

The Role of Ecotourism Development in the Financing of Conservation Initiatives in Cameroon's Protected Areas: Lessons from the Campo Ma'an National Park

Authors : Nyong Princely Awazi, Gadinga Walter Forje, Barnabas Neba Nfornkah, Ndzifon Jude Kimengsi

Abstract : Ecotourism is documented as a sustainable measure of bridging conservation goals and livelihood sustenance around protected areas, due to its ability of not just providing alternative livelihood, but also in providing the necessary resources that can help finance conservation initiatives. In Cameroon, all ecotourism activities around national parks are aimed at generating revenue through the conservation service while providing sustainable livelihood options to the local population. There exists an information lacuna regarding the contribution of ecotourism finances to conservation efforts in the country. This study was aimed at establishing the contribution of ecotourism finances to conservation initiatives in and around the Campo Ma'an National Park (CMNP). Data were collected through the administering of 120 structured questionnaires to ecotourism actors and 15 key/expert interviews with tourism and conservation actors in the Campo Ma'an landscape. Chi-square test, Spearman's rank correlation and regressions were used for data analysis. The study revealed that the main sources of ecotourism financing to the park service are through entrance fees, cameras and vehicle fees paid by tourists as well as ecotourism project financing through NGOs. Calculations from the tourism register of the park showed that the park was able to raise as much as 1,576,000 FCFA (US\$ 3,152) annually. It was further established that ecotourism revenue has not greatly supported conservation, with 54% of respondents perceiving ecotourism not contributing to biodiversity conservation. Chi Square test results highlighted poor ecotourism governance, low level of ecotourism development, corruption from park management staff, obsolete nature of the current finance law on the management of protected area revenue as key factors hindering ecotourism financing in conservation. For ecotourism financing to contribute to biodiversity conservation in the CMNP and in Cameroon's protected areas, the government needs to revise the finance law on the management of revenue generated from protected areas, improve park governance to fight corruption and enhance transparency, invest in the development and marketing of the Campo Ma'an national park as a tourism destination in the country.

Keywords : Cameroon, Campo Ma'an National Park, conservation, ecotourism, ecotourism financing

Conference Title : ICESTPA 2023 : International Conference on Ecotourism, Sustainable Tourism and Protected Areas

Conference Location : Montreal, Canada

Conference Dates : May 15-16, 2023