

To: Dr. Zakaria

From: Students of Boston College Schiller Institute's Working For and With Communities Course

Date: October 30, 2024

Re: Blue Economy Policy Recommendations

Statement of Issue

It is well known that while tourism is one of the biggest contributors to the development of Zanzibar's economy, Zanzibaris' involvement in this sector is comparatively low. Often, foreign investors are the ones to build hotels, attracting other expats with them to create successful businesses. Given the language requirements and specific skills needed to be directly employed in tourism, Zanzibaris are often relegated to indirect or informal involvement, for example providing seafood for the increasingly large hotel market. Tourism's use of local resources coupled with barriers that limit local involvement in the industry creates tension within communities. Locals also tend to resent tourists because of their lack of cultural awareness. Our ethnographic research has led us to believe that this tension is primarily due to a lack of communication, understanding, and difficulty in equitably accessing resources. Education is a crucial avenue for creating opportunities for cooperation between stakeholders and increasing access to the benefits of tourism for Zanzibaris. Providing educational resources for the community would be impactful in:

- Establishing connections and improving relationships between stakeholders
- Assisting Zanzibaris in better advertising their products and services
- Empowering Zanzibaris to make informed financial decisions
- Guiding Zanzibaris in navigating competitive landscapes

In addition, providing accessible and invitational materials for tourists to learn about Zanzibar people and culture would potentially mitigate local-tourist tensions.

Background and Key Data

Zanzibaris are at a disadvantage in competition within the tourism industry: "60.6 percent of tourism activities in Zanzibar are said to be done by foreigners..."(Mikofu 2024). Interviews that we conducted with the local population revealed concerns regarding the unfair nature of the competition:

- A masseuse whose client base is mainly tourists and who previously worked as a seaweed farmer shared resentment of the lack of support in terms of training for business management and advertising to properly compete with the hotels. It is particularly important to support such small business operations given the difficulty for Zanzibaris to find direct employment within the hotels.
- A local tour guide described the value of knowing different languages. He has been successful because he has been able to learn various languages such as English, French,

and Italian, so he can communicate with tourists and build his business. However, those who do not have access to education to learn languages or basic financial literacy face greater barriers when trying to get involved in the tourism industry.

Keshodkar (2013) talks about the struggles Zanzibaris face when trying to become involved in tourism: “People from the mainland possess the educational background, the linguistic skills and the willingness to work in tourism, in contrast to Zanzibaris, who often have lower education and are less qualified.”

There are also issues relating to the ownership of land by Zanzibaris, a key factor in developing wealth. On the one hand, “less than 15% of homeowners in Zanzibar have documentation to signify property ownership, say government officials” (Harrisberg 2020). The Ministry of Lands, Energy and Water in collaboration with the Spatial Collective conducted a pilot project of measuring/documenting the land ([Cities Alliance](#)) to try and rectify the lack of title deeds. On the other hand, the complex nature of laws and regulations around land right of use, including establishing the Right of Occupancy, negotiating lease agreements, and creating shared-profits arrangements, places local Zanzibaris in a disadvantaged position vis-a-vis more informed foreign investors.

Policy Recommendations:

In light of our findings above, we recommend the development and implementation of short education modules that assist Zanzibaris in gaining a competitive advantage and getting involved in the tourism industry, on: 1) Social Media and Marketing Literacy, 2) Negotiations and Financial Literacy, and 3) a Cultural Orientation for Tourists.

1) Social Media and Marketing Literacy:

Formulation of a curriculum on social media and marketing would benefit both Zanzibari business owners and tourists. Most locally-owned businesses remain small in Zanzibar, while tourists have a limited way of knowing places to visit beyond well-known travel destinations. Many tourists plan their trips online and the unavailability of information resulting from the hyper-localized nature of Zanzibar businesses offers unfortunate circumstances for both stakeholders. Considering the conditions and culture of Zanzibar, it would be most effective to create a comprehensive and manageable curriculum with an accompanying workbook on marketing in an accessible format. We imagine that more tech-savvy young people might systematically support older generations’ engagement in the curriculum.

Opportunities: Social media and marketing literacy would increase the potential for fair and effective competition in the market, allowing local entrepreneurs to attract tourists who plan their trips on social media and the Internet. It increases the competitiveness of local businesses, It would also increase the opportunities for intergenerational collaboration in support of traditional and local businesses. Having a workbook will also

allow people to learn at their own pace at any time, without requiring a burdensome time and financial commitment.

Challenges: A key challenge is the lack of ready access to smartphones and other internet technologies which will allow the Zanzibaris to put their new technological literacy into practice. Particularly with older generations, it may also be difficult to generate motivation and sustained interest in Internet marketing.

Negotiations and Financial Literacy

An educational module on negotiations and financial literacy would serve to support Zanzibaris living in newly developing tourist villages to be better positioned to benefit from new tourist investment. Such an educational module would cover the key laws and regulations regarding selling landed property, skills for negotiations, and financial principles related to profit-sharing and smart investment. This would expand on earlier initiatives to document land ownership and title deeds to provide newly recognized deed owners with education on how to make responsible investment decisions including learning the value of properties.

Opportunities: Mitigate the inequalities already experienced in highly developed tourist villages in Zanzibar by equipping Zanzibaris with the financial and legal knowledge to effectively negotiate with foreign investors and therefore better benefit in the long term from tourist investment. Bolster Zanzibaris' capacity for economic growth through avenues such as loans, small business operations, and personal financial literacy and give Zanzibaris a competitive advantage in personal and corporate wealth by providing knowledge on how to make responsible investment decisions.

Challenges: The complexity of laws and regulations related to the sale of landed property and right of use in Zanzibar will make it difficult to create an educational module that is both comprehensive and accessible to those with varying educational backgrounds. Further, for some individuals, there may be challenges in conveying the benefits of long-term investment over the short-term gain of immediate sale, and so the educational module should begin by ensuring the understanding and benefits of long-term investment.

Educating tourists

The purpose of this educational initiative is to create easily accessible information for tourists to address the tensions that arise from cultural differences between tourists and locals. Information presented can involve local values, beliefs, the type of wardrobe appropriate in various places on the island, basic Swahili phrasing, Islamic prayer rituals, the importance of seaweed farmers and fishers, and other important topics. The tone of the materials should be invitational and light-hearted rather than didactic and preacherly so that tourists feel that they are being welcomed into local culture rather than lectured to. This educational module will necessarily involve multiple formats, both online and physical, before and during a tourist's visit to Zanzibar. We imagine the following components of the educational module:

- A short and welcoming video that introduces visitors to key aspects of the islands while mentioning cultural etiquette related to different spaces, including wearing more modest clothing while not on the beach or while interacting with Zanzibaris engaged in coastal livelihoods on the beach. This video can be posted on official websites linked to tourist travel in Zanzibar including the Zanzibar Commission for Tourism site, and if infrastructure allows, can be played in the airport while visitors wait for their visas.
- Attractive informational graphics can be created and replicated at the entrances to beaches, on the doors of local restaurants and shops, and anywhere the local community sees fit to help inform tourists on how they can best respect the local culture and community.
- Materials can be developed to be made available in hotels for their guests to look through in order to become acquainted with local cultural norms. This would ideally be created with the input of willing hotel management to ensure that the style and tone are appropriate for that setting, and to secure the buy-in of hotel leadership.
 - **Opportunities:** Making information on how to respect the local culture accessible to tourists is a critical way to reduce tensions between locals and tourists. Tourists can understand the importance of wearing appropriate clothing when they are in villages or not in a beach area. Connecting with the community in this way will enrich the experience of the tourists.
 - **Challenges:** If the tone of the materials is not invitational and light-hearted, tourists may feel imposed upon and resent the efforts to curb their behavior. Working with non-Zanzibaris to workshop the materials is thus vital to ensuring that the materials feel welcoming to outsiders. Tourists may also choose to ignore the information presented if they do not want to participate in creating an overall respectful environment.

Intended Outcomes

- *Intergenerational communication and connection*, encouraging tech-savvy youth to help support older generations in using technology and social media to promote their businesses
- *Empower communities*, through increased financial, social media, and marketing literacy and a better understanding of the value of their properties
- *Increase market diversification* by offering opportunities for locals to capitalize on opportunities generated by increased tourism
- *Mitigating intercultural tensions between tourists and Zanzibaris*, by encouraging tourists to better understand and exhibit respect for local Zanzibari culture

Appendix:

This data was collected by a group of seven students, one staff member, and one professor, all from Boston College. After a semester of study and preparation, our group spent three weeks in Zanzibar conducting ethnographic research to gather information on how economic and environmental change has impacted the coastal livelihoods in Zanzibar. Our research allowed us to form connections with stakeholders around the island including government officials and agencies, business owners, employees, investors, native-born community members, and immigrants who have moved to Zanzibar to pursue opportunities in the tourism sector commonly referred to as foreigners. While our perspective and inherent biases as foreigners lends an incomplete picture of Zanzibar's complexities, we intend for our research to draw on our outside lens to help construct an objective understanding of the changes occurring in Zanzibar.

Sources

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