

Between the values of fishing communities and modern tourism



Fishermen work together to haul in the daily catch. Unregulated tourism development is posing a threat to this traditional livelihood activity

Our Empowering Coastal Communities project is seeking to protect land and livelihood in south India from aggressive tourism development. KP Sasi, an award-winning local film director and activist, gives his view.

Many coastal communities have depended on the sea for centuries. Their relationship

with the sea has shaped their history, culture, social relations and economics. Whether Hindu, Christian or Muslim, these fishing communities still worship the 'Mother Sea' today.

The notion of 'state' and 'private property' only recently entered the lives of these fisherfolk. Relationships regarding the catch tend to be formed on the principle

of sharing. Many believe a catch is to meet their daily needs – Mother Sea is protector and provider.

This relationship has fostered the conservation of marine resources for generations. These communities don't like the small, meshed nets that capture everything and are favoured by mechanised crafts; they take only what they need. While modern fishing is an economic activity that exploits labour and the ocean's resources, for traditional communities, fishing is a social, cultural, ecological and spiritual activity.

'Consumption of the coast', including aggressive tourism development, is threatening the existence of these people by systematically exploiting coastal regions for quick profits. Some 75 per cent of the coast that belonged to the communities has been lost; the non-monetary values of these peoples make it easier for the monied to invade them.

The coastal environment is like a glass – it can hold only so much water before it spills. Tourism is already spilling. The only answer is a total policy rethink – planning with respect for local cultures, community rights and future generations. ■

members' corner

News and events

AUTUMN EVENTS EXTRAVAGANZA

This autumn, we are keenly promoting Tourism Concern's presence at events and seeking opportunities to raise our profile. If you have any ideas in this regard, we would love to hear from you.

We are also always on the lookout for volunteers to help at events. If

you'd like to get involved and help us campaign, please request an event volunteer form from events@tourismconcern.org.uk.

WORKERS BEER FESTIVALS

As we say goodbye to the summer and its much-loved music festivals, we'd like to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who pulled pints for Tourism Concern in the tents of the Workers Beer Company. This year our team of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers raised over £1,500! We appreciate all the time and effort given to raising money for us and look forward to seeing you next year for more festival fun!

HAVE FUN FUNDRAISING!

We'd like to encourage you – our supporters – to fundraise on

Tourism Concern's behalf. Every pound is a crucial contribution towards our campaigns. Visit our website for inspiration on how to get involved, be it by running, walking, cycling or baking cakes! There's something for everyone – get your friends involved too.

Contact events@tourismconcern.org.uk for a fundraising pack. ■

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Date and location – tbc

Celebrate Human Rights Day on 10 December by joining us for a special film screening followed by talks from our campaigners. Details will be announced soon.

tourism in focus

Extended versions of these articles are available online

Get on board – help us fight to make tourism fair

Welcome to the autumn edition of *Tourism In Focus*. As you are no doubt aware, tourism is one of the world's largest industries, with huge potential for positive cultural exchange. But it is up to us, as responsible travellers, to realise those positive benefits.

For Tourism Concern, this autumn is about outreach. It's about ensuring that there is greater awareness of our work and public backing of our campaigns, which is vital to their success. For example, this November, we launch a briefing at the World Travel Market, urging the tourism industry to embed respect for human rights in all its activities. Our research into water issues is nearing completion and our **Water Equity in Tourism (WET) campaign** is beginning to mount. Our **Gap Year and International Volunteering Standard (GIVS)** is now being launched, and our **Empowering Coastal Communities**



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programme in India is giving local people the tools they need to engage in tourism policy-making to help protect their rights.

Action taken by you, our valued supporters, is essential to ensuring our work remains on the forefront of the responsible tourism agenda. Raising our profile and promoting understanding of tourism issues among holidaymakers is crucial to enabling individuals to make conscious choices. As individuals, we can all take small actions to help ensure that the way we travel

does not violate the rights of local communities and that tourism works as a positive development tool. Check out the Avoid Guilt Trips section of our website (www.tourismconcern.org.uk/travellers.html) for simple fair travel tips.

Having reviewed our membership packages, we are now pushing forward with a **new membership drive**. We need you to become part of our outreach network and spread the word for Tourism Concern. Please consider becoming a member if you aren't one already. By joining the movement for ethical tourism and encouraging others to join, you can help strengthen our voice. It is thanks to our members that we can continue punching above our weight. Our voice is a powerful tool; let's amplify and use it together to benefit the communities fighting for a fair deal from tourism. ■

JASSI SANDHAR
Membership officer

TAKE ACTION!

BECOME A TOURISM CONCERN MEMBER TODAY!

We really value the ongoing commitment and passion of our supporters, but we now need you to go one step further in your support of ethical tourism. If not one already, become a member – and extend this request to all your friends, family and colleagues.

For just £2 a month, you can help guarantee that tourism is a force for good. The support we gain from members ensures we can continue campaigning for fair tourism and allows us to provide a voice for the voiceless.

For further details and to join today, please visit www.tourismconcern.org.uk/members.

Tourism Concern

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campaigns

International volunteering: a local perspective



Bic Manahira (front right) with fellow local Vezo community members in Andavadoaka, southwest Madagascar. Blue Ventures' volunteering projects are embedded in the local community

Bic Manahira is one of the most knowledgeable and respected men in the Vezo community of southwest Madagascar, a community whose identity is tied to the ocean. He is a key factor to the success of Blue Ventures, whose work in community-based conservation and sustainable ecotourism using international volunteers is helping ensure the survival of marine resources and the Vezo community.

When I was a boy, I thought I would leave Madagascar one day to join the military, even be a legionnaire. I never expected to stay, working in conservation and responsible tourism, meeting people from far-off places.

I came to know Blue Ventures in 2003, whilst working at the hotel where their first expedition team was staying. Their project was exciting to me, and by the second expedition, I was working for them. I began as boat captain and handyman, and soon learned to fill the oxygen tanks for the diving programme.

In 2004, the Blue Ventures' director caught me using a PADI instruction book to learn about diving and improve my English. By 2009, I had become Madagascar's first PADI dive instructor, teaching Blue Ventures' volunteers to dive and collect underwater scientific data.

I also got involved in educating the local youth about environmental matters. I wanted to inspire a new generation of Vezo conservationists, just as my experience with Blue Ventures inspired me. I helped to establish Andavadoaka's first environmental club; five years on, it's part of a network of similar clubs all over Madagascar and I'm working with Blue Ventures and UNICEF to turn it into the strongest youth environmental club in the southwest.

I want these young people to learn what I learned – that our actions as Vezo people have long-term impacts on the environment, and that our survival is tied to the survival of this unique marine ecosystem. I want them to learn that we can be responsible conservationists, as well as a thriving Vezo community.

I could not have learned this if it weren't for my experience working with Blue Ventures. Interacting with hundreds of volunteers from all over the world has taught me to see my home as something special; they get to see what biology and conservation look like in real life, and be a part of this vital work and unique community.

I am happy my own knowledge has been an important part of BV. We continue to teach and learn from each other. ■

Our survival is tied to the survival of this unique marine ecosystem

GIVS Setting the standard

International volunteering is something that should be rewarding and fulfilling for both host communities and volunteers. When projects are developed and managed in partnership with local people, and volunteers are given robust training and support, volunteering overseas can make a meaningful contribution to sustainable and positive change.

Tourism Concern's new Gap Year and International Volunteering Standard (GIVS) is designed to:

- help volunteer-sending organisations ensure that their projects are positive for all; and
- guide them towards best practice.

In October, we brought together 34 volunteer organisations so that we could introduce them to GIVS and garner their feedback. The enthusiasm and positivity was overwhelming, with a clear consensus that such a standard is much needed, particularly given the unregulated growth of the 'voluntourism' sector.

Tourism Concern is continuing to develop our GIVS auditing systems with the help of our expert advisory group. We plan to fully launch GIVS and begin auditing volunteer organisations by the beginning of 2012.

For more information about GIVS, visit www.tourismconcern.org.uk/GIVS. ■

PETER BISHOP
Project manager



Reclaiming water rights: towards an equitable social contract

Goa, promoted as India's beach tourism capital, receives approximately 2.5 million visitors annually. This far exceeds the population of the state. Mass tourism has forced changes in resource use of local communities. Public spaces and resources are



An abandoned well of a local family residing beside the 7-star Leela Hotel. High nitrate contents resulted in an oily residue at the well surface, which made the water unconsumable. Several other families suffered the same problem

being appropriated for private corporations; communities are replaced by hotels; and water is diverted for entertainment.

The right to water for survival must be reconciled with the right to water for leisure. Frequently, local communities' right to water for survival is compromised, either in the form of shortages or lack of access to clean and safe supplies.

Statistics continue to unveil the inequities in water access. One five-star hotel consumes some 500m³ of water daily – this is the same as the monthly consumption of the entire village. Although Goa receives high rainfall, 80 per cent runs off into the sea. This, in addition to degrading water quality, is posing a threat to communities. In most coastal areas, unregulated tourism has caused the proliferation of construction as well as the dumping of sewage and garbage into water bodies.

The Central Government has failed to take cognisance of these figures and is planning on promoting resorts within the 200m high-tide line. This violates existing

regulations and puts an additional burden on water resources that are already stressed.

During peak season, the use of private tankers to meet the water demands of large hotels is rampant. A lack of regulatory systems has resulted in illegally tapping groundwater. Adding to local people's discontent is the fact that the hotels use their purchasing power to guarantee indiscriminate water appropriation, whose usage remains unmonitored and limitless.

Water in tourism is an unequivocal concern among locals. With more and more bodies of water becoming contaminated and higher demands placed on this limited resource, local people are calling for appropriate management mechanisms. The Centre for Responsible Tourism plans to create a stage for rightholders and stakeholders to develop a new social contract that will pave the way towards water equity in tourism. ■

ANABEL DA GAMA
Centre for Responsible Tourism, Goa

Pushing for respect for human rights in tourism

Tourism Concern and our partners have continued to push the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) to embed human rights in tourism policy and development. For this to happen, the UNWTO must open its doors to civil society organisations, including communities who have been negatively impacted by tourism development. It is vital for their voices to be taken into account if their rights are to be protected. The UNWTO has stated its commitment in this regard and we continue to explore avenues through which this can be realised.

In this vein, colleagues from TEN (European Tourism Partnership) were busy disseminating our joint human rights and UNWTO briefings at the International Congress on Ethics and Tourism on 15-16 September in Madrid, hosted by the UNWTO and the

Spanish government. Although a positive step, Tourism Concern remains concerned about the scope and accessibility of the conference. Dominated by tourism ministers and big business, it did not offer real opportunities for those directly suffering tourism-related human rights abuses – many of whom lack resources or are socially marginalised – to participate. However, several speakers, including some ministers, demanded action to mitigate tourism's harmful impacts. Find out what our social media volunteer, Jeanett Soderstrom, thought about the Congress at www.tourismconcern.org.uk/news/254/249/BLOG-A-candid-take-on-Tourism-Ethics-conference.html.

Encouraging words also emerged from a UNWTO meeting on World Tourism Day on 27 September.

The 'Aswan Recommendations' call for "community engagement to be mandatory in tourism development", and for all tourism stakeholders to commit to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. Article 5 of the Code is of particular importance as it emphasises that tourism should benefit host countries and communities. Tourism Concern will be urging for these positive statements to be converted into action.

We also continue to lobby the tourism industry more widely on the need to respect human rights. On 10 November, we launched a new briefing at the World Travel Market in London, which makes the business case for taking a human rights approach to tourism. To find out more, visit www.tourismconcern.org.uk. ■

RACHEL NOBLE
Campaigns manager