

**THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL  
RESPONSIBLE TOURISM CONFERENCE  
ACADEMIC PAPER SUBMISSION**

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**TITLE OF PAPER:** From the snow to the mangrove, creative solutions

**ABSTRACT:** Through economic development projects, the idea is to stimulate and strengthen local societies to face the fallout from the situation at the northern border. Local economic accumulation processes, Identity construction processes, Participatory processes involving all stakeholders. The serious, historical and recurring problems of the northern region of the country have to be solved: Poverty, Inequality, and Exclusion.

**Declaration:** Please note that this paper has been submitted as part of the Second International Responsible Tourism Conference. The paper is presented as it was submitted and as such Leeds Metropolitan University and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism are not responsible for any of the content.

## **“From the Glaciers to the Mangrove Forest:**

### **Alliances between communities, private sector and local governments to develop alternative and responsible tourism products in the northern region of Ecuador”**

#### **1. Basic information of the project**

The Project, started in February 2007, is being implemented by CARE International in Ecuador in partnership with the Development Alternatives Foundation and the Ministry of Tourism through its Northern Regional Office.

It includes the participation of local governments (of San Lorenzo, Eloy Alfaro and Rio Verde in the Province of Esmeraldas; Tulcan, Huaca, Montufar, Espejo, Bolivar and Mira in the Province of Carchi; Ibarra, Pimampiro, Urcuqui, Antonio Ante, Cotacachi, and Otavalo in the Province of Imbabura; and Cayambe and Pedro Moncayo in the Province of Pichincha), along with tourism initiatives: small companies and communities who wish to join in the sustainable management of tourism.

Within the project area, a great deal of tourism potential has been identified in terms of landscapes and scenery, local crafts and food, as well as historical, social and cultural value arising from the presence of Afro-Ecuadorian and Andean indigenous ethnic groups that are very important for fomenting tourism in the region.

The main fields of work are focused on the following areas: Alternative Tourism Development, Promotion of Micro and Small Enterprises and Protection and Conservation of Tourism Resources.

The project seeks to achieve responsible tourism by incorporating concepts and practices that ensure economic, social and environmental sustainability, encouraging interaction and coordinated work between public and private sector and also the communities. For this purpose, the project is addressing the creation and linkage of tourism products, taking into account the entire productive chain, the establishment of alliances between rural communities and the private sector from the perspective of their responsibility into their own business and their surroundings and the inclusion of local governments in tourism planning in order to make a meaningful contribution in local economic development through this activity.

#### **Map of Coverage**

#### **2. Project objectives**

The General Objective of the Project is “Contribute to improving the quality of life of the population of the northern highlands and coast of Ecuador, linked to alternative and responsible tourism chains, through the development and promotion of medium, small and micro-enterprises<sup>1</sup>, under the principles of sustainability, equity and the conservation of tourism resources<sup>2</sup> (natural and cultural) of the region.”

Following the perspective of achieving the main goal, we set 3 Specific Objectives:

1. Generate sustainable tourism enterprises with an awareness of citizen rights and responsibilities, building capacities and add value to local resources as a key condition for the development of the region.
2. Give an impulse to the diversity of tourism resources and add value to transform them into quality products and services with a clear market orientation.
3. Build consensus among local stakeholders connected through shared objectives which will make it possible to take advantage of and preserve tourism resources as well as promote long-term local economic development.
4. Guarantee the sustainability and continuity of the project activities by identifying local leaders, strengthening institutions and promoting partnerships.

Through this Project we want to reduce poverty within the northern region of Ecuador, taking the following main actions:

- Including in value chain different sectors of small agricultural producers through product production and distribution (food, natural resources and cultural resources) and services (local tour guides and several employments in private tourism enterprises).
- Making easier tourism product development in which there are always included local communities through rural tourism, agro tourism, ecotourism, community tourism, ethno tourism and other proposals in a way that all generated incomes due to tourism get to benefit the poorest populations.
- Enhancing private enterprises located on the northern region to work in the corporate social, politic and environmental responsibility philosophy; in this aspect, the enterprises will work sharing responsibilities and benefits with the poorest sectors of the region.
- Working strongly with local governments to make them work with equity and transparency, giving a wider approach of their efforts and giving public services to a wider range of people and places (“juntas parroquiales”, rural communities, etc.).

The implementation of this kind of Project in the northern region of Ecuador will help to alleviate poverty as well as generate security for populations and tourists, political measures and economical development.



Fresh fruits – El Limonal

Imbabura (Ecuador)

Lita river – San Lorenzo

Esmeraldas (Ecuador)



### 3. Project justification

The project bases its approach toward serious, historical and recurring problems of the northern region of the country that have to be solved:

- Poverty
- Inequality
- Exclusion

Two of the poorest cantons of the country are located in this region: Río Verde and Eloy Alfaro; the biggest problems of inequity and exclusion due to racism (against indigenous people and afro descendants) take place in this region.

This is a strategic area for the country, for the region, and its population. The negative impacts of the “Plan Colombia” are well known: insecurity, migration, refugees, environmental and health problems, and others.

In terms of agricultural development there are some structural problems for small producers, then the tourism activity is a feasible alternative for the region but taking a value chain approach and incorporating all the agents involved. Furthermore, Ecuador has great tourism potential, and is recognized around the world for its mega diversity. This activity is a source of income comparable with other activities (agriculture, fishing, raising livestock, and others). It makes a very significant contribution to the growth and development of the local economy, through leisure activities, cultural exchange, the production of goods and services, and others.

Through economic development projects such as this, the idea is to stimulate and strengthen local societies to face the fallout from the situation at the northern border trough:

- Local economic accumulation processes
- Identity construction processes
- Participatory processes involving all stakeholders



Mangrove forest – San Lorenzo  
Esmeraldas (Ecuador)

Cayambe Volcano – Imbabura

(Ecuador)



#### 4. Strategy and approaches

The main activity is focused on adopting responsible tourism. There are three selected approaches:

- 1) Tourism product development considering value chain approach,
- 2) Alliance establishment between rural communities and private enterprise sector into a perspective of environmental responsibility and
- 3) Local government incorporation in economical growth, trying to make this approaches work to achieve holistic vision, which is the global strategy of the project in order to achieve all settled goals.

This approaches have being selected because they are the most suitable way to achieve local development and build societies based upon poverty reduction, to get this is fundamental that: a) All agents must be integrated in development process,

b) Generate process of local economical growth and

3) Add value and reinforce local identity.

Traditionally, development process have being held and impulsed by the and this is the main cause of no meaningful poverty reduction results alter decades of work, resources and efforts invested on this field, more over, poverty indicators said that it has increased because the real benefits never arrived to all the sectors, in this case, to the populations of the northern region of Ecuador.

This region is ethnically formed by afro descendants (Chota and Esmeraldas), Andean indigenous populations (Otavalos, Imbayas, Karanquis), tropical forest indigenous populations (Awas and Chachis) and "mestizos". This situation is relevant because of two reasons: 1) it is important to understand the great cultural and ethnical tourism potential and 2) to add important to what we explained before: as there is centralism, there are also proves of racism against this ethnical and cultural groups of population that have always being excluded from any development possibility.

Therefore, through this Project we want to solve problems such as poverty, inequity and lack of inclusion. This supports the selected approaches.

The direct impact that must be generated is to reduce poverty integrating local rural communities into the process of tourism development of the northern region of Ecuador.



Artisan – Peguche

Imbabura (Ecuador)



Gaen Group – Mascarilla

Carchi (Ecuador)

## 5. Project activities

This project emphasizes sustainability, economic development, responsible consumption and contributions to eliminate poverty in the area in which is focused.

All the activities were programmed considering the respect and promotion of World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics, Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry, Cape Town Declaration and other documents oriented toward similar goals.

There are three general results with its own detailed activities, settled to achieve specific objectives as well as the general objective:

- Result 1 (R1): Alternative and responsible tourism development promoted
- Result 2 (R2): Medium, small and micro-enterprises linked to alternative tourism are developed and promoted
- Result 3 (R3): Tourism resources are conserved and protected

The main segments of population/economical sectors involved in our scope of work are:

- tourism entrepreneurships located in the northern region of Ecuador,
- originating markets (Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Ibarra, Colombia and several European and North American markets identified),
- local and national governments (and institutions such as the Tourism Minister, FENACAPTUR, FEPTCE, WTO-STEP Program, etc.),
  - local communities
  - mass media, travel writers and journalists
  - other related or complementary segments.

The activities and their implementations are showed as following:

**To achieve R1:**

1. Development of responsible and alternative tourism products

The steps to follow are:

1. Inventory of actual and future tourism entrepreneurship
2. Participative selection of tourism entrepreneurship
3. Elaboration of a tourism product development plan
4. Visits to selected entrepreneurship included in the development plan
5. Negotiation meetings to establish partnerships and make concretions about tourism products
6. Tourism product design and creation
7. Participative validation of tourism products

2. Implementation/reinforcement of Tourism Information Centers (CIT)

The steps to follow are:

1.2.1. Conception and design of CIT

1.2.2. Physical implementation/improvement of CIT

1.2.3. Equipment and operation of CIT

1.2.4. Hiring process of personnel to operate in each CIT

1.2.5. Negotiating meetings with local governments to reinforce CIT operation and activities

1.2.6. Elaboration of MOU's (Memorandum of Understanding) with local governments to agree about several aspects and assume the responsibility of operating CITs.

3. Tourism product commercialization

The steps to follow are:

1.3.1. Market research for alternative tourism development

1.3.2. Strategy definition and commercialization plan of tourism products

1.3.3. Promotional material design to promote tourism products

1.3.4. Commercialization plan implementation

1.3.5. Agreement and alliance establishment with tour operators



**To achieve R2:**

2.1. Technical assistance and management training

The steps to be followed are:

- 2.1.1. Formulate selection criteria's to evaluate entrepreneurial initiatives and also qualification mechanisms
- 2.1.2. Evaluation of the area
- 2.1.3. Community leader contact and meeting with social agents
- 2.1.4. Parameter establishment and process of selection and qualification (previously agreed)
- 2.1.5. Selection of entrepreneurial initiatives
- 2.1.6. Workshop to identify demand of services and establishment of commitment and alliances
- 2.1.7. Action plan elaboration: development o fan integral training and technical assistance plan.
- 2.1.8. Development of training events (reinforcing capacities and motivation)
- 2.1.9. Technical assistance program execution
- 2.1.10. Training program execution
- 2.1.11. Evaluation of the programs

	
<p>Traning, program TTBiz,</p> <p>In collaboration with Junior Achievement</p> <p>Grupo GAÉN (Mascarilla – Carchi)</p>	<p>Traning, program TTBiz,</p> <p>In collaboration with Junior Achievement</p> <p>Imbabura Red Muyuntik (Peguiche –</p>

## 2.2. Financial services

The steps to follow are:

2.2.1. Selection, hiring and training of credit promoters on entrepreneurial culture, credit procedures, policies and strategies.

2.2.2. Basic market research

2.2.3. Elaboration of strategy of intervention

2.2.4. Identification of tourism entrepreneurs and local leaders

2.2.5. Promotional material elaboration

2.2.6. Product promotion

2.2.7. Physical space pacification and organization of communication activities by sectors

2.2.8. Credits to selected areas

2.2.9. Visits and explorations

2.2.10. Negotiating closure and alliance establishment

2.2.11. Ad hoc financial product adjustment to serve potential markets

2.2.12. Evaluation of the applicability of financial product (IFIS).

2.3. Development of mechanisms for enterprise sustainability

The steps to succeed in this activity are:

- 2.3.1. Meeting with those who are interested in starting a tourism business
- 2.3.2. Technical assistance in business plan elaboration
- 2.3.3. Lobbying with local institutions to facilitate legal and operational aspects related to create and promote tourism enterprises
- 2.3.4. Action plan elaboration and execution
- 2.3.5. Following, evaluation and applicability of the learning process
- 2.3.6. Strengthening events to motivate and inspire changes and to value local capacities
- 2.3.7. Incentive development related to the results obtained after evaluating entrepreneurial initiatives
- 2.3.8. Quality service certification (or qualification)
- 2.3.9. Results and main experiences diffusion to society

**To achieve R3:**

3.1. Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) Promotion

The steps to follow are:

- 3.1.1. Action plan elaboration to promote CRS
- 3.1.2. Visits to private enterprises and following meetings
- 3.1.3. Technical assistance to coordinate and establish protected areas
- 3.1.4. Lobbying with local institutions to facilitate adjudication related to formal steps to protect areas by private enterprises
- 3.1.5. Workshops and seminars about best practices and CRS related to tourism
- 3.1.6. Results and main experiences diffusion to society

3.2. Political influence to generate local policies

The steps to follow are:

- 3.2.1. Political incidence plan elaboration for 15<sup>th</sup> local governments involved
- 3.2.2. Material preparation for political influence in local governments
- 3.2.3. Lobbying actions in 15 local governments of the region
- 3.2.4. Facilitate policy elaboration established to protect tourism resources
- 3.2.5. Support the process of turning policies into laws and regulations
- 3.2.6. Facilitate, through diffusion activities, policies and regulations application

### 3.3. Awareness and training campaigns

The steps to follow are:

3.3.1. Training and awareness plan elaboration in order to protect tourism resources (mass campaigns)

3.3.2. Material design (to be used in campaigns)

3.3.3. Diffusion of promotional materials

3.3.4. Organize forums about preservation and sustainable use of resources

3.3.5. Work with schools of the region to include tourism and preservation aspects in the study “pensum” (informally, at least 1 hour per month).

Taking into account the huge extension of the northern region of Ecuador that involves the territory of 15 local governments (cantons and municipalities), the amount budgeted for this project in a period of 4 years of execution arises the amount of US \$ 3'000.000. This 4 year period is enough to establish the bases of a sustainable tourism in that region.



Mangrove forest – San Lorenzo

Esmeraldas (Ecuador)



Butterfly – El Limal

Imbabura (Ecuador)



Render – La Merced Baja

Imbabura (Ecuador)

## 6. Lessons and suggestions to achieve responsible tourism in the route “From the Glaciers to the Mangrove Forest”

After eleven months of work we have identified some key aspects about the reality of tourism as an economical tool of development and also related to responsible tourism.

In general terms, the future tourist development of each country or region depends upon the capacity of businesses and organization that interact in this sector in order to make it competitive and generate new options and innovative alternatives to enjoy free time and increase quality in the market of services and complementary goods.

Analyzing the statistics of a global market, the arrival of international tourists consolidates the fact that there is a growing tendency in tourism and there would be an expansion in specific markets in the following years. The last WTM Barometer estimates that there would be a growth of 5,7% for 2007 regarding to the previous year which involves a volume 880 and 900 million of international arrivals (approximately). Tourism is one of the most relevant sectors in

global economic development and this is demonstrated through the important growth that this activity has shown in the past decades.

In the national and international level, there are no doubts about the advantages that Ecuador has for tourism development: it has a great diversity of flora and fauna, uncountable historical and cultural attractives as well as manifestations of folklore (music, dances) and gastronomy that along with other aspects, situate it among the countries with the biggest tourism potential.

Ecuador is considered as one of the 17 countries with mega diversity in the World considering its reduced territorial extension (in its 256.370 kilometers has the 11% of the terrestrial vertebrates, 16.087 plant species, near to 600 fish species, a record in the number of counted bird per minute in Mindo Reserve and the list continues...) besides of have the condition of offering the visitors short distances and the advantage of change from one landscape and region to the other in a few hours.

Following the information of the Tourism Minister, this activity has become the fourth generator of external incomes to the economy, after petroleum, flower exportation and shrimp industry. In 2006 there were generated US\$ 480 millions by this activity and following preliminary statistics, by September 2007, Ecuador received 714 271 tourists (registrating an increase of 8.09% compared to the same period of the previous year). Statistical projections indicate that the number of international arrivals will continue increasing, tourist demand will be expanded and the offer of new destinations and tourism options will emerge due to the diversification policy of the Tourism Minister.

For all this reasons, it is a key aspect to identify which are the main areas that Ecuador must reinforce and consolidate in relation with the perception of the country as a tourism destination, as well as the main aspects that have to be improved. It is also important to know the risks and opportunities of the international, national and regional market in order to gain profit or try to minimize them and achieve the goals that have being settled in terms of sustainable tourism development. At the same time, it is also important to know and evaluate specifically the northern region of the country (in which is focused the area of interest of this project). This area is the main point of access of the tourists that come from Colombia. This zone has potential to become itself as one of the most important centers of tourism, culture, gastronomy and economical development of the country if responsible tourism development and sustainability are conceived as a challenge.

On the other hand, in this specific region, following employment indicators and researches from Central Bank of Ecuador and United Nations Program, there have being produced lots of processes that have maintained poverty and social inequity. In this context, economic development through tourism it's seen as a positive option for Ecuador and specifically for this region. This is a growing sector, employs in a direct way more than 72.106 people, involves many activities, such as transport (airlines, airports, buses, train stations, terminals, ships and cruises, etc.), lodging and restaurants, entertainment, distribution channels (Internet, tour operators, whole sellers, retailers, etc.), mass media, communications and technology, as well as other sectors that generate more direct and indirect employment and, at the same time, have the quality of enhance the incorporation to the value chain of sectors that were traditionally excluded, such as women, indigenous or afro Ecuadorian people, young adults, elderly people and other segments of the population with less opportunities given for traditional economic industries.

Talking about responsible tourism, which has being the main objective to achieve and promote in this first period of leanings, as a concept related to ethics, sustainability, social corporate, responsibility, trade fair and other aspects, is a tendency that has emerged from the vision and specific interests from markets that come from developed countries (in its majority) and trying to implement its recommendations and principles is one of the bests schemes to achieve and contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction for undeveloped countries such as Equator. As responsible tourism involve local people and integrate different

sectors of populations, business local governments and organizations, minimizes negative economic, environmental, and social impacts, generates greater economic benefits for local people improves working operations and conditions, promotes fair access to the industry, contributes to the conservation of natural patrimony and cultural inheritance, respects diversity and provides provides a better and integral experience for tourists through a deep and meaningful connections with local people and its own culture this is the approach that is more suitable for the development of the northern region of this country.

We have noticed that in order to commercialize products that are designed and operated under this principles and conditions it is mandatory to identify and analyze the relationships and reality of the agents that are part of the value chains of tourism and interact inside the integral tourism system, it is also required to know productive system of good and services, establish parameters to achieve sustainability, have an accurate notion of the profile and characteristics of the market segments that can be attracted and other several aspects.

In the frame of action of the Responsible Tourism Project “*From the glaciers to the mangrove forest*” we have identified small and medium enterprises and lots of possibilities of entrepreneurship that are very diverse and are in the territory and also in their actions. This coordinated process and the activities organized to generate synergies, dialogue spaces and opportunities for interactions has allowed us to give technical assistance in order to impulse a responsible tourism network integrated by communities, small business, country farms and other kind of entrepreneurship located in the northern region of Equator.

### **List of companies and communities part of the Responsible Tourism Network**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Canton</b>
Chilcapamba	Micro-enterprise / Community	Cotacachi
Bosques de Paz	Micro-enterprise (family)/ Forest Farm	Ibarra
El Kibutz	Small business / Hostel	Ibarra
Hacienda La Merced Baja	Micro-enterprise (family) / Farm	Ibarra
San Clemente	Micro-enterprise / Community	Ibarra
Zuleta	Artisan Association	Ibarra
Gaén (Mascarilla)	Micro-enterprise / Artisan Association and hostel	Mira
San Juan	Community Association	Montufar
Monteverde	Community Association	Montufar
Pizán	Community Association	Montufar
La Casa Sol	Small family business / Community Hotel	Otavalo
Red Muyuntik	Community network	Otavalo
Rey Mola Kocha	Community Association	Otavalo
Totora SISA	Micro-enterprise /Community	Otavalo
Nueva América	Micro-enterprise /Community	Pimampiro
El Cauchal	Community Association	San Lorenzo
Siete Cascadas	Micro-enterprise (family) / Hostel	San Lorenzo
Hacienda Pantaví	Small business / Farm	Urcuquí

We all, as teamwork, promote tourism in the northern region under this phrase:

### ***DIVERSITY, CULTURE AND SAFETY***

### ***DISCOVER ECUADOR FROM THE GLACIERS TO THE MANGROVE FOREST***

Our marketing activities include the use of a project logo that shows the diversity of resources of the zone and also has helped us to generate an idea of integrity and collaboration among all the entrepreneurs that participate enthusiastically in the project:



All of the entrepreneurs (without letting aside their diversity, resources, ethnic differences and the variety of their own entrepreneurial organization: communities, family business, farm owners, independent entrepreneurs, etc.) share the same philosophy and motivations: their desire to generate economical development for the local communities and the region in general and also their willingness to incorporate responsible tourism in their operations and interactions within the market. They, as people responsible for their own destinies, have determined their actions in terms of environmental preservation, reforestation, cultural recovery and promotion (including hand made products, handicrafts and organic ancestral production of food), gender equity, and incorporation of best practices in terms of social corporate responsibility applicable to the scale and level of their business.

To help in this aspects and also in the commercialization of the route and the tourism packages we have planed the execution process of the Project and initiated some activated related to reinforce their capacities and impulse their previous experiences and knowledge through education (training) and technical assistance to invigorate their alliances and also to solve some problems in each initiative.

From our point of view, there must be done a huge and continuous effort (not only with experts in the field but also generating conditions to have access to the market and also giving incentives with starting capital) to support the process of reinforce and generation of new entrepreneurs and improvements in the tourism industry in the northern region. To guide this actions, there must be a clear vision of sustainability in the short, medium and long

term, an impulse in participation and a formal intention to promote leadership of the local agents.

To enhance the entrepreneurships involved in the project in the economic and managerial aspects we, as a teamwork, must provide professional technical assistance to reinforce their quality in service, the internal relationships with employees, their relationships with suppliers, their conditions to fairly access to the market and also generate a competitive process. They also need to have commercial and marketing assistance, with emphasis in learning other languages and in the use of technology and communication tools.

Due to the speed, dynamic and complexity of tourism market, just the vision of generating effective networks and alliances is not enough to have success in this business. That is why communities and small and medium entrepreneurs, local governments and other actors have to know better the characteristics benefits and the role they play in local economical development and responsible tourism implementation. They all need to become responsible for their actions, they require a market orientation and also a continuous assistance in order to achieve a real sustainability.

Finally, it is important to consider that in the national and international market there have being occurring process that help to generate more awareness and consciousness to promote a local sustainable tourism development and there have being emerging new tendencies in the market and segment that become more and more interested in responsible tourism "consumption". Here in Ecuador, there have being many successful experiences that generate best practices in sustainable tourism and at the same time, there is a favorable tendency in promoting policies for sustainability and social corporate responsibility (in public institutions as well as in private business) and this is generating a very positive frame of action to impulse a wide variety of options related to responsible tourism. All this opportunities, and others that can emerge, must be proactively detected and the communities, local governments and business must gain profit of them in order to achieve a real responsibility in the tourism sector.