

Eco-tourism, Conservancies and Sustainable Development: The Case of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT The paper presents a definition of eco-tourism that puts an emphasis on conservation through utilisation, instead of an emphasis on preservation only. Eco-tourism in this paper is seen as incorporating both consumptive and non-consumption aspects. It is a definition that stresses community participation in decision making processes in relation to eco-touristic ventures and subsequent benefits derived from such ventures flowing back to local communities. The paper examines the triple role of eco-tourism in the protection, utilisation and conservation of natural and cultural resources. Tourism is by far a sector that continues to play a positive socio-economic role in the midst of a declining economic base in the Zimbabwe of the post 2000 period. The paper views conservancies as tenurial units and goes further to examine the link between conservancies and eco-touristic ventures. The issue of sustainable eco-tourism developments in the form of conservancies is debated in the paper in the light of the socio-economic challenges Zimbabwe is going through. It is strongly argued that to avoid another case of entrenched failed development, conservancies need to be seen in a holistic manner that takes into account the role of all stakeholders or actors including the role of local communities.