The Relationship of Tourism Development to Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Use Energy and Water Resources: A Stakeholder Framework

Theme A Ecotourism policies and planning

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Abstract

This project was premised on the belief that sustainable tourism policies that are planned and implemented to integrate resource sustainability and biodiversity conservation considerations in the development process will reduce the negative impacts of tourism development. To accomplish this goal, the historical record and future prospects for tourism development in relation to biodiversity conservation and energy/water resource sustainability were examined. In order to address the goals outlined above, it was necessary to identify key stakeholders that have been involved in the development of conventional tourism and the roles they can play in creating sustainable tourism in the future. The Sustainable Tourism Stakeholder Management Framework evolved from this project and is used to present the results to date.

Statement

The Relationship of Tourism Development to Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Use Energy and Water Resources: A Stakeholder Framework

Full report prepared by Donald E. Hawkins and Kristin Lamoureux of Hawkins & Associates, Inc. and Auliana Poon of Tourism Intelligence, Inc.

This project, funded by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), was premised on the belief that sustainable tourism policies that are planned and implemented to integrate resource sustainability and biodiversity conservation considerations in the development process will reduce the negative impacts of tourism development. To accomplish this goal, the historical record and future prospects for tourism development in relation to biodiversity conservation and energy/water resource sustainability were examined, using the following methods:

- Key stakeholders were identified and described in terms of their (a) long-term interest in the managed economic growth of tourism destinations, (b) concerns for biodiversity conservation, (c) degree of control and influence on the sustainable use and protection of their natural resource assets and (d) commitment to collaborative management processes involving local communities.
• Selected tourism destination development cases were reviewed in terms of their (a) tourism development patterns or life cycles, (b) key stakeholders and their respective roles in planning and decision making and (c) the policy and planning frameworks influencing their decisions.

• Consultations were conducted with international and regional development donors and private sector businesses, NGOs and consultants to (a) identify targeted areas in developing countries for future investments, (b) describe major policy and planning goals and (c) determine specific projects funded or in the pipeline related to tourism-related developments in key development areas. Particular attention was given to tourism development policies or initiatives over the next 5 years which may be supported or endorsed by international and bilateral aid and funding agencies. Through the development of a database, over 200 initiatives from aid agencies were identified as being either in-progress or planned for the future (pipeline).

• Based upon the study findings, recommendations were formulated on the ways and means by which key public/private sector stakeholders can encourage sustainable tourism development, which can contribute to the economic, environmental and social well-being of the destination.

In order to address the goals outlined above, it was necessary to identify key stakeholders that have been involved in the development of conventional tourism and the roles they can play in creating sustainable tourism in the future. The Sustainable Tourism Stakeholder Management Framework which follows has evolved from this project and is used to present the results to date.
The Stakeholder Framework outlines the following stakeholders in sustainable tourism development:

**Drivers:** The first stage of the analysis process within tourism development occurs because a series of conditions or “drivers” have come together, enabling tourism to be considered as a development option. Increased growth and change in tourism patterns, greater focus on biodiversity and conservation, and increased attention to tourism by development agencies are among the leading drivers for sustainable tourism development, particularly in developing countries, as well as increased awareness of the flaws in the life cycle of the traditional or conventional tourism developments has resulted in demand for greater stakeholder involvement in the planning stages at the local and regional levels.

**Institutional Arrangements:** Tourism development is most often a mixture of public, private and civil society sector activities. The boundaries that outline the form that
tourism will take can be found in public intervention, as outlined in a region’s laws and policies, local governance and privatization activity. In addition, the private sector, including the civil society or non-governmental organizations, will also play a role in the way in which tourism developments.

**Stakeholder Entry Points:** Key stakeholders, encouraged by incentives offered at the macro and micro levels, influenced by prevailing laws/regulations and public policies and by private sector competitive forces, are often driven to key tourism development entry points or tourism “starters” such as those outlined in framework. Of course, not all entry points are presented in the framework, however, cases in the full report support each of these entry points.

**Collaborative Tools:** As a result of the case study analyses conducted as part of this project, it is evident that several “lessons learned” can be derived. These lessons learned could be paired with different “tools” from which tourism development, managed by a stakeholder driven collaborative process, can be conceptualized, implemented and managed; these tools follow:

1. **Inclusive Stakeholder Rapid Sustainable Tourism Assessment:** Failure to include all key stakeholders within a destination is the most common cause of discord and ultimately, failure of a tourism destination. In some destinations around the world, tourism has been developed without any attention given to those that will be most directly affected by it. The most effective way, although not always the easiest way, to ensure that all of the needs of each stakeholder are developed in a manner that protects the natural and social environment as well as fosters economic sustainability is to include each stakeholder in the planning process.

   There are several methods of fostering stakeholder participation. Recently, Conservation International and the George Washington University with support from USAID developed the Tourism Rapid Assessment (TRA) Tool. This tool is designed to perform a rapid assessment and analysis of a tourism destination through a participatory planning process. The assessment can be used for policy debates, for developing a conservation strategy, for determining focus areas for development assistance, and for planning and implementing tourism development. This tool is primarily designed to assess nature-based tourism in rural communities. This instrument takes into account the importance of large-scale mass tourism, but focuses primarily on smaller-scale, niche market tourism. The TRA is currently being tested in both Ghana and Niger. Further information regarding the TRA can be found at [http://www.raise.org/tourism/](http://www.raise.org/tourism/).

2. **Competitive Clusters based on Natural Resource and Biodiversity:** As the world moves towards a global economy and boundaries continue to blur. It is no longer effective to operate with the “each man is an island” mentality. Creating strategic partnerships and competitive clusters strengthens a destination and enables it to compete on a greater plain while reducing individual economic liability.
The competitive cluster approach is being employed in developing and transitional countries. The “competitive cluster” concept is a strategic set of activities and services organized as an effective ecotourism supply chain. The core of the “cluster” is the comparative advantage represented by the protected area’s natural attractions and biodiversity. The competitive cluster is used to examine and support a set of strategic relationships between donors, the private sector and government in a specific program of support to ecotourism development linked to improved management of Sarawak’s protected areas.

One example of a competitive cluster implementation program can be found through Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth project funded by USAID in Bulgaria. This project focuses on developing a model for a protected area competitive cluster. The cluster has been created as a key element of Bulgaria’s national tourism development and promotion strategy, as well as promoting biodiversity conservation and local enterprise development in rural areas. The figure below describes this cluster. Further information about the project in Bulgaria can be found at http://www.ardinc.com/htm/projects/p_bceg.htm.

3. Community Tourism and Environment Education and Awareness: Repeatedly within cases studied throughout the world, indications are that community awareness promotes sustainable practices. Educating the local community, and in some cases, the tourist, is increasingly important. By understanding why it is important to protect an area, residents are given the opportunity to make educated decisions about their quality of life and to comprehend the reasons why tourists visit their destination.

One of the most common ways of fostering education and community awareness is through benchmarks or best practices. There are many sources of best practices. The World Travel and Tourism Council has developed an on-going series entitled “Steps to Success” which offers a variety of "real-life" case studies in key areas of management and training. The publication is designed to offer practical information relating to travel and tourism, including customer service training, intercultural training, specialty training, peer training, institutional frameworks, management tools and practices, travel & tourism human resource development. Further information about Steps to Success can be found at http://www.wttc.org/resourceCentre/publications.asp.

An additional tool for best practice identification has been developed by Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel (BEST). Through a monthly publication, BEST highlights successful business practices utilized by travel and tourism companies that advance their business objectives while enhancing the social and economic well being of destination communities. Examples featured in this series are drawn from BEST's extensive and ever-growing database of the latest sustainable travel
and tourism practices. Further information can be found at http://www.sustainabletravel.org/practices.cfm

4. Legal and Institutional Framework Focused on Partnerships and Strategic Alliances

An appropriate legal and policy framework is vital to tourism development. Often the most important framework necessary in sustainable tourism development are laws and regulations protecting the social and natural environment and development rights of local residents, including indigenous peoples.

5. Small and Medium Size Business Incubator and Entrepreneurship: Large destinations feature large resorts, transportation and other suppliers. However, regardless of the size of the destination, small and medium size businesses (SMEs) play a key role in development. These businesses serve various purposes such as providing an entry point to the economic gains for the local community, helping to foster ownership of the destination, providing the tourist with alternative or support services (i.e. diving, horseback riding, traditional cuisine, etc) that are not available directly through the resort. Additionally, SMEs are the key to maintaining tourism revenue within the destination, as they are more likely to buy locally and use local infrastructure to develop their product or service.

A tool to guide the development of the EEC was developed by George Washington University and Conservation International with the assistance of MSI under the USAID RAISE Consortium. The goal of an ecotourism enterprise incubator is to promote the creation and/or strengthening of strategic new businesses in the area of ecotourism and related industries, as an instrument for the conservation of biodiversity and the creation of jobs, based on the principles of sustainable development. The expected results include:

- A network of competitive ecotourism enterprises in strategic pilot areas focused on the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development.
- A pilot model for incubators in ecotourism, potentially replicable in other rural municipalities near protected areas.
- A mechanism for assisting in the financing of protected areas.
- Greater harmony between the financial sector and entrepreneurs in ecotourism, creating possibilities for other interested entrepreneurs.
- Sustainability of a nucleus of synergistic enterprises, united by service standards and attention to environmental management improvements and social concerns.

Further information about the Ecotourism Incubator can be found at www.raise.org/tourism/.
Another example of a business incubator project is the Small Tourism Enterprises Project (STEP) Model. In 2001, the Organization of American States (OAS) Inter-Sectoral Unit for Tourism and USAID have engaged in a partnership to extend the OAS Small Hotels Project to encompass sites and attractions over the next several years. Consistent with the new partnership with USAID, it has been agreed to change the name of the project to the Caribbean Small Tourism Enterprises Project (STEP). This reflects an orientation that foresees support programs, not only for small hotels but also for small tourism enterprises. A key feature will be the packaging of small hotel experiences with sites, attractions, events, festivals and related activities of interest to the marketplace.

6. **Destination Management and Marketing Capacity Building:** In almost all of the other tools mentioned above, ownership is mentioned as a positive result of the stakeholder driven process. While this is key, it is important to foster ownership not only among the direct stakeholders but also throughout the community in general. Tourists will come in contact with many more people than just the hotel clerk and the bus driver. Therefore it is important that the general public feel a sense of pride in their destination, which will be translated into a friendly attitude, good customer service and a pleasant experience for both the tourist and the resident. Community involvement and ownership is a result of a planned, well-represented development process which includes providing the destination with as much information as possible as well as having an informed destination manager or destination management organization leading the process.

There is no one easy way to develop an educated destination manager or destination management organization. The George Washington University has developed a program entitled Tourism Destination Management and Marketing Certificate Program which offers continuing education courses for professionals in the tourism and hospitality field or those working in areas related to tourism such as economic development, investment promotion, planning, protected area management, historic preservation, cultural resources, performing arts, museums, small business development, sports and recreation, and transportation. GW has joined together with partner universities from all over the world to offer the Destination Management program throughout the world. Further information about the Tourism Destination Management and Marketing can be found at [www.gwu.edu/dmp](http://www.gwu.edu/dmp).

7. **Product Development and Contingency Planning:** Unfortunately, a great weakness of the tourism industry is its fragility. For example, tourism arrivals to Egypt have been greatly affected by terrorist activity through the last decade, causing a significant loss in revenue. Equally devastating to the industry was the Gulf War in the mid-nineties, which represented the only period of overall

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1 This material is excerpted from STEP Project Update, September 5, 2001, by the Technical Team, Organization of American States (OAS), Inter-Sectoral Unit for Tourism
tourism decline that decade. Because there is no way to predict those events that will negatively impact tourism development, contingency planning and diversification of the tourism product is necessary to limit this impact.

Carefully developed plans that deal not only with the emergency as it occurs, but also address how to overcome the crisis and generate new economic alternatives are key to tourism development. It is vital that a destination not depend completely upon tourism as its only means of revenue. As the recent terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington have shown, the industry is extremely susceptible to catastrophic events, regardless of where they happen.

A tool to assist destinations, as well as small and medium size businesses foster product development and differentiation is the **Product Development Workbook** developed for ARD, Inc. for use in the gateway communities of the Rile and Balkan National Parks. This workbook was designed to provide a step-by-step process from which local participants could strategically develop their own tourism product.

Several tools for contingency planning are currently being developed in the wake of the recent disasters in New York City and Washington. The Pacific Asia Travel Association offers a seminar entitled “Managing a Crisis: Are you prepared?” This seminar provides insight into crisis management operations, the needs and demands of the media, action plans for handling crisis and regaining consumer confidence. The program also included recent tourism industry case studies about health, natural disaster and terrorist situations that tested crises plans in action. Information regarding this program can be found at [https://www.pata.org/frame3.cfm?pageid=6](https://www.pata.org/frame3.cfm?pageid=6).

8. Environmental Management and Certification Program: Environmental certification programs exist for an array of consumer products. Tourism is no different. Environmental certification programs or environmental management systems (EMS) have increased dramatically in the last 10 years. According to Honey and Rome\(^2\), “there are some 250 voluntary initiatives including tourism codes of conduct, labels, awards, ‘benchmarking’ and ‘best practices’. Of these, about 100 are eco-labeling and certification programs offering logos, seals of approval or awards designed to signify socially and/or environmentally superior tourism practices.”

There are two main reasons why a destination or an individual property/company would wish to involve themselves with a certification or environmental management program. First, consumers may demand a certification of some sort, although at present consumer pressure has been minimal in the tourism industry.

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Secondly, the implementation of an eco-label or certification may save significant resources, including contributing to the “bottom line.” Many of the costs involved in achieving an eco-label or certification may result in lowered operating costs in the long run through energy, waste removal and sanitary savings as well as reduced expenses caused by environmental degradation.

**Desired Outcomes:** It was recommended that UNEP work to establish strategic directions to encourage sustainable development and biodiversity conservation in the tourism sector. The private sector, government agencies and the civil society need to create working partnerships between biodiversity conservation and tourism sector stakeholders to encourage sustainable growth while protecting vital cultural and natural resources. Strategic recommendations follow. Each recommendation is expanded in the full report.

**Private Sector:**
- Organize a Sustainable Tourism Development Opportunities Conference
- Showcase Sustainable Tourism at the Beijing Summer Olympics--2008
- Provide Sustainable Development Technical Assistance to Tourism Industry Investors and Operators

**Government**
- Establish Resource Rents, Taxation Regimes and Other Financing Mechanisms for Improved Environmental Management and Protected Area Systems
- Establish Viable Financing for Small Scale Accommodations Meeting Sustainable Design Requirements

**Donor Agencies**
- Focus Donor Aid on Sustainable Tourism’s Role in Developing and Transitional Economies
- Contribute to the World Bank Group’s Review of the Its Role in Tourism-Related Development Efforts
- Expand the Donor Tourism Development Funding Database
- Conduct Research, Evaluation, and Monitoring Activities to Determine the Effectiveness of Donor Support

**Civil Society and the Media**
- Enlist the Assistance of Higher Education Institutions to Include Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Tourism Principles and Practices in their Education and Research Programs
- Use NGOs to Monitor Sustainable Development Indicators and Guide Tourism Development Decisions.
- Encourage Media to Promote Sustainable Tourism Development Practices

**Feedback and Monitoring:** Although the development of a monitoring system might be the least exciting element to tourism development, it is extremely important in the long run. Monitoring a destination allows its stakeholders to adequately access the impact
(both positive and negative) tourism is having on the natural, social and economic environments of a destination.

A useful guideline for monitoring development has been developed as part of the Urban Environmental Management Project of the Canadian Universities Consortium at the Asian Institute of Technology under the supervision of Dr. Walter Jamieson. *Indicators in Monitoring Tourism in Small Communities* is a manual intended for use by those involved in monitoring tourism development in a village or small community. This manual may be used by a community member who has been designated as the person responsible for monitoring tourism change in the community, by a local government official given the same task, by someone from outside of the community who has been brought in to conduct the monitoring or by anyone else charged with this task. The focus of the manual is on developing indicators to monitor tourism change in a small community. The manual has been written for communities experiencing relatively small tourism development and numbers of tourists visiting. It addresses common impacts affecting small communities as tourism grows and begins to have an effect on community life.

**CONCLUSION**

As previously discussed, multi-national organizations, such as UNEP, are in the position to establish strategic directions to encourage sustainable development and biodiversity conservation in the tourism sector. The private sector, government agencies and the civil society need to create working partnerships between biodiversity conservation and tourism sector stakeholders to encourage sustainable growth while protecting vital cultural and natural resources.