UNITY IN DIVERSITY
(ONE WORLD WITH CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT DIVERSITY)

By
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PHILOSOPHY OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

Indonesia is a country where the principal foundation for living is the religious values. Almost all leading religions in the world such as Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Kong Ho Cu exist in Indonesia and their followers are living side by side in harmony. The history shows that those religions had entered into Indonesia peacefully as no force had been exerted when they were being introduced to the Indonesian people.

A more in-depth examination of those religions will lead you to the fact that they share common values which are universal in nature. Broadly speaking, the universal values that exist in each religion actually represent a concept known as “balance of life”. This concept has been used as a basis in all development activities whether it is economy, social affairs, culture, technology, environment, etc. Balance of life covers all aspects as follows:

- Vertical and horizontal balance (relationship between man and God; and relationship between man and its fellows, relation between man and its environment)
- Physical and spiritual balance
- Macro and micro-cosmic balance

This balance of life concept teaches man not to be greedy and to always take into consideration the balance between “exploitation or resources” and “preservation of resources”. In its operational terms, this development concept puts emphasis on the balance between use of resources and conservation. In the development terminology, the concept of balance is commonly referred to as the sustainable development concept. The balance of life principle in Indonesia, has been clearly defined by the Indonesian People’s Consultative Assembly into a resolution on the “Ethical Values of the National Life” with the objectives of:

- improving the quality of the Indonesian human resources towards those being religious and of good character with strong national personality.
- Maintaining the national unity, integrity, and sovereignty as well as safeguarding the natural and cultural environment based on religious and cultural values.

These Ethical Values of the National Life have been adopted in all the aspects of life of the Indonesian people such as the socio-culture, politics, government administration, economy, business, law enforcement, science and environment.
In addition, the development activities in Indonesia are carried out based on cultural values and traditions which exist and prevail within the communities. Indonesia possesses a diverse range of more than 500 ethnic groups that maintain the cultural traditions different to one another. Such a plurality has consequently enriched the culture of Indonesia which is symbolized as the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity).

Within the traditional community one can still find many practices of local wisdom which basically teach people to safeguard and have respect for nature as a place for living. The local wisdom practiced by many different ethnic groups cover the various aspects of the economy and socio-culture of the modern societies such as: agriculture, medication, etc. These local and traditional values are encouraged to prosper not only as a tourist attraction but also as a living culture.

**DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES**

An Ever increasing number of countries are depending on tourism to boost the development of their economy. At present, a large-scale expansion of tourism markets is taking place all over the world. The tourism industry has now become the third-biggest international export branch after oil and automobiles. Many specialists are of the opinion that its above – average growth rate will soon make it the single most important economic factor globally.

The tourism today faces new challenges, those of imbalances resulted from physically uncontrolled, purely comercial developments, whose adverse impacts on our resources make us realize that the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of our planet is at stake. Every year new areas are opening up to tourism and its clear that here we have a phenomenon which knows no boundaries. A race is now taking place between the massive expansion of tourism and a realization of the need to bring expansion under control of the “balance of life” concept.

If we are to meet these challenges, we must remember that tourism must be to satisfy legitimate human needs for balance of life. To this end, ecotourism by its nature might become an effective tool.

**POLICY FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Tourism in Indonesia is developed based on the balance of life concept and the desire to uphold the local wisdom insights. Ecotourism which is believed to be the most approriate approach towards sustainable development of tourism actually reflects the same philosophy described earlier. In its implementation, ecotourism in Indonesia puts emphasis on the development of community-based tourism where the social welfare of the local people is placed in the forefront of the development objectives. The active participation of the local community becomes the focal point.
of the ecotourism development. The active participation of the community will eventually motivate them to be also responsible for the preservation of their natural and cultural environment in which they live as they have been able to take pride in their heritage, and to understand that the use of natural resources does not necessarily mean exploiting them. Through ecotourism the locals are encouraged to preserve the environment and the ecosystem in which they live and furthermore, they are able to share in the benefit created by tourism.

To carry out the sustainable development of tourism with community-based approach, the important element that calls for attention is the improvement of the human resource quality. The development of ecotourism products cannot be separated from the development of the local community. The host population directly involved in tourism would require special training not simply in the aspects of the skill, expertise and management, but also in the aspect of marketing and promotion which provide accurate and reliable information on products being offered.

Ecotourism is seen as a model for the integration of tourism and conservation purposes; a model for cost-efficient development during our difficult times; a model for educating the public as well as the tourists to take responsibility for the conservation of the environment and cultural heritage; a model for community empowerment; all of which are indicators for sustainable development.

Ecotourism in Indonesia becomes an effective tool for the conservation of natural environment, heritage sites and traditional values of the community. Ecotourism is also a tool for the enhancement of the local prosperity as it generates more income and expands job opportunities.

**THE POTENTIAL AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ECOTOURISM IN INDONESIA**

The potential for ecotourism development in Indonesia mainly lies in its resources. Indonesia is known as a country with mega-diversity. In terms of biodiversity, Indonesia is home to 10% of flowered flora in the world, 12% of mammals, 16% of amphibia and reptiles, 17% of birds, 25% of fish and 15% of insect. As an archipelago with 17,508 islands and over a hundred million hectares of forest areas, it is also a potential indicator. 30 million hectares of which are protected forest, and over 15 million hectares are nature preservation area comprising national parks, grand forest parks and nature recreation parks. Around 7.3 million hectares are nature conservation area, which includes the nature preservation and the animal conservation areas spread over many different locations. Indonesian water is home to world class underwater resources, which are under the management of many national park entities.
Besides its mega-diversity in biological resources, Indonesia also offers a diverse geographic and geologic features to be explored. The caves are among the potentials for ecotourism, not only as natural wonders but also as historical assets.

Diversity of cultures which include ethnic groups, religions, traditions and all other dimensions of culture, are additional wealth to the richness of our natural resources because of the relation between the two and also their relation with The Creator.

Some of our natural and cultural heritage sites have been included in the list of the world heritage. In short, not only the number and the size of the resources but the diversity, uniqueness and condition are more important in valuing the potentials for ecotourism development.

Whether it is considered as an industry, as a human experience or as a subject for academic discussions; tourism is a multi-sectoral undertaking. The realization of tourism in any place will involve many parties: government, central as well as local, private enterprises with varied scales and types of businesses, communities, NGOs and the whole range of professionals.

The multistakeholders’ concern on ecotourism has made some ecotourism destinations come into being, and many other forms of tourism which can be categorized as good practices are also growing.

Community-based ecotourism began to expand approximately ten years ago, initiated by the NGOs having an interest in environmental issues both local and international. In the beginning, the activities focused on nature conservation efforts in certain areas only and at a later stage they turned the areas into tourist attractions, considering that through tourism, the efforts to conserve the environment could be more sustainable. In addition, as the world market trend is undergoing a shift from travel for leisure to travel for widening horizon and individual experience, so ecotourism is becoming the focus of the national tourism development policy. Several types of development of ecotourism as to that of mountain-based, low land-based and marine-based, have been carried out. Examples of some ecotourism destinations already developed are: Togean Islands in Central Sulawesi, Ujung Kulon in Banten, Mount Halimun in West Java, Bird Watching Project in Seram Island, Komodo National Park, Orang Utan Project in North Sumatera and Central Kalimantan, Green Turtle Conservation Programme in Sangalaki Island, West Bali National Park and Borobudur Archeological Park. These developments of ecotourism in several locations in Indonesia have been carried out by the local NGOs such as Indecon, Patrapala Foundation, Halimun Ecotourism Foundation, etc. in collaboration with the international counterparts such as Conservation international, WWF, The Nature Conservancy, USAID, JICA, UNDP, etc.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need for a newly oriented concept of development (economy) from that which concentrates only on pursuing growth target so it often neglects the carrying capacity aspect of the environment. This newly oriented concept of development should be directed towards balance of life.

2. Considering that the world is one only as our shared possession, in this era of globalization, the sustainable development must be implemented comprehensively by all countries. There should be a balance between the advanced countries and the less advanced countries which means there should be a feeling of responsibility on the part of the advanced/developed countries to assist the less developed ones to establish the balance.

3. Sustainable development should follow a concept that respects the diversity of cultures and natural features and avoids any attempt to establish global uniformity. **UNITY IN DIVERSITY (ONE WORLD WITH CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT DIVERSITY)**