Water Shortages: A Potential Conflict Between Tourists And Locals?

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Tourism is a thirsty industry

- Water is critical resource for tourism
- Tourism = high demand for water: two showers a day, swimming pools, landscaped gardens, etc.
- $15,000^3$ is enough for
  - 100 rural families for 3 yrs
  - 100 urban families for 2 yrs
  - 100 tourists for 55 days
- Competition with communities in destinations
- Tourism Concern undertook research in four countries
- This is not an isolated problem
Goa: A typical example

- A decline in the quantity and quality of well water. Depleted by hotel boreholes and contaminated by their use of soak pits.
- Water governance is hopelessly inadequate. – Lack of monitoring and enforcement of environmental law, lack of political will to commit resources and corruption.
- Piped supplies are inadequate, so private supplies fill the vacuum. Allocation is based on ability to pay rather than human rights to water.

“We recognise the benefits tourism can bring, but ordinary people are suffering. Some can afford to buy water, some cannot.”
Zanzibar: Resentment and Conflict

- Very few hotels undertake any water conservation methods
- Many residents in NE report daily struggles to access sufficient water
- Water supply for many is electricity dependant. “The hotels have generators and can get water all the time... they are our neighbours, but refused us even one bucket full”
- Anger has led communities to cut hotels’ water pipes, so water sources and pipelines are now guarded 24/7 by armed hotel guards
- A multi-stakeholder workshop, dialogue, pledges and management of their water resource
Bali’s Water Woes

Rapid and unchecked tourism development has resulted in:

– A falling water table
– Salt water intrusion
– Land subsidence
– Increased flooding
– Deteriorating water quality
– Competition with agriculture
– Increase in water borne disease
– Conflicts over water resources
The consequences of the water crisis

- Health implications for locals and tourists
- Vicious cycle of declining agriculture and increasing tourism development - loss of sustainable food supply and attraction
- Increasing costs of water up 25% in 3 years

Bali’s pending water crisis will rapidly become a tourism and economic crisis. If Bali’s tourism falters then so will her economy (75-80% of Bali’s economy is tourism dependant), seriously impacting on the welfare of over three and a half million people.
Intensification from climate change

- Increased frequency and intensity of heavy precipitation events
- Declining water quality
- Increased saline intrusion exacerbated by sea level rise
- Vulnerability is aggravated by:
  - Limited institutional capacity
  - Ill-enforced regulatory framework
  - Poor distribution of available funds
- Adaptation to reduce vulnerability should include:
  - Reduction of water pollution and high withdrawals
  - Improvement of supply and sanitation
What hotels can do and many are doing

• Despite research revealing a low understanding of water issues in the hotel sector, e.g. we found several 5* hotels using sprinklers in the middle of the day, many (>50% in Goa) do not monitor water use and few recycle grey water.

• There are numerous ways for hotels to reduce water consumption:
  – Flow restrictions, Low flush toilets
  – Low flow with aeration
  – Grey water recycling
  – Timing devices for garden irrigation
  – Moisture sensors to ensure water on demand
  – Water delivered below the soil

• BUT MOTE IMPORTANTLY CARRY OUT HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESMENT
Access to Water is a Human Right
UN Resolution A/HRC/15/L.14 2010

- **Sufficient** (50 – 100 litres per person per day)
- **Safe** (free from microorganisms or other hazards)
- **Physically accessible** (within 1000m and collection time ≤ 30 minutes)
- **Affordable** (water costs ≤ 3% of household income)

- Prerequisite for other rights: food, health, education, self determination and life.
Women Bare the Brunt

• In all the case studies we examined women were the worse affected
• It was usually their job to provide water for domestic purposes, queue to fill and carry containers and care for the sick
• MDG 3, UNWOMEN, UNWTO...
• Equality in Tourism (http://equalityintourism.org/)
UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (June 2011).

- Requires companies to consider their spheres of influence and responsibilities and engage with affected stakeholders, including local communities.
- Relates to direct activities, but also supply chain and communities where companies operate.
- Tour operators can put pressure on hotels.
Sustainability means taking a human rights based approach.

- Many tourism companies are embracing the sustainability agenda, but **true** sustainability means taking a Human Rights based approach.
- Tourism business complicity in the infringement of a communities rights to water, even if inadvertent, places companies at risk of allegations of abuse and undermines sustainability of companies and the destination.
- By conducting human rights due diligence, companies can reduce risk of culpability and complicity.
The business case for considering Human Rights

- Safe guard reputation and brand image
- Gain competitive advantage
- Improve recruitment and staff loyalty
- Foster greater productivity
- Secure and maintain a licence to operate
- Ensure active stakeholder engagement
- Reduce cost burdens
- Meet investor expectations
- Due diligence, not be complicit (HR impact assessment)
Human Rights Impact Assessments

• The way to understand your actual and potential impact on human rights
• The way to conduct your due-diligence to ensure that you are not complicit
• Ensures stakeholder engagement
Thank You
Any Questions?