

Reminder: Buy 3M on the Dip

Though the Post-It and Scotch tape maker issued a disappointing 2010 ... [More](#) ▶

BARRON'S

Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.com

OPINION | DECEMBER 7, 2009, 2:53 P.M. ET

Global Warming and Mt. Kilimanjaro

The glaciers on the famous peak, receding for more than a century, attract many tourists; the people of Tanzania attract much less attention.

By BJØRN LOMBORG

Climate change has captured the attention of politicians around the world. The following article is part of a series, leading up to the United Nations conference on global warming in Copenhagen that starts this week, on how ordinary people in different countries view the issue:

Every year, more than 10,000 tourists are drawn to Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, driven in no small part by the fear that the mountain's magnificent ice will soon melt.

Mary Thomas lives not far from their path, on the southwestern slopes of that mountain, but tourists do not come to her town of Mungushi.

At 45, Mrs. Thomas is a widow. Her husband died of complications from HIV/AIDS; she too was diagnosed as HIV positive. "When my husband's family found out that I had HIV, they isolated me and took my house," she told a Copenhagen Consensus researcher in June. "Before I got HIV I never expected to live like this and be so poor. I had a good house and food on the table and I was living a good life."

Today, Mrs. Thomas lives in a small, two-room house with no electricity. The toilet is a hole in the ground outside the house. Her three children, all HIV negative, have been taken away by relatives. She worries about their care after her death.

She has heard talk of melting ice on Mount Kilimanjaro, and she has noticed less snow and rain and drier conditions since she was a child. "It worries me."

This, according to climate groups, is a critical and urgent problem. Greenpeace warns there could be no ice left on the mountain within just eight years. "This is the price we pay if climate change is allowed to go unchecked," warns the group.

Climate activists claim the receding ice is evidence of the need for developed countries to reduce carbon output. Actually, the glaciers on Mount Kilimanjaro have been receding since 1890, according to research by G. Kaser, et al., published in the *International Journal of Climatology* (2004). They note that when Ernest Hemingway published "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" in 1936, the mountain had already lost more than half its surface ice area in the previous 56 years. This is more than it has lost in the 70 years since.

According to this study, and another published in *Geophysical Research Letters* (2006) by N.J. Kullen, et al., the reason the ice is disappearing is not warming temperatures, but a shift around 1880 toward drier climates. What we see today is a hangover from that climactic shift.

Even if some of their claims are questionable, climate activists have managed to promote local tourism and have done a great job at bringing the world's attention to the mountain's glaciers. But they are doing a poor job at bringing attention to the actual people of Tanzania.

For Mrs. Thomas, arguments over the state of the ice are irrelevant. When she was asked by a Copenhagen Consensus Center researcher what donors and the Tanzanian government should do, she doesn't think for long. "Education is the first priority," she says, "and it should provide proper understanding of HIV and reduce the stigma. The next priority is micro-finance so people can have the chance to become self-reliant."

As she puts it, "There is no need for ice on the mountain if there is no people around because of HIV/AIDS."

Mr. Lomborg is director of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, a think tank, and author of "Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming" (Knopf, 2007).

Copyright 2009 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones

Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit

www.djreprints.com