queuing at public standpipes. Meanwhile, hotels and resorts affix wide pipes and pumps to the mains supply, which depletes availability and pressure for other users. Most hotels also invest in boreholes to ensure a regular supply. However, this groundwater extraction largely goes unregulated and unmonitored, and the water is considered ‘free’. This is alarming given the dire need for government authorities in all locations to recover revenues in order to improve equitable access to water and sanitation.

Incremental privatisation

Inadequate public supplies, and depletion and pollution of groundwater, are forcing both tourism businesses and communities to secure their water needs through private providers. This includes those drilling boreholes and selling water transported in from elsewhere. Such incremental and broadly unchecked privatisation of water and water services is prevalent in Bali, Goa, Zanzibar and The Gambia. However, as demonstrated in Bali, rising costs leave some poor households with little choice but to pay for poor quality water, which poses serious risks to health.

Rule-breaking

All the case studies highlight instances of rule-breaking, where tourism businesses take advantage of water governance gaps. For example, in Goa and Bali, widespread disregard of regulations regarding sewage and solid disposal has led to pervasive water contamination. In Alleppey, designated areas for houseboats to dispose of sewage and kitchen waste are apparently ignored by most houseboat operators. Similarly, many hotels in The Gambia admitted having faulty water meters, while the water authorities estimate there to be some 9000 broken meters in the Gambia Banjul Area, which incorporates the main tourism zone. Inadequate public infrastructure

Weak & poorly enforced regulations

Lack of information and planning

Unregulated privatisation

Low water consumption

Lack of resources

Deformation & Watershed degradation

Urbanisation & population growth

Climate change

Inadequate public infrastructure

Low awareness levels

Figure 1: The range of causal factors and impacts undermining water equity and sustainable tourism development.

Livelihood impacts

Inequitable and insufficient water access is harming livelihoods everywhere. Small businesses, such as beach shack restaurants and guesthouse owners in Goa, and fruit vendors in The Gambia, often struggle to meet their water needs. Agriculture is in decline in Goa and Bali because of the reduced availability of water and pollution of paddy fields, combined with poor returns and pressure to convert farmland. Fishing communities in Alleppey are seeing fish catches fall due to pollution from tourist houseboats. These examples raise critical questions around food security. Similarly, in The Gambia, the government’s goal of achieving food self-sufficiency could be thrown into doubt without careful management of its water resources.

Health risks

The depletion and contamination of freshwater due to tourism poses significant health risks to both communities and tourists. This is perhaps evident most starkly with the cholera outbreak in Jambiani, Zanzibar. Farmers in Alleppey, Goa and Bali have reported skin infections from sewage entering their fields. In Bali, skin rashes, stomach upsets and ear infections among tourists are now common, caused by sewage contamination of the sea (BIMC Hospital 2012).

Social conflict

The situation of water inequity is leading to increasing resentment and conflict among many communities towards the tourism sector. The most extreme examples of this can be seen in Zanzibar, where hotel water pipes have been vandalised and are now patrolled by guards.

Ultimately, the situation in all case study sites is unsustainable environmentally, socially and economically. Tourism’s vast and inequitable consumption of water is undermining community rights to water and sanitation, while threatening the future of the sector itself, as well as water equitable, sustainable development.

In Zanzibar, this image shows a hotel’s workers cleaning their gardens. This situation can be seen as a conflict with the local community, as the hotel damages the local vegetation and environment.
Discussion and Conclusions:
Opportunities and ways forward

Despite the challenges, there are notable opportunities from improving water equity in each case study site. These can offer useful lessons for tourist destinations elsewhere facing similar challenges. Grasping these opportunities could help governments fulfill their obligations to uphold and protect the right to water and sanitation as a priority; and support tourism businesses in implementing their responsibility to respect these rights.

The significance of tourism to the economies of Zanzibar, Goa, Bali, The Gambia and Kerala makes it imperative for their governments and tourism businesses to take steps to ensure sustainable water management and equitable access. The superior infrastructure of luxury tourism developments and their capacity to pay for their considerable water consumption should be harnessed to support improved access for local communities. In all locations, there is a dire need for improved tourism and water governance, including with regard to the planning, regulation and monitoring of tourism development and its water use. It is essential that water resources be assessed and tourism carrying capacities be ascertained. Other livelihood needs and tourism carrying capacities water resources be assessed and its water use. It is essential that access for local communities. In

Zanzibar

Zanzibar’s Water Policy (2004) acknowledges the importance of community participation in sustainable water planning and management. The policy allows for the formation of village Water Committees. Given that the impacts of water inequity are disproportionately borne by women, their participation in such committees is vital. Although the role and effectiveness of the committees is currently questionable (many residents interviewed were unaware of their existence, doubted their effectiveness or expressed concerns regarding corruption), their potential to contribute to improved community-level water management is considerable (Slade, 2011). This could include more coordinated dialogue with hoteliers, tour operators and relevant authorities on water issues, as well as improved engagement in the various forthcoming donor-funded water projects. One such project is an African Development Bank piped water scheme for Kiwengwa and Nungwi, which is due to be implemented within two years. A detailed hydrology report has been undertaken, which will yield crucial information regarding available water resources, and which could inform the development of tourism carrying capacities. In Nungwi, a UNDP project aimed at supplying water to the community is due for completion in November 2012. The development of community protocols around tourism and water resource management was suggested by a local respondent, whereby communities could set out how they expect other stakeholders to engage with them (Slade, 2011).

Goa’s Centre for Responsible Tourism is calling for a ‘social contract on water equity in tourism’ to be developed and integrated into the state’s Tourism Master Plan (CRT, 2011). Goa has an organised, active civil society, which is well-versed in challenging tourism-related water abuse through local government forums and the courts. Goa is also one of just two Indian states to have a policy regulating extraction of groundwater – the Goa Groundwater Regulation Act 2002. This offers scope for challenging unsustainable water extraction for tourism, including by private tankers and in relation to the illegal sinking of boreholes (Mukherjee, 2012). Agrieved communities could additionally file a case with India’s National Green Tribunal (ibid). The Tribunal was established in 2010 to consider all cases of environmental abuse and can order relief and compensation to be paid to victims of pollution. There is also scope for exploring the revival of aspects of Goa’s traditional community-level water management system, Gaonkari, as a means for improving local water stewardship (CRT, 2011).

Bali’s government has acknowledged that the island is facing a water crisis. A water purification and sewage network project is planned (Jakarta Globe, 2011), while Bali’s Environment Agency has threatened to revoke the operating licences of hotels and restaurants that fail to dispose of their waste and sewage properly (Bali Holiday Info, 2011). In order to stem the rapid decline in agriculture, the Indonesian Farmer’s Union has called for differing tax rates for land used for commercial projects, including tourism, and farming (Bali Discovery,2011).

As the houseboat sector is relatively new, there is an opportunity for the Kerala state authorities to develop and implement regulations to ensure it becomes sustainable. This should be developed with the participation of local communities. Communities negatively affected by the houseboats, or local civil society groups representing them, could also consider filing a case with India’s National Green Tribunal. Again, Kerala has a groundwater act so there is scope for communities to challenge abuse on this basis where applicable.
Discussions and Conclusions:
Industry frameworks for change

As well as representing best ethical practice, adopting a rights-based approach to water can provide significant advantages in terms of business sustainability, identifying and managing risks associated with potential complicity in infringements of water rights, and promoting sustainable development in destinations (IHRB(ii), 2011).

A rights-based approach

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (see page 7) offer tourism businesses a useful framework for fulfilling its responsibility to respect water rights, thereby promoting more sustainable water management. The UN Guiding Principles state that company commitment to respect for human rights should be set out in a clear policy statement that is backed at the most senior level. Enacting the responsibility to respect means taking steps to ensure that company activities are not infringing on the human rights of others. This includes employees, communities or entities who may be affected directly or indirectly by company activities. According to the UN Guiding Principles, companies should work towards fulfilling their business responsibility to respect human rights due diligence. This is an on-going process of identifying, assessing and mitigating potential and actual human rights impacts; of tracking and reporting on performance internally and externally; and of providing access to redress for those whose rights have been harmed. Effective human rights due diligence necessitates direct engagement with potentially affected parties, including marginalised groups who may be disproportionately impacted but inadequately represented at ‘community’ or ‘local’ level, such as women and indigenous peoples (UNHRC, 2011). It should include assessments of wider socioeconomic, political and environmental factors that could influence the extent to which water rights are being fulfilled in specific contexts. Particular due diligence should be applied in destinations where poverty levels are high, infrastructure is weak, political will or capacity is lacking, or where the political climate limits civil society space or capacity (IHRB, 2011).

Human rights due diligence requires transparency and information provision to communities about business water consumption and management; and further activities that could impact upon water quality, access or availability. Such communications should be culturally and gender-sensitive, and take account of language, literacy levels, and access to technology.

Building on good practice

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, launched by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), are posited as ‘the minimum requirements that any tourism business should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world’s natural and cultural resources while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for poverty alleviation’ (GSTC, 2011). The criteria include a provision that: “The activities of the company do not jeopardise the provision of basic services, such as water, energy, or sanitation, to neighbouring communities.” The GSTC are now launching a set of criteria for destinations to complement those for tourism businesses. Furthermore, the ‘Travlife Sustainability System Criteria, a major international certification scheme for hotels and accommodation, is working to align itself with the GSTC, including in respect to water.

Some tourism operators take direct action to provide water to neighbouring communities. There are examples where hotels, guesthouses or safari lodges have installed water tanks, wells or boreholes to facilitate community access to water, tanks, wells or boreholes to facilitate community access to water, as in Zanzibar. However, as this case study shows, it is vital that any such interventions are developed in close cooperation and coordination with the communities concerned, as well as the relevant government authorities. Other examples exist of hotels and lodges providing financial support to community trusts, which may then allocate the funds to improving access to water and sanitation. Such approaches can promote community autonomy while strengthening local ownership over water and other village-level development projects. Tourism companies should manage all such community relationships sensitively and transparently, and be wary of creating situations of over-dependency.

In 2011, international tour operator Kuoni held a stakeholder dialogue workshop on the theme of ‘Fresh water and tourism’. Participants included the World Water Council, the Gender and Water Alliance and the United Nations Environment Programme. Kuoni recognises its stakeholders as including “NGOs, the media, our suppliers, our employees, our investors, our customers and our industry partners”. Such a multi-stakeholder approach is broadly recognised as key to fostering sustainable and coordinated business responsibility to respect water rights.

There are examples where hotels, guesthouses or safari lodges have installed water tanks, wells or boreholes to facilitate community access to water.
solutions (e.g., see CEO Water Mandate below). However, Kuoni’s water dialogues apparently stopped short of recognising and involving the rightsholders themselves – communities in destinations – even though they stand to be the most immediately affected by the company’s water consumption.

The UNWTO is the largest global tourism policy body, with a membership of 155 countries, seven territories and over 400 affiliates representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities. It has officially adopted the Millennium Development Goals, and in recognition of the importance of water to the tourism sector, has joined UN-Water, a body set up to strengthen water to the tourism sector, has joined in recognition of the importance of Millennium Development Goals, and authorities. It has officially adopted the educational institutions, tourism representing the private sector, territories and over 400 affiliates company’s water consumption.

Even though they stand to be the communities in destinations – the rightsholders themselves – short of recognising and involving water dialogues apparently stopped below). However, Kuoni’s solutions (e.g., see CEO Water Mandate,2011). Launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2007, the Mandate is a voluntary public-private initiative designed to help companies improve their water sustainability policies and practices. Corporate signatories recognise their role and stake in helping to address the global water challenge, and pledge to take actions in a number of key areas, including supply chain impacts and community engagement. The CEO Water Mandate offers a range of free guidelines and assessment tools in a bid to foster responsible and effective business engagement with water policy at the local, regional and international level. For example, it is producing a Guide to Aligning Business Practice with the Human Right to Water and Sanitation. This will offer an operational framework for applying business and human rights principles to water.

Tourism industry stakeholders could also learn from the water stewardship approach advocated by the CEO Water Mandate (CEO Water Mandate,2011). Launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2007, the Mandate is a voluntary public-private initiative designed to help companies improve their water sustainability policies and practices. Corporate signatories recognise their role and stake in helping to address the global water challenge, and pledge to take actions in a number of key areas, including supply chain impacts and community engagement. The CEO Water Mandate offers a range of free guidelines and assessment tools in a bid to foster responsible and effective business engagement with water policy at the local, regional and international level. For example, it is producing a Guide to Aligning Business Practice with the Human Right to Water and Sanitation. This will offer an operational framework for applying business and human rights principles to water.

Recommendations

**GOVERNMENTS**

1. Governments must implement their fundamental duty and international legal obligations to uphold, fulfil and protect the right of their citizens to water and sanitation for personal, domestic and essential livelihood needs. This includes protection against infringements by tourism businesses. The right to water and sanitation should not come second to, or be compromised by, tourism development.

2. Governments should sensitise tourism businesses operating locally and/or overseas of their business responsibility to respect human rights and offer guidance in this regard.

3. Destination governments should not privilege allocation of water supplies or infrastructure to the tourism sector and should take steps to ensure public supplies are not appropriated by superior tourism sector infrastructure to the detriment of local communities.

4. A clear regulatory and institutional framework for the coordinated development and implementation of sustainable integrated water and tourism planning and management should be established. Such a framework should provide for the adequate resourcing of clearly defined departmental mandates, roles and responsibilities.

5. Any such regulatory framework should incorporate measures governing water provision by private suppliers, including water tankers and providers of borewells. It should include measures and guidelines to encourage groundwater replenishment and protect watersheds.

6. Land use planning should be based on an assessment of available freshwater resources, which should be a key criterion in establishing tourism carrying capacities. Such assessments should take into account: the water consumption and impacts of all tourism businesses and services; consumption discrepancies between high and low-end establishments; infrastructure capacities (including sewage, waste and electricity); population growth; urbanisation; competing livelihood needs; food security; climate change; and wider watershed degradation.

7. Land use, tourism and water planning and decision-making should be undertaken transparently and participatively, with involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including communities, tourism and other large water consumers, such as agriculture. Special efforts should be taken to involve women, given their increased vulnerability to adverse water impacts, and other marginalised groups, such as indigenous peoples.

8. Clear financing and incentives structures should be established with tariffs set according to size of establishment and rates of consumption, along with measures to recover user fees. In order to build upon the poverty alleviating potential of tourism, measures (such as affordable tariffs and improved water infrastructure) should be introduced to support water access for small-scale tourism entrepreneurs.

9. Destination governments should raise awareness of water issues among the tourism industry, local communities and tourists by communicating regulations and guidance.

10. Adequate punitive action should be taken against tourism businesses found to be in breach of regulations. Good practice should be championed and publicised.

11. Governments should be accountable and responsive in respect to water equity in tourism, with a clearly identified department and process to investigate and redress community grievances.

12. Agriculture and fishing should be protected against over-consumption and pollution of freshwater by tourism. In order to stem the loss of agricultural land, governments should consider differentiating tax rates between commercial and farm land where relevant.

13. The link between the erosion of community water access and the privatisation of land for tourism purposes should be recognised; measures to protect customary land rights and water access should be introduced, including those of indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups.
Recommendations

**ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

1. Stakeholders in government, the donor community, the national and international tourism industry, civil society, and other affected sectors, such as agriculture, should recognise that there is a shared risk to all if water resources in destinations are not managed equitably and sustainably. This shared risk gives rise to a shared responsibility (CEO Water Mandate, 2011) to work together to address the issues, with particular responsibility resting on those inequitably consuming and polluting water resources, and those in positions of power and with greater access to resources.

2. Relevant stakeholders should consider establishing multi-stakeholder initiatives in order to foster dialogue and understanding of water issues and impacts, and to develop collaborative approaches to address inequitable access. Measures should be taken to ensure adequate community participation, including of women and other marginalised groups.

3. Such multi-stakeholder initiatives could include the formulation of destination-specific principles of water equity in tourism. They could serve as points for coordinating with, and providing input to, international donor-funded water and sanitation projects (Slade, 2011).

**HOTELS, TOUR OPERATORS AND TOURISM BUSINESSES**

4. Such collaborative approaches should be developed in partnership with local communities, with special consideration given to the needs of women and other users who may be disproportionately impacted by insufficient access to water and sanitation. The development of community protocols around tourism and water resource management, whereby communities set out how they expect other stakeholders to engage with them, could be explored (Slade, 2011).

5. The advantages of adopting a rights-based approach should be recognised, in terms of sustainable business practice, managing risks associated with potential complicity in water rights infringements, and promoting wider development in destinations (IHRB(ii), 2011). The UN Guiding Principles, as well as the CEO Water Mandate, offer useful frameworks for change in this regard.

6. Companies should work towards fulfilling their business responsibility to respect water (and other) rights through a process of human rights due diligence (UNHCR, 2011). This entails identifying potential and actual human rights impacts of their water consumption; integrating findings into company processes; addressing negative impacts; and reporting on performance (see page 25).

7. Strategies to conserve and reduce water consumption should be broadened, with international tourism operators and hotel groups providing further sensitisation, capacity-building and technology transfer to destination counterparts. Existing industry initiatives and toolkits should be utilised in this regard, although their short-comings with regard to the business responsibility to respect water rights should be recognised.

8. Industry stakeholders should provide relevant data and support the establishment of water resource baselines and tourism carrying capacities in destinations.

9. The UNWTO has a particularly important role in promoting a rights-based approach to water and sanitation as part of truly sustainable, equitable tourism development, and should align its policies, sustainability indicators and guidelines for destination governments and industry stakeholders accordingly.

**CIVIL SOCIETY**

Local and international civil society has an important role to play in advocacy, capacity-building and sensitisation of governments, industry, and the wider public. This includes:

1. Awareness-raising among local communities, industry, government stakeholders and tourists of water inequity issues; advocating for participative, rights-based approaches to tourism development.

2. Empowerment of communities to advocate for their water and sanitation rights, and to effectively participate in tourism and water policy-making process and other multi-stakeholder initiatives.

3. Exploration of opportunities to revive or strengthen community-based water management systems, with examples of successful models shared and replicated.
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