

Socio-economic analysis of ecotourism activities of women in Turkey

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Ecotourism is a type of tourism in which maximum benefits are provided to local people while protecting the environment. Local people care more about the sustainability of biodiversity and they are very effective at protecting it. Kure Mountains National Park is one of the most important protected areas for accelerating ecotourism, having tremendous natural resources, protected traditional cultures, caves, canyons, waterfalls and natural wonders. In this study, we aimed to examine the support of women in ecotourism activities in Kure Mountain National Park. To measure the support of women in ecotourism, we conducted face-to-face surveys with 366 women from 53 villages and used observation method. It was found that the level of education in the region is quite low, 65 out of 98 women having 64 years of age and older were illiterate. As the level of education decreased, there was an increase in the unemployment. About 94.3% of the women living in the buffer zone of the park stated that there was no relation between their income and the status of National Park. These findings are important in understanding the role of women in the development of ecotourism. Moreover, stimulating ecotourism activities with encouragement and micro-development plans for local people will increase their livelihoods and people who live in and around the National Park will be more careful to protect these areas.

Keywords: biodiversity conservation, survey, ecotourism, rural livelihood, national park.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'ecotourism' is based on the recognition made by Hetzer (1965) who was one of the first to use the term in the mid-1960s as a form of tourism based on natural and archaeological resources such as caves, fossils and archaeological sites (Higham, 2007). The definition of ecotourism was first described by Ceballos-Lascurain in 1987 as leisure or scientific travels made to see natural areas, landscapes, wild animals and vegetation that remain unspoiled by human factors. While the initial emphasis was on protecting tourism resources, sustainability overpowered the other approaches and remained the leading agenda in the subject (Cheia, 2013; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996).

Forests are hosts to a wide variety of products and services such as timber production, ecotourism, biodiversity, water management and animal husbandry but in most of the places, they are subjected to the rights of local communities (Kraxner *et al.*, 2017). Prioritizing local communities to take benefit from these opportunities in their region is important for contributing to the protection of the local population and regional development. The rural population in the province of Kastamonu between 1965 and 2013 decreased from 65.57 to 8.65% (Erkan Bugday and Ozden 2017). Topographic

barriers and the limitations of agricultural areas have had an important role in this decline. Forest villagers who have settled within the park's buffer zone can lead ecotourists to specific locations to see local attractions and market their handicrafts, souvenirs, cultivated goods, etc. for their own livelihoods.

To curb the transhumance from rural areas to urban areas, sustainable development must somehow be established at the very source; thus, ecotourism can further flourish (Un *et al.* 2012). Forested areas provide food and other subsistence products to people who live within and near them (Muvatsi *et al.*, 2018). In forested areas, when the population increases, protection motives decrease, but with an increase in literacy, both protected areas and the GNP (Gross National Product) increase (Yildirim and Yurdakul, 2012).

Ecotourism was defined by the Ecotourism Society (TES) in 1991 as "responsible travel in natural areas on the basis of protection of the natural environment and improvement of the living standards of indigenous people" (Blamey, 2001). It was stated by the Australian Ecotourism Association in 1992 that ecotourism is "ecologically sustainable tourism, protection of the natural environment and the promotion of cultural elements by encouraging people to this understanding" (Scheyvens, 2000). In another study by Dinçer *et al.* (2015),



ecotourism was identified as a form of tourism made to relax in natural environments and to interact with different cultures to get away from negative factors (noise, crowds, air pollution, etc.) created by cities on humans. Fang and Cheng (2012) stated that ecotourism is one of the largest industries in the world, and it is one of the fastest growing sectors, with a growth rate of 10-15%.

Due to a shortage in the labor force in the post World War II era, an environment was developed to enable women to enter in working life, and some measures were taken to ensure women's participation in the labor force. When we look at the time of women's participation in the labor market in the USA and Europe, we see that World War II had a great influence, and this period was a crucial time for women (Korkmaz and Korkut, 2012). Similar consequences in Turkey took place in 1915 when a large portion of the male population joined the army and women were required to meet the gap in labor markets. From 1915 to the end of World War II, women's participation in labor markets increased continuously (Kızılgol, 2012).

At home with their husbands and outside by society, many women in business life feel perplexed between the roles of "housewife" and "business woman" (Gurol, 2007). In Turkey, compared to male employees who do the same work as women, there was a double standard regarding wages, promotions, appointments and dismissals for women (Mercanlıoğlu, 2009). Resultantly, women were kept one step back in business life by men. According to Kavak (2015), more women than men who live in this region support the idea that "ecotourism has socio-economic and environmental contributions", while men support "the idea that it contributes more to sociocultural developments". The most positive point of view for ecotourism was by university graduates, whereas the least positive attitude as by primary school graduates. Thus, differences in educational levels was an important factor in shaping diverse perspectives on ecotourism.

Erol (2015), emphasized that the problems experienced by women in terms of their working environments and class differences were because they were exposed to gender-based division of labor regardless of which group they belonged to, and they had a secondary position in society. In 2005, the female labor contribution to the agricultural sector was 46.3%, while the labor force in the non-agricultural sector was 53.7%. In 2012, the contribution of women in the non-agricultural sector increased to 60.7% (TUIK, 2018). The research aimed to make socio-economic determinations related to the effect of KMNP on the people of the region and on potential ecotourism activities by making use of existing ecotourism opportunities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area: Küre Mountains National Park (KMNP) is located in the western Black Sea region of Turkey spanning

on an area 1720119 ha, out of which 370753 ha is the core area and the rest is a buffer zone that was declared as National Park in 2000 (Figure 1). There is absolute conservation within the core area and there are rural settlements (forest villages) around the buffer zone. The term buffer zone was first mentioned in KMNP to better understand and preserve the biodiversity at its source in Turkey. Intense forest management activities along with people's daily chores take place within the buffer zone. There are 53 forest villages in the study area within this particular zone.

The region encircled by the park is considered one of the 238 global ecologic hotspots defined by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) within northern Anatolia-Caucasia temperate forests. KMNP is one of the 40 national parks in Turkey and due to its unique position and rich floristic and faunistic character, it was the first designated Turkish conservation area by PAN Parks in 2012 (Barraud and Périgord, 2013).

There are many historical and touristic sites in the region of KMNP and the buffer zone. Valla Canyon is the second deepest canyon in the world, with a length of 12 km and a depth of 800-1300 m, and Çatak Canyon is the 4th largest canyon in the world. Horma Canyon is in Pınarbaşı and at the end of this canyon water pours from the height of 10 m called Ilıca Waterfall and forms a natural pool. Medil Cave is located in the Azdavay district and is said to have cured many asthma patients. Saray Waterfall offers unique beauty. Gideros Bay, located in Cide is an archaeological site and is ranked 12th in the "The Hidden Paradise Atlas of Turkey: 50 Fabulous Place" (Ayan *et al.*, 2009) (Turker and Ozturk, 2013; Akbulut *et al.*, 2015). KMNP has facilities suitable for activities such as cave tourism, mountain biking, wildlife (fauna) watching, photography, off-road activities, camping, agriculture and farm (agro-) tourism, gastronomy, sport angling, rafting, butterfly watching, nature-compatible rural heritage trips, plateau tourism, trekking, bird watching (ornithology), etc. (Ozturk, 2005).

The 200-year-old Historical Pasha Mansion, restored in 2001 by the WWF-TR, Kastamonu Governorship and transformed into the Ecotourism Center of Pınarbaşı became an alternative source of income with the efforts of the local people (Erdogan, 2004). From 2004-2006, Küre Ecotourism Association (KED) / GEF-SGP supported the "Zümrüt Village Ecotourism Implementation Project" to stimulate ecotourism in the region, and in 2006, the EU (European Union) and the State Planning Organization (SPO) of Turkey funded the "Azdavay - Yanıkali Mansion Restoration Project" and the mansion was transformed into an 18-20 room accommodation and training center that can be used for ecotourism (Cetinel, 2013; Kuter and Unal 2013).

Data collection: Within the scope of this research, the levels of benefiting from natural wonders and the values regarding the social and economic aspects of the region were examined for the families, particularly women living in the buffer zone of KMNP. The study covers 53 villages

in the districts of Azdavay, Pınarbaşı, Cide and Şenpazar located in the buffer zone of KMNP. The survey was conducted in 4 villages in Azdavay district, 8 in Pınarbaşı district, 7 in Şenpazar district and 19 in Cide district. A survey with 35 questions was given to the women who were living in these villages in the buffer zone. During the face-to-face survey, open-ended questions were asked to obtain information about the local women and their perspectives on ecotourism. While the questionnaire was given, the role of women in ecotourism activities and their support for the sustainable development of the region as well as their own households were investigated. In determining the size of the sample, the following formula was used when the number of universal elements was known (Islamoglu and Alniacik, 2016; Şenol, 2012);

$$\text{Number of sample (n)} = \frac{N \times (t)^2 \times (pxq)}{(d)^2 \times (N-1) + (t)^2 \times (pxq)} \quad (1)$$

Where n = required sample size; N = population size; t = value for the selected alpha level or confidence level at 0.95 = 1.96; pxq = estimate of variance (0.25); d = acceptable margin of error

$$\text{Number of sample (n)} = \frac{2406 \times 1.96^2 \times (0.50 \times 0.50)}{0.05^2 \times (2406-1) + 1.96^2 \times (0.50 \times 0.50)} = 331$$

Although the minimum sample size calculated for the study was 331, the maximum number of women who could be reached was surveyed. The number of women in the districts and the number of women surveyed is given in Table 2.

Table 1. Number of women surveyed and the current female population in the districts

	Number of women surveyed	Number of women in the districts
Azdavay	8	52
Pınarbaşı	77	511
Şenpazar	52	337
Cide	229	1506
Total	366	2406

The first part of the questionnaire relates the demographic questions that provide general information about the region. Then, job status of women (including ecotourism applications), job domain, income status and level of satisfaction in the work. For the nonworking women, the potential of labor force participation was determined if they had opportunities. The collected data were recorded in the MS-Excel program, and then the variables were transferred to SPSS-20. The data were statistically analyzed after removing errors. Descriptive statistics of the data, N (number) and % (percentage) values are summarized in tables. Chi-square analysis was used in the analysis of categorical variables and statistical analysis were made at p < 0.05 significance level in all results. In cases where the expected value was less than 5

in 2x2 tables, Fisher's exact test / Yates continuity correction was performed (Buyukozturk, 2012).

RESULTS

In this study, 366 women living in 53 villages of the 4 districts in the KMNP buffer zone were interviewed. The results are explained under three main headings: the sociodemographic structure, the results of the working women and the results of nonworking women.

Sociodemographic Structure: The findings regarding the age, education, income, marital status, working status, place of residence, etc. of the women living in this region are presented in Table 2. When the distribution of the women according to their age and educational status was examined (Table 2), 19 of the 44 women in the 20-30 age group had the highest education level, with a university graduation. On the other hand, 65 out of 98 women 64 years of age and older were illiterate. Regarding the age groups in general, it can be concluded that the level of education in the region is quite low.

Table 2. Relationship between age and education of the respondents

Education	Age groups					Total
	20-30	31-41	42-52	53-63	64+	
Primary school	6 (4.2%)	28 (19.7%)	43 (30.3%)	47 (33.1%)	18 (12.7%)	142 (100%)
Secondary school	8 (21.6%)	10 (27.0%)	11 (29.7%)	6 (16.2%)	2 (5.4%)	37 (100%)
High school	11 (26.8%)	19 (46.3%)	9 (22.0%)	2 (4.9%)	0 (0%)	41 (100%)
University graduate	19 (70.4%)	6 (22.2%)	1 (3.7%)	1 (3.7%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
No schooling but literate	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (7.4%)	12 (44.4%)	13 (48.1%)	27 (100%)
Illiterate	0 (0%)	2 (2.2%)	10 (10.9%)	15 (16.3%)	65 (70.7%)	92 (100%)
Total	44 (12.0%)	65 (17.8%)	76 (20.8%)	83 (22.7%)	98 (26.8%)	366 (100%)

Looking at the total income of women's household, 89.4% (327) declared an income of \$100-600, while 3.8% (14) had less than \$100 of total income. When the number of people living in the household and the total income relationship were evaluated, a significant difference was found within the 95% confidence interval (p = 0.035) (Table 3).

Table 3. Relationship between number of households and total income of the respondents

Number of households	Total household income (\$ 1 = 5 Turkish lira)					p
	< \$100 N(%)	\$100-300 N(%)	\$301-500 N(%)	\$501-1000 N(%)	>\$1001 N(%)	
1-3 people	10 (4.5%)	141 (63.5)	63 (28.4%)	7 (3.2%)	1 (0.5%)	0.035
4+ people	4 (2.8%)	81 (56.3%)	42 (29.2%)	16 (11.1%)	1 (0.7%)	
Total	14 (3.8%)	222 (60.7%)	105 (28.7%)	23 (6.3%)	2 (0.5%)	

When the women's education and employment status were examined, it was determined that 65% (93) of the women

were primary school graduates and were not working, while 35% (49) of the women were employed. However, of the women who were university graduates 77.7% (21) were working and 22.3% (6) did not work (Table 4). There was a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between the groups (95% confidence interval). As the level of education decreased, there was an increase in the number of participants who did not work.

Table 4. Relationship between women's education and employment status of the respondents

Employment status	Education						p
	Primary school N(%)	Secondary school N(%)	High school N(%)	University graduate N(%)	Literate N(%)	Illiterate N(%)	
Working women	49 (44.5%)	8 (7.3%)	16 (14.5%)	21 (19.1%)	2 (1.8%)	14 (12.7%)	0.001
Nonworking women	93 (36.3%)	29 (11.3%)	25 (9.8%)	6 (2.3%)	25 (9.8%)	78 (30.5%)	
Total	142 (38.8%)	37 (10.1%)	41 (11.2%)	27 (7.4%)	27 (7.4%)	92 (25.1%)	

$p < 0.05$ significance level (chi-squared test)

When the marital status of the surveyed women was examined, 86.1% (315) were married, while 13.9% (51) were single. Of the married women, 73.3% (231) were working while 26.7% (84) did not work. The vast majority of the women did not work because women with age of 50 years and older have a retirement salary.

Effect of the 'national park' status on the income levels of women living in the buffer zone was revealed that there was no change in income of 94.3% (345). The women stated that they were deprived (4.9%) of the resources with the 'national park' status as they were supplying wood and non-wood forest products from these areas before Küre Mountains became a national park. Some women, 0.8% (3), indicated that their level of income had risen because of the increase in the number of tourists coming to this area because Küre Mountains have been declared as a National Park (Table 5).

Table 5. Effect of 'National Park' status on women's income levels

Effect of income level on 'national park' status	Increased income N(%)	Decreased income N(%)	No change in income N(%)
	3 (0.8%)	18 (4.9%)	345 (94.3%)

Nonworking Women in Buffer Zone: Table 6 revealed that, 73.7% (14) of the women between the ages of 20-30 were willing to work, while 26.3% (5) were not interested in working at all. In older women i.e., age 64 and above the women's willingness to work decreased to 24.7% (21). It is evident from the data that women, especially young women, living in the KMNP buffer zone were willing to work if provided opportunities. However, marital status did not have any effect on working desire of the women. A total of 110 out of 256 women who did not currently work declared that they would work if there were opportunities (Table 6).

Respondents who wish to work were of the view that they would need government support (84.5%) to solve the

infrastructure problem of their villages (Table 8). Without solving those problems, there would be no improvement in the ecotourism activities in the region. Food and beverage sector (54.5%), service sector (23.6%) and weaving and handcrafting sector (21.8%) were among their work of profession (Table 7).

Table 6. Relationship between age groups and willingness to work

Age groups	Willingness to work		Total	p
	Yes	No		
20 - 30	14 (73.7%)	5 (26.3%)	19 (100%)	p<0.001
31 - 41	20 (60.6%)	13 (39.4%)	33 (100%)	
42 - 52	29 (54.7%)	24 (45.3%)	53 (100%)	
53 - 63	26 (39.4%)	40 (60.6%)	66 (100%)	
64 +	21 (24.7%)	64 (75.3%)	85 (100%)	
Total	110 (43.0%)	146 (57.0%)	256 (100%)	

$p < 0.05$ significance level (chi-squared test)

Table 7. Relationship between need of support and sector

Sector worked	Support needed			Total
	Government support N(%)	Education assistance N(%)	Financial support N(%)	
Food & beverage sector	53 (88.3%)	2 (3.3%)	5 (8.3%)	60 (100%)
Weaving & handcrafting sector	20 (83.3%)	4 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	24 (100%)
Service sector	20 (76.9%)	4 (15.4%)	2 (7.7%)	26 (100%)
Total	93 (84.5%)	10 (9.1%)	7 (6.4%)	110 (100%)

As a result, we can conclude that the women who participated in the study were in need of government support and were willing to work mostly in the food & beverage sector.

Working Women: According to the survey results, the vast majority of the women living in the KMNP buffer zone work full time (95.5%). Approximately half of the women who work full time have job in the service sector (51.4%), while 42.9% work in the food and beverage sector. When the relationship between the working time of the women and the sector in which they worked was examined, no significant relationship was found at the significance level of $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.436$) (Table 8).

Table 8. Relationship between women's working status and different sectors

Working status	Sector worked			Total N(%)	p
	Food & beverage sector N(%)	Weaving & handcrafting sector N(%)	Service sector N(%)		
Part time	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	5 (100%)	0.436
Full time	45 (42.9%)	6 (5.7%)	54 (51.4%)	105 (100%)	
Total	47 (42.7%)	7 (6.4%)	56 (50.9%)	110 (100%)	

$p < 0.05$ significance level (chi-squared test)

Looking at the social security status of the working women, 96.4% (106) obtained social security. Only 29% (32) of the women run their own business; the rest worked in someone else's workplace. Of the women who had their own businesses, 84.4% (27) worked in the food and beverage sector and the rest worked in the weaving and handicraft sector. The women who established their own businesses

stated that they made an investment between US \$100-600. Those who had expenses for their business said that they had not used any incentives or loans (81%) from the state or private institutions. The women who received incentives/loans or credits (19%) used between US \$1000-4000 from different institutions.

Vast majority of the women who worked either in the food and beverage or the service sector earned an income between US \$100-300, which is lower than the minimum wage in Turkey (Table 9).

Table 9. Relationship between working sectors and income

Income level	Sector worked			Total N (%)
	Food & beverage sector N (%)	Weaving & handcrafting sector N (%)	Service sector N (%)	
\$ 100 and less	11 (23.0%)	0 (0%)	3 (5.4%)	14 (12.7%)
\$ 101 - 300	31 (66.0%)	4 (57.1%)	47 (83.9%)	82 (74.5%)
\$ 301 - 600	5 (10.6%)	2 (28.6%)	4 (7.1%)	11 (10.0%)
\$ 601 - 1000	0 (0%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (3.6%)	3 (2.7%)
Total	47 (100%)	7 (100%)	56 (100%)	110 (100%)

Working women stated that they worked (110), 10-12 months (61%), while the rest worked only in summer. Data also revealed that, 52% (57) worked whole week, but 27% (30) worked only on the weekends, when there was more visitation in areas in KMNP. The women also stated that their customers were 100% local ecotourists; and rarely nonlocals.

Regarding women's earnings, 71% (78) women said that their income changed, while 29% (32) stated that there was no change. The women who said there was change also specified that in the months of June, July and August, their earnings increased. When asked about their job satisfaction, 87.3% (96) stated that they were satisfied, and only 12.7% (14) were not satisfied (Table 10).

Table 10. Relationship between job sector and work satisfaction.

Job satisfaction	Sector worked			Total N(%)
	Food & beverage sector N(%)	Weaving & handcrafting sector N(%)	Service sector N(%)	
Yes	44 (45.8%)	7 (7.3%)	45 (46.9%)	96 (100%)
No	3 (21.4%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (78.6%)	14 (100%)
Total	47 (42.7%)	7 (6.4%)	56 (50.9%)	110 (100%)

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the participation of women in ecotourism and the socio-economic effects on women in Azdavay, Pınarbaşı, Şenpazar and Cide villages in the buffer zone of KMNP were analyzed based on data obtained with a face-to-face survey. First, it was determined that the population actually living in the region and TURKSTAT data do not match. The reason for this is that the majority of elderly

people come to their villages in the summer months and migrate to towns or big cities in winter. The population in the region between 1985-2013 was consisted of old age people because of the migration of young people (Ozden and Erkan Bugday, 2015).

Out of the 366 women surveyed in 53 villages of 4 districts in the buffer zone of KMNP, 86% were married and 14% were single. It is believed that the pressure on women is still continuing in this region as there were difficulties to reach women for the interviews. Especially in ecotourism, it has been determined that women's employment is negatively affected by men in the region. Scheyvens (2000) stated that women want to carry out ecotourism initiatives in their communities, but they face some gender issues. There are unspoken restrictions in many societies and cultures about women's roles in such initiatives. Self-employment in an informal sector such as ecotourism is a particularly significant economic opportunity for low-income householders and for women with limited employment options (Cunningham *et al.*, 2017). It was also mentioned that ensuring that women have control over ecotourism-driven income is difficult in societies where men control household incomes.

Local administrations should play an important role in the promotion of ecotourism. Advertising, publicity activities and training for women can be carried out by local governments. Additionally, preparing trip programs, providing local tastes and accommodations for tourism agencies and social media are phenomena that are highly recognizable and appealing to large audiences and will increase ecotourism participation. Pleno (2006) conducted a study in Bohol region of the Philippines, where women were mobilized by NGOs, local government units, and public organizations who ensured their participation in ecotourism projects. Providing seminars for women, promotion and advertising at the national and international levels increased participation in ecotourism projects.

It might be concluded that, to ensure the contributions of ecotourism projects in the region, which have been carried out or are still ongoing, the support of public institutions and organizations should not be limited to the duration of the project but should be sustained. Although national and international projects play very important roles in the development of the region with the support of ecotourism, the greatest task is to ensure the sustainability of the region's people. Barry (2012) stated that, the development of ecotourism, when done sustainably, can be an effective tool for promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, maintaining biodiversity, continuing culture and traditions and creating employment for local communities. In addition, ecotourism has the potential to prevent gender discrimination and to promote women's empowerment through income-generating activities and professional trainings.

Bozkaya (2013) stated that women faced a number of eco-economic, cultural, environmental barriers that limit their

participation in the labor market. Jobs are classified according to gender and separated into 'women's work' and 'men's work', and the social perception is that women's primary tasks are still housework. In the present study, it was observed that the spouses of the middle-aged and older women did not want them to work and / or some of them did not want to be employed by their spouses. It was determined that women were not employed by their spouses when they were married, and later they could not work due to children. Another reason for women not working is that women having age 50 and above did not feel the need to work because their spouses receive their pension. In terms of household income, 60.7% respondents had an income of US \$200-500, and even though they had a lower income than the current minimum wage, 70% of the women did not need to work or were not employed by their spouses.

When household income was examined, it was observed that it was between US \$400- 1 000 TL for the working women and between US \$200-500 for the women who did not work; therefore, household income is doubled if women work. Although women get the opportunity to work all year, the highest income was obtained in June, July and August. The majority of the women stated that they were satisfied with their work but would prefer to do a different job if there was another opportunity. Socio-economic diversity can help to bring about innovative development in all practices involving forestry, including ecotourism (Cedamon *et al.*, 2017).

Conclusion: The development of ecotourism activities in KMNP increases the participation of women living in the region and improves the social, cultural and economic aspects. Firstly, it is necessary to raise awareness about what ecotourism is, what it aims to do, and how it can create economic, ecological and sociocultural benefits for local communities in a region. To minimize the pressures on women who work or are willing to work, it is necessary to provide various types of trainings to ensure the continuity of this training by local authorities. Furthermore, to ensure the continuity of ecotourism benefits, which is required by women, the simplest infrastructure investments need to be completed such as to make roads in a region suitable for the transportation of locals and ecotourists.

After the “national park” declaration, the diversification of ecotourism activities is expected to increase the income of the people in the region. Even the inhabitants of the KMNP buffer zone are not yet fully aware of the ecotourism potential of this area. With the opportunity provided by TURKSOY's (International Organization of Turkic Culture) declaration of Kastamonu as a “Turkic World Capital of Culture” in 2018, the ecotourism activities carried out would be extended to wider segments by taking advantage of the increased advertising and promotion opportunities. Revitalizing ecotourism in KMNP will be an important step for the people

of the region to enable them to have new and sustainable opportunities for women and men.

Disclosure statement: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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