Full Length Research Paper

Promoting tertiary education through ecotourism development

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In general, this study was to encourage students to pursue, environmental science, biology and tourism programmes at tertiary level by embarking on educational tour with tertiary students to the study area, while at the same time, the paper performs its functions such as finding out how residents were empowered in funding, capacity building and conflict resolution skills in tourism development. Specifically, the study was to analyse areas in which residents were empowered to involve in ecotourism development. The sample of the study was 281 respondents including 14 key informants. Data were collected using household surveys, made up of questionnaires and interviews. The findings show that the residents were empowered through funding, capacity building and conflict resolution skills. In general, there was no significant difference in methods of empowerment among the socio-demographic characteristics of residents in the projects. Resident's commitment to ecotourism development in their communities is commendable. It was recommended that the government and the NGO's committed to the development of the projects in the local communities should integrate the local people fully and empower them as partners in the management of the projects by not only asking for their views when making decisions, but also, putting their ideas into action for the benefit of the projects. Again, since effective management of the projects is essential, residents should be empowered through training to enable them to participate fully in the projects.

Key words: Residents, empowerment, participation, ecotourism, development.

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a means and a goal to obtain basic human needs, education, skills and the power to attain a certain quality of life (Parpart et al., 2002). Obviously 'empowerment' is more than participation in decision-making; it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions (Rowlands, 1997). Empowerment may facilitate involvement in agreed-upon activities or alterna-tively, it can mean exclusion from activities that elements

of the community may not wish to engage in (Ramos and Prideaux, 2014). This implies that the local people should be encouraged to enable them to have direct involvement in and control over what happens in their lives (Bahaire and Elliot-White, 1999).

The ability for community members to participate in ecotourism development projects is however limited by the extent to which ecotourism is accepted as replacement for traditional activities. Where there is an agreement for

participation in ecotourism projects, the ultimate success of such projects depends to a large extent on the level of involvement of external stakeholders including tour operators, government agencies and wholesalers (Nault and Stapleton, 2011).

Empowerment may also be seen as the development of skills and abilities of residents to manage existing development projects better and have a say in whatever is done in their community. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 1990) used the term 'empowerment' to describe any development process or activity such as skill training, management techniques and capacity building which could have some impact on people's ability to deal with different political and administrative systems, and influence decision making.

According to Whitford and Ruhanen (2010), almost all policies for indigenous tourism lacked the vigour and depth required to achieve sustainable ecotourism development. Farrelly (2011) identified a lack of formal education and perceptions of weak leadership from residents which contributed to an inability for local communities to make fully informed decision in community-based ecotourism, leaving them politically disempowered. Rogerson (2004) also found that the main obstacle to meeting government objectives for promoting economic empowerment of the owners of small tourism firms was lack of training in marketing tourism products. In an examination of empowerment in tourism destination, it has been found out that power struggles in local communities continue to affect the most disadvantaged groups such as ethnic and racial minorities, women and the poor (Timothy, 2007) .

Participation in development projects however, reinforces empowerment through an individual's inclusion in an organization and its organizational decision-making (Rocha, 1997). To apply the concept of empowerment to ecotourism development, it would mean that tourist destination communities, rather than governments or the multinational business sector, hold the authority and resources to make decisions, take action and control ecotourism development (Timothy, 2007). Consequently, in order to achieve sustainable ecotourism, the empowerment of communities affected by ecotourism development is attached to the importance of political and socio-economic justice (Sofield, 2003). As a way to achieving public participation and empowerment, Reid (2003) stresses the necessity of communities' awareness raising and transformative learning processes in understanding their situation and the need to handle problems themselves. Ecotourism resources in Ghana and in particular Brong-Ahafo Region include national parks, nature reserves, waterfalls, cultural and historical attractions and tropical flora and fauna. Community involvement in the development of these natural resources into tourist attractions may offer the necessary antidote for sustainability in the development of the tourist attractions in the region (GTB, 2008). Yet there has been little work undertaken by researchers into issues such as funding, capacity building and conflict resolution skills related to empowerment of the local

people in the study communities.

METHODOLOGY

The study area

Brong-Ahafo region is the second largest region of Ghana, after the Northern region, with a territorial size of about 39,557 km^2. Geographically, it is located at the centre of Ghana. It has a tropical climate with high temperatures of between 23 and 39°C, with a maximum rainfall of 450 mm in the northern parts, and up to 650 mm in the south of the region (Ghana Tourist Board (GTB), 2008). There are two main types of vegetation; the moist semi deciduous forest and the guinea savannah woodland.

The region has tourism facilities such as hotels, restaurants and fast food outlets found mainly in Sunyani and some of the district capitals. Some tourist's attractions in the region include Digya National Park, Bui National Park, Buoyem Caves and Bats Colony, Tanoboase Sacred Grove, Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, Hani Archaeological Site, Bono Manso Slave Market, Kintampo and Fuller Waterfalls (GTB, 2008). The study was however, conducted at Tanoboase, Boabeng and Fiema which form part of the communities selected for the implementation of the community-based ecotourism projects in the Brong-Ahafo region. Furthermore, the sites selected for this study were the earliest to be established in the region as CBEP sites (Zeppel, 2006) and as a result, were due for evaluation.

Tano sacred grove

Tanoboase is located 15 km north of Techiman, along Techiman-Kintampo road. The community began the development of Tano Sacred Grove as an ecotourism site in 1996 with the help of Ghana Association for the Conservation of Nature (GACON), which assisted the community in activities such as construction of green fire belt, tour guide training, wildlife conservation and bushfire prevention education at the initial stages of the project.

In 2001, Tanoboase was selected among the 14 communities to be developed under the Community-based Ecotourism Projects (CBEPs) in Ghana (GTB, 2008). Even though USAID assisted the project financially, its implementation was a collaborative effort among the major stakeholders such as the GTB, NCRC, United States Peace Corps Volunteer, SNV and the local community.

The aim of the project was to develop community-owned and operated ecotourism activities, which will conserve the ecosystems and also serve as income generating opportunities for the local people (GTB, 2008). A tourism management team made up of local community members was set up to manage the project at the local level. Development activities were based on community input, local workmanship and communal labour.

The community has a semi-deciduous forest which covers about 300 acres of land, a distance of about 1 km away from the village. The forest contains bats, baboons, antelopes, and a historic Bono Shrine. It also encloses a cluster of striking sandstone rock formations. The grove is believed to be the cradle of Bono civilization, and it served as a hideout for the Bono people during the slave trade and the Ashanti-Bono wars. Other tourist activities being promoted in the community are a visit to Tano Shrine and a 'village life' tour which includes a visit to local farms, homes and schools. This gives a visitor the opportunity to view local food preparation, village industries and listen to traditional songs and stories.

Boabeng-Fiema monkey sanctuary

Boabeng-Fiema is located 22 km north of Nkoranza. Two communities (Boabeng and Fiema) began the development of the monkey sanctuary as an ecotourism site in the early part of the

1970s with the help of officers from Ghana Wildlife Department (GWD), who protected the sanctuary from encroachers. The sanctuary, which is home to the black and white Colobus and the Mona monkeys that are used to interaction with human beings was opened to tourists in 1997 (Zeppel, 2006). The aim of the project was to develop community-owned and operated ecotourism project. It was also to serve as prospects for generating income by conserving local ecosystems and protecting the monkeys, which are generally regarded by the local people as sacred.

Stakeholders include the local communities, the Nkoranza Traditional Council, the Nkoranza North District Assembly, and NGOs such as NCRC, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, the United States Peace Corps Volunteer and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization). Initially, USAID funded the project whilst Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), NCRC and other NGOs supported it through training.

At the moment, the monkeys have spread to the surrounding communities, and based on the advice received from UNDP, the local people have set up a tourism management committee (TMC) made up of residents from all the nine communities which surround the sanctuary to direct the project at the local level. These communities are Boabeng, Fiema, Akrudwa Number 1, Akrudwa Number 2, Busunya, Bonte, Bomini, Senya and Kokorompe. Activities involving the development of the project are based on community input, local workmanship and communal labour.

Fieldwork

The study was conducted between 25th May, 2009 and 11th June, 2009. Four field assistants (two tour guides and two senior high school leavers) from Tanoboase, Boabeng and Fiema were given one day's training in English and Twi to assist the researcher in the distribution and administration of the questionnaires.

All the in-depth interviews were conducted at places of choice by the interviewees in the various communities. Though a total of 281 questionnaires were administered, 268 responses were obtained. This indicated a total response rate of 95.4%. The returned questionnaires were made up of 122 (43.4%), 50 (17.8%) and 96 (34.2%) respondents from Tanoboase, Boabeng and Fiema respecttively.

Target population and sample size

The target population for the study was household heads or their representatives aged 18 years and above in the selected communities. This age group of people was targeted because people in this group were among the economically active population in the study area (Ghana statistical service - GSS, 2005). A list of household heads was compiled and used as a sampling frame for the selection of the respondents. The unit of data collection was individual household heads in the communities.

Those selected for the in-depth interview were the key informants or the opinion leaders in the study area. They were made up of fourteen representatives of the local people including TMC members, traditional authorities, service providers, assemblymen and unit committee members from Tanoboase and Boabeng-Fiema project sites.

Since it was not practically possible to observe all the elements in the target population, a sample was selected for the survey. The size of the sample required for the study depended on the purpose of the study and the availability of resources. In order to determine the sample size for the study, it was estimated that about 79% of the economically active population in the study area were aware of visitors' interest in the communities' tourism projects (GSS, 2005). This is because the region abounds in a wide range of tourist attractions. The sample size was therefore determined using Fisher's formula of determining samples (Chandam et al., 2004).

The calculated sample size indicated that at least 255 respondents had to be selected from Tanoboase, Boabeng and Fiema to get a representative population. 10% was however, added to make room for non-response. In total, 281 members of the communities took part in the study.

Sampling procedure

The study utilized a multi-stage sampling procedure to select respondents. The first phase centered on the listing of household heads in each of the communities. As part of this exercise, field assistants were tasked to list and identify the number of people in each house and also give identification marks to each of the household heads. Household refers to a person or group of persons related or unrelated who live together in the same house or compound, share the same housekeeping arrangement and are catered for as one unit (GSS, 2005).

The second phase dealt with the proportional allocation of the sample size of 281 among the three selected communities (Boabeng, Fiema and Tanoboase). To ensure fair representation, this exercise was based on the population of the communities instead of the household list. With this approach, the community with more people had more household heads participating in the study than its counterpart with less people. Therefore, using the list of household heads as a sampling frame, these sample sizes; 51, 103 and 127 were allocated to Boabeng, Fiema and Tanoboase respectively.

At the third phase, simple random sampling (without replacement) was used in selecting the individuals from the list of heads of households. Using simple random sampling, one household head was selected from the sampling frame to complete a questionnaire.

Additionally, 14 in-depth interviews were conducted with the opinion leaders or the key informants in the study area using an interview guide. Ten representatives of TMC members (including assemblymen and unit committee members), two elders representing traditional authorities and two service providers were purposively selected. It was the researcher's hope that the individuals selected would have knowledge, experience or information that would be useful to know about.

Research instruments

An interview schedule was the main instrument used for the study. The questionnaires were verbally administered in Twi. This approach was adopted because of the low literacy rate in the study area. The GSS (2005), reports that the effective literacy level for the study area is 48%, which is lower than the national average of 54.5%. Additionally, Twi was used because it is the lingua franca of the people involved in the study. Respondents were asked to respond to a series of close-ended and open-ended questions.

Data processing and analyses

The data were analysed by using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 16. The quantitative responses were categorised, analysed, and examined based on various respondent groups such as sex, age and place of residence. Percentages and frequencies were also used in the analyses.

Qualitative data arising from open-ended questions that respondents answered using their own words, were coded into a set of categories developed from identified commonalities, that is, repeated themes were recorded together and categories of themes identified as they emerged. All the qualitative data were paraphrased while remaining faithful to the original meaning as it was given by the respondents during the in-depth interviews. It is also important to note that all the qualitative data had to be translated from Twi to English.

Table 1. Socio - Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Individual characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	171	63.8
Female	97	36.2
Total	268	100.0
Residential status		
Resident	254	94.8
Non-resident	14	5.2
Total	268	100.0
Age		
30 – 39	109	40.7
40 – 49	118	44.0
50 and above	41	15.3
Total	268	100.0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents were sex, residential status, and age. The highlights of the findings are as shown in Table 1.

Development of ecotourism tends to be sex-selective, thereby altering the composition of the population as well as its size in the destination area (Pearce, 1992). Mason and Cheyne (2000) observe that sex affects the needs, aspirations and attitude of people to issues and events.

Place of residence in relation to area of tourism concentration is known to affect people's perception and attitude towards tourism development. The impacts of tourism on urban areas or on people residing in tourism concentrated areas are found to be potentially so great that some method to reassure local residents has assumed prime importance (Bahaire and Elliot-White, 1999).

Age is known to determine individuals' needs, attitudes and perceptions towards tourism development in a community. Gilbert and Clarke (1997) notice that young and middle aged had a strong support for ecotourism development. The importance of the people found between 30 and 50 years age categories in the study area was that their ideas and grievances were generally heard and felt by the larger community. Consequently, these were the age groups which could influence certain decisions about the tourism projects. Most of the people in these age groups were breadwinners at home.

Residents' empowerment in ecotourism development projects

Among the key aspects of community participation in tourism development is the empowerment of the people to enable them to participate in decisions that affect their community and their lives. Community development involves empowerment of residents by providing them with the skills they need to make changes in their own lives and their communities (Korten, 1990). With specific reference to Ghana, CBEPs introduced support mechanisms to empower residents to participate effectively in the programme. Such support mechanisms were to improve the capacity of residents to plan and manage ecotourism development projects at the community level.

About 63.0 % of respondents agreed that funds were provided to residents to help them participate effectively in tourism development (Table 2). It was observed that, NCRC provided community leaders with money which enabled them to attend in-service training in bush fire prevention and sanitation. It was also revealed that funds were given to some of the Tourism Management Committee (TMC) members and individuals in the communities by UNDP to attend training workshops in tree planting and also, funds to buy mango seedlings for cultivation. One of the interviewees said: "*NCRC helps in capacity building, organise workshops to equip us with financial management and also offer technical advice. UNDP were giving us money to attend workshops but at the moment, it is not active. Landowners, at the end of every quarter of the year, are given part of the revenue from the project. Again* Hotel, Catering and Tourism Training Centre (*HOTCATT) in Ghana gave us training on how to receive visitors and how to present our local dishes to meet the taste of visitors.*"

At every quarter of the year, proceeds from the projects at Boabeng-Fiema for example, were shared among communities that surround the sanctuary. However, according to respondents, the money received from the project at a quarter of the year was woefully inadequate for any meaningful development in the communities. This made it necessary for management of the projects to halt 'quarterly sharing' of proceeds till the end of the year before they would decide whether to use the money accrued to develop at least one of the communities or use it to buy a bus that will carry tourists to and from the nearby towns. Meanwhile, at Tanoboase, proceeds from the tourism project were used to fund needy children's education, repair football field and the street lights in the community. Affected land owners in the study area were also given a share of the proceeds from the project.

Closely related to financial support to residents is the source of funding for the tourism projects. It was observed during the study that, funds were provided for the development of the ecotourism projects through levies. Moreover, the projects were funded through penalties or fines from those arrested for encroaching the forest reserves. Other sources of funding were through annual harvests and donations from individuals, groups and organizations.

Capacity building was identified as one of the modes through which residents were empowered to participate

Table 2. Ways in which residents were empowered to participate in ecotourism projects

Techniques	% in agreement	% not sure	% in disagreement
Provision of funds	63.0	2.0	35.0
Capacity building	62.0	8.0	30.0
Conflict resolution	87.0	2.0	11.0

in the CBEPs in the study area. This is a process and means through which a country, its people and organisation develop skills necessary to manage their resources in a sustainable manner (Gubbles and Koss, 2000). The purpose of the capacity building as a component of the project was to strengthen the institutional structures in the communities to deal with the task of tourism development. At the institutional level, it was meant to promote decentralised management of tourism.

About 62.0% of respondents agreed that, the programme offered capacity building to local people especially residents who were desirous of venturing into ecotourism development (Table 2). The reason is that, series of workshops were organized for residents in the communities. For instance, NCRC organized workshops for the Tourism Management Committee members in financial accounting. That is, how to save money and what to do with the money accrued from the tourism projects. More so, courses were organised for residents on how to manage the resources in the forest reserves, and again, to train tour guides for the ecotourism projects in the communities. Workshops were also organized by UNDP to train residents in tree planting. Likewise, Netherlands Development Organization trained residents to plant trees like *mangifera indica,* popularly known as 'mango tree' and *terminalia glaucescens,* which is locally called *framo,* to serve as food for the animals in the forest reserves.

Skill training is one of the means of meeting the human resource capacity needs of any organization. This can be used to build the skills and knowledge as well as attitudes of local people in ecotourism development. As a result, it was initiated by the project to increase the quality of service provision and also raise ecotourism awareness. It was observed during the study that, in order to improve service quality, Hotel, Catering and Tourism Training Centre (HOTCATT) initiated skills development programme for community members on standards for service provision (how to receive visitors and also package the local dishes for tourists) and the protection of the communities' natural assets. This was also confirmed by a resident at Tanoboase during the in-depth interview. He said: *"NCRC gives in-service training to us on how to manage the projects. I have been trained in data reporting, first aid, management and governance, private sector community partnership and tourism development plan. I sometimes give talks to the community on the benefits of tourism"*

This finding is consistent with that of Holland et al. (2003) study of heritage trails in the Czech Republic, where beneficiary communities were involved in capacity building through training in tourism skills. Paul (1987) observes that local people who participate in tourism projects need training and support to facilitate the development of the projects. This is also in line with Friedmann's (1992) observation that empowerment of local people to participate in development projects could lead to both their economic and socio-political well-being. The empowerment of community members helps them to assume key roles and responsibilities in the management of ecotourism projects.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents were in agreement that residents, especially the community leaders, were taught how to resolve conflicts relating to tourism projects in the communities (Table 2). The in-depth interview conducted also revealed that most of the project's management committee members attended workshops on conflict management. Efforts to provide community members with conflict resolution skills may have been informed by lessons from other projects in other countries. Abraham and Plateau (2001) have reported on the time consumed by community leaders in Kibera, a Nairobi slum, in protracted mediation to settle interpersonal conflicts. This was linked to the fact that community leaders lacked training in conflict resolution. Conflicts in the communities were often settled by the traditional authorities or the community leaders and in some few cases, judiciary. These were confirmed during the in-depth interview with some of the opinion leaders in the communities; *"Conflicts in this community may include herbs taken from the forest by local people, destruction of farms by monkeys in the forest and embezzlement of money by some leaders of the project. To resolve it, offenders are asked to refund the money embezzled. The Chief sometimes settles conflicts through re-allocation of land to the affected people whose lands have been taken by the projects."*

The in-depth interview asserts that, the communities involved in the projects were empowered through funding, capacity building and conflict resolution skills. As confirmed by this study, empowerment involves getting rid of the barriers that work against the local communities and building their capacity, providing them with funds and conflict resolution skills to engage effectively in tourism development (Arnstein, 1969; Fariborz and Ma'of, 2008;

Table 3. Means of Empowerment by Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Individual Characteristics	N	Funding			Capacity Building			Conflict Resolution		
		Mean	Test Stats.	p-value	Mean	Test Stats.	p-value	Mean	Test Stats.	p-value
Sex										
Male	171	2.61	t-test	0.000*	2.63	t-test	0.000*	1.98	t-test	0.699
Female	97	2.18	2.017		2.27	2.080		1.97	0.057	
Age										
<34	109	2.37	Anova	0.567	2.52	Anova	0.355	2.05	Anova	
34-54	118	2.47	0.746		2.39	1.308		1.93	1.492	0.205
<54	41	2.40			2.45			1.71		
Community										
Tanoboase	122	2.55[a]	Anova	0.029*	2.54	Anova	0.084	1.93	Anova	
Boabeng	50	1.88[ab]	3.604		2.12	2.504		2.00	0.165	0.848
Fiema	96	2.63[b]			2.64			1.97		

N = 268. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level; a and b indicate the difference in mean scores of the dependent variables across the individual characteristics.

Pretty, 1995; Tosun, 2000; ZhaoandRitchie, 2007).

Means of empowerment by respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

The mean responses of the ways in which residents were empowered by sex, age and community are presented in Table 3. Both t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were performed in order to assess the differences in the manner in which residents were empowered to participate in the projects. T-test statistical technique was employed on socio-demographic variable that was measured along a dichotomous scale such as sex (1 = male, 2 = female) of respondents. Other characteristics of respondents like age and community of residents which were measured along interval scale differences, were tested using one-way analysis of variance. It was hypothesized that; there is no significant difference in methods of empowerment among the socio-demographic characteristics (sex, age and community) of residents in the projects.

Pearce (1992) observes that development of tourism tends to be sex-selective, thereby altering the composition of the population as well as its size in the destination area. The t-test results (Table 3) show that there was a significant statistical difference between sex of respondents and funding (p-value 0.000) of tourism projects, and capacity building (p-value 0.000) of residents in the destination communities. There was however no significant difference between sex of respondents and conflict resolution (p-value 0.699) in the study area. Female respondents expressed high levels of agreement (funding:

mean = 2.18, capacity building: mean = 2.27), whilst their male counterparts expressed their doubts (funding: mean = 2.61, capacity building: mean = 2.63) as to whether residents were empowered through funding and capacity building. The involvement of residents, especially women, in productive enterprises could lead to both their economic and socio-political well-being and empowerment (Friedmann, 1992). Responses from both males (mean = 1.98) and females (mean = 1.97) confirm that residents, were trained in how to resolve ecotourism-related conflicts in their various communities as shown in Table 3.

Gilbert and Clarke (1997) observe that young and the middle aged are in favour of ecotourism development in their communities. The one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference in the provision of funds (p-value 0.567), capacity building (p-value 0.355), and conflict resolution skills (p-value 0.205) with respect to respondents' age in the study area.

Responses from those aged ≤ 39 years indicated that residents benefited from community empowerment programmes such as funding (mean = 2.37) and conflict resolution skills (mean = 2.05) but expressed their doubts as to whether residents received training in capacity building (mean = 2.52). The reason being that many of the people aged ≤ 39 years might not have been around at the time the training was going on, or were in the communities but did not see that people were being trained. However, respondents found within 40 - 49 years age brackets agreed that residents were empowered through funding (mean = 2.47), capacity building (mean = 2.39) and conflict resolution skills (mean = 1.93). This was confirmed by respondents aged 50 years and above as shown in Table 3.

Place of residence in relation to area of ecotourism concentration is known to affect people's perception and attitude towards ecotourism development. The impacts of ecotourism on people residing in ecotourism concentrated areas are found to be so great that, some methods need to be taken to reassure the safety of local residents in destination communities (Bahaire and Elliot-White, 1999).

The one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference among the communities and funding (p-value 0.029) of ecotourism projects. There was however no significant difference among the communities and capacity building (p-value 0.084), and conflict resolution (p-value 0.848).

The results show that whilst respondents at Boabeng (community directly affected by the ecotourism project) were in agreement that residents were compensated by providing them with funds (mean = 1.88) and training in capacity building (mean = 2.12), their counterparts at Tanoboase and Fiema were divided as to whether people in their communities were provided with funds (Tanoboase: mean = 2.55, Fiema: mean = 2.63) and training in capacity building (Tanoboase: mean = 2.54, Fiema: mean = 2.64). The reason for the divided opinion among the communities may be due to the fact that the negative impact of the ecotourism project is felt by the people at Boabeng more than the rest of the communities. This finding confirms Bahaire and Elliot-White (1999) report that place of residence in relation to area of tourism concentration affects the local people.

It was observed that at Boabeng, residents were staying with the monkeys in their homes. Therefore, it was not surprising when the local people at Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary project site received funds to build shrines, boreholes, visitor centres and internet café. But it is envisaged that, sooner or later, if measures are not put in place to compensate the local people adequately, they will run out of patience, looking at the inconveniences created by the monkeys to them and the inability of the management to provide the basic needs of the communities like senior high school, health centres, good roads and jobs to the youths.

Conclusions

The findings of the study led to the conclusion that residents at both project sites (Tano Sacred Grove at Tanoboase and Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary at Boabeng and Fiema) were provided with funds, capacity building and conflict resolution skills all of which have influence on local people's participation in the projects. Effective management of the projects is very crucial if the communities and indeed all stakeholders are given the necessary training to enable them participate fully in the CBEPs. The statistical analysis done supports the null hypothesis set. That is, there is no significant difference in ways of empowerment among the socio-demographic characteristics of residents in the projects. The implication

is that socio-demographic characteristics of residents did not significantly have impact on the way they were empowered.

The authorities need to integrate the communities fully and recognize them as partners in the management of the projects by not only asking for their views when making decisions but also putting their ideas into action for the benefit of the projects.

For communities to have more knowledge in ecotourism development, they should seek assistance of experts from organisations and institutions like Ghana Wildlife Department, GTA, and NGOs. Similarly, to rekindle students' interest in ecotourism and tertiary education, the authorities in tertiary institutions such as the universities and the polytechnics around the tourist sites, should encourage their students to embark on educa-tional tour to these sites at least once every academic year. The communities could join resources in the protection of attractions, training of human resources for ecotourism development, construction of roads, joint promotion, and research which relates to impact assess-ment and monitoring of communities' attitude towards ecotourism development. Collaboration would enable the communities to enjoy economies of scale as well as gaining recognition and support from government and international donors.

Since local people can be empowered through access to credit, efforts should be made to address it. Most of the community members would like to sell food and drinks to the visitors. Unfortunately, they do not have the initial capital for such establishments. In order to empower them to engage in this business, government through the rural banks in the area should initiate a special tourism-related micro-finance scheme for the communities. The interest rate on the loan facility should be affordable to make it attractive to ordinary people in the communities.

Development of every economy relies on its infrastruc-tural base. As a result, government should come to the aid of the communities to help improve security, drinking water, sanitation, roads, education and health care facilities in the area.

Conflict of interest

The author did not declare any conflict of interest.

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