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## Ecotourism in Indonesia

### Contribution of community-based tourism for sustainable regional development in Flores



Figure 15: Climbing Mt. Inerie is mostly combined with a visit in the village of Bena (own image).



Figure 13: All traditional houses (sa'o) of Bena are facing the centred public square (own image).



Figure 23: The main characteristic of Waturaka is its highly diverse farmlands (own image).

**Introduction:** Tourism is only sustainable if it fosters a sustainable regional development. Ecotourism is a tourism niche market which focuses on the connection and conservation of nature, and community-based tourism is a way of managing such tourism niche markets. It aims to empower host communities equitably.

The equatorial archipelago of Indonesia is highly diverse in culture and ecology, and its economy is one of the world's biggest. The central part of the country's economic growth plan focuses on tourism, giving priority to ten regions which do not include Indonesia's main destination Bali. Labuan Bajo is one of the prioritized destinations, located on the island of Flores. Most of the livelihoods in Flores are related to subsistence agriculture, and economic potential remains low in all sectors apart from tourism. Therefore, Labuan Bajo and other destinations of Flores receive support in developing its tourism industries. The rural villages Bena, Nggela and Waturaka have been chosen as community-based tourism destinations, in order to establish a more sustainable development of their regions.

**Procedure / Result:** This project thesis contains research about the current situation and the incurring challenges of Indonesian regional development. The three-tiered focus is on the nation, on the island of Flores, and on three villages. Publications by international institutions and a semi-structured interview constitute the scientific bases. A research method is established to evaluate the tourism impact in Bena, Nggela and Waturaka and to assess sustainability in regional development. This research method results in a set of assessment criteria which measure tourism impact on the destination's environment, socio-culture and economy. The research data is obtained by verbal inquiries with residents and by taking into account two studies, commissioned by the foundation Swisscontact.

**Solution:** Mass tourism is a successful strategy to boost Indonesia's economy. However, the objectives of tourism development plans need to be better aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The future tourism development plan for Labuan Bajo shows potential that the region becomes a more sustainable ecotourism destination which other ecotourism industries in Flores can follow. A sustainable regional development shows potential in implementing community-based tourism in Flores communities the size of villages and connecting their tourism industries.