Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Tourism through the Development and Dissemination of Best Practices

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Rainforest Alliance Mission

The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior.
Conservation International
Mission

To conserve the Earth’s living natural heritage, our global biodiversity, and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature.

Tourism:
One of the Largest Industries

Developing countries received 292.6 million tourists in 2000 (95% more than in 1990).

Tourism in the Americas:
- Overall annual growth (2007): 5%
  - Central America: 11%
  - South America: 8%
- Home to 104 UNESCO World Heritage sites

Sources: UNWTO, TIES
Nature Tourism

Worldwide

- In 1992, between 40% - 60% of tourists participated in nature tourism activities.
- In 2004, nature tourism grew 3 times faster than the industry as a whole.
- Tourism to biodiversity hotspot countries has increased by more than 100% between 1990 and 2000.

In the Americas

- Belize, 2006 → 42,000 tourists visited national parks (up 25% from 2004)
  → 60% of tourists snorkel
  → 25% visit rainforests

- Galapagos → from 41,000 in 1990 to +100,000 in 2005

Sources: TIES
From Mexico to the Patagonia: Nature and Culture Based Tourism is being Promoted

- **Guatemala**: “... Soul of the Earth”
- **Belize**: "Mother Nature's Best Kept Secret"
- **Costa Rica**: “No artificial ingredients"
- **Panama**: “…the path less traveled”
- **Peru**: “Land of the Inkas”
- **Ecuador**: ”Life at its purest”
- **Chile**: “Nature that moves your soul”
- **Uruguay**: “A natural country”

Tourism in Developing Countries

- Tourism is a principle foreign exchange earner for **83% of developing countries**, and the leading export for 1/3 of poorest countries.

- For the world’s **40 poorest countries**, tourism is the **2nd** most important source of foreign exchange.

- Over last decade, tourism has been “the only large sector of international trade in services where poor countries have consistently posted a surplus.”

Source: TIES
Negative Impacts of Tourism Development on Tropical Forests and Coastal/Marine Ecosystems

- Unsustainable consumption of resources (water, energy).
- Uncontrolled visitation to natural sites and protected areas.
- Displacement of local people and wildlife.
- Habitat destruction.
- Pollution: absence of waste disposal and recycling systems.
- Erosion and introduction of exotic species.
- Visual pollution: spoiled natural sceneries.
- At the global level: loss of biodiversity, contribution to global warming, and depletion of the ozone layer.

Source: UNEP, 2004

General Project Information

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

Sub-Programme Title: Biodiversity – 2: Water Ecosystems cutting across OP 3.

Project Title: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Tourism through the Development and Dissemination of Best Practices.

Geographical Scope: Belize, Ecuador

Project Duration: November 2005 -- October 2007
Project Objective

- Work with tourism operations in Belize and Ecuador to **conserve biodiversity** in their regions.
- **Create a supply** of sustainable tourism services, and link them with market demand for sustainable tourism.
- **Engage key private sector players** on both the supply and demand side.
- **Create benefits** in tropical forest and coastal/marine ecosystems in Belize and Ecuador by creating linkages at the international level.

Globally Significant Biodiversity in Belize

- Belize is a “hotspot” - one of the 25 terrestrial regions of the planet identified by CI as the richest and most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life on Earth.
- The Belizean protected area system encompasses 820,000 hectares or 36% of the country’s total surface area.
- Belize hosts:
  - Jaguars
  - Ocelots
  - Margays
  - Jaguarundi
  - Baird’s tapir
Tourism Threats to Biodiversity in Belize

- 15% of Belize’s 200,000 tourists visit one of the 5 main parks and reserves
- No clear policy or plan towards development of natural and cultural resources as tourism attractions
- Rapidly growing number of cruise arrivals
- Quality is low, there is an absence of market orientation and business management skills are weak

Globally Significant Biodiversity in Ecuador

- One of the top 8 countries in terms of biodiversity.
- Contains more than half of all the species of birds in South American and one-sixth of all bird species on the planet.
- 7th among all countries for vascular plant biodiversity
- Part of the Tropical Andes hotspot, which is ranked #1 by CI and represents 24% of the world’s biodiversity.
Tourism Threats to Biodiversity in Ecuador

- Tourism industry is centered in nature-based tourism, both in the Galapagos Islands and elsewhere
- Resources are insufficient to carry out all the necessary education and awareness-building activities

Ecotourism Association of Ecuador (ASEC)

- ASEC is a non-profit organization
- Mission: "to foment harmony between Society, Tourism and Conservation"
- Created in 1991, ASEC currently has 77 members that represent ecotourism stakeholders in Ecuador
Programme for Belize (PfB)

- PfB is a non-profit organization established in 1988
- Mission: to promote the conservation of the natural heritage of Belize and to promote wise use of its natural resources.

Sites

- San Ignacio, Belize
- Galapagos Islands, Ecuador
- Mindo Chocó, Ecuador
Our Commitments

- Increase the potential that tourism companies have to contribute to conservation and communities while improving their performance.
  - Workshops and seminars.
  - Direct assistance and monitoring of implementation of best management practices.
  - Co-financing small businesses to support implementation of best practices and certification standards.
- Increase competitiveness of responsible businesses by creating market linkages.
- Create local capacity by training trainers and partnering with local organizations.

Project Strategy:
Work the Supply Chain

Demand side

Consumers -> Inbound tour operators -> Inbound tour operators

Supply-side

Suppliers

Certification Programs
Supply-side Tools
Training, technical assistance and co-financing fund

- Environmental operational best practices specific to tour operators and accommodation providers
  - Good Practices Guide for Accommodations Services in Marine-Coastal Ecosystems
  - Best Practices Guide for Marine Tour Operators
  - Best Practices Guide for Tropical Forest Tour Operators

- Training of trainers
- Training entrepreneurs
- Sustainability diagnostic tool

Supply Side Results

- **People trained in BP: 1,311**
  - Ecuador:
    - Seminars: **418**
    - Workshops: **587**
  - Belize:
    - Seminars: **206**
    - Workshops: **100**

- **Co-financing fund: 22 hotels**

- **Technical Assistance: 26 hotels**
Monitoring and Evaluation System

1) Site baseline: potential ecosystem impacts caused by tourist activities

2) Definition of requirements

3) Monitoring

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<td>Solid and liquid waste management</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental information, including environmental interpretation and education</td>
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Results

65 tourism businesses are implementing best practices
- 21 in Mindo-Chocó – Ecuador
- 18 in Galapagos – Ecuador
- 26 in Cayo District – Belize

- Overall, more than 2,217,000 acres are benefiting including 1,714,000 acres in coastal marine environments.
Mindo

- Average level of compliance with sustainability practices increased from **63% to 75%**.
- **21** local tour operators and hotels are implementing best practices
- **6** operations are implementing best practices within the 93,800 acres of Mindo-Nambillo Protected Forest, directly impacting more than 6,100 acres of cloud forest.
- Changes in:
  - energy and water consumption (24.5%)
  - waste management (13.8%)
  - environmental interpretation (12.0%)
  - reduced contamination (11.7%).
- **10** businesses have since obtained certification by a third-party program, Smart Voyager

Galapagos

- Average level of compliance with sustainability practices increased from **51% to 72%**.
- Changes in:
  - environmental interpretation (30%),
  - purchasing policies (25%),
  - reduced contamination (20%),
  - energy and water consumption (20%),
  - concrete activities to support conservation efforts (14%).
- **18** hotels and **4** local tour operators are implementing best practices
- **5** vessels and **1** hotel in Galapagos have obtained certification by a third-party certification program, Smart Voyager
Cayo District

- **14** hotels in Belize are participating which directly impacts **265 acres** of private land, and have also played a role in the conservation of **402,835 acres** of protected areas.

- **12** local tour operators in Belize are implementing BP

- Average level of compliance went from **65%** to **76%**
  - water and energy consumption (13%)
  - environmental interpretation (13%)
  - environmental protection (12%)
  - reduced contamination (9%).

- **Two** Belizean operations have began the process to obtain a third-party certification seal.

Demand-side Tools

**B2B Tool**

*Integrating Good Practices Into A Tour Operators Supply Chain:*

- The business rationale for managing supply chains against social and environmental criteria
- Recommendations for practical mechanisms to encourage implementation of the best practices by their suppliers
- Relevant web-based resources for good practices.
B2B Tool

The document has been reviewed by key private sector players:

- Mountain Travel Sobek
- Geographic Expeditions
- Wilderness Travel
- the International Galapagos Tour Operators Association (IGTOA)
- the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) (all 300 members).

Industry outreach

Creating partnerships with international industry actors to promote community based tourism projects across the globe.

- Partnership with ATTA; to disseminate and educate tour operators on good practice guidelines.
- Partnership with Responsible Travel to develop a community based project database.
Partnerships with Tour Operators & Suppliers

Outbound Tour Operators

Inbound Tour Operators

Supplier

Partnerships with Tour Operators

Ecuador

- Gray Line Tours
- Ecoventura
- Explorandes Ecuador
- Positiv Turismo
- Terra Diversa
- Sierra Negra Expeditions
- SIGORTRAVEL
- Surtrek -- Ecuador & Galapagos Tours
- Toppsa
- Tropic Journeys in Nature
- Travel Sources
- Via Natura

Belize

- Hamanasisi
- TIDE Tours
- Via Venture
Promoting Belize and Ecuador

- Catalog of Certified Businesses
- Eco-Index of Sustainable Tourism
- Informative publications
- Community-base tourism

Trade Shows and Events

- Travel Show Chicago (2005)
- Expotur (2004, 2005)
- ITB, Berlin, Germany (2006)

...and others
Local and National Alliances

- **Government:**
  - Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador
  - Belize Tourism Board.

- **Private sector:**
  - Galapagos Chamber of Tourism (CAPTURGAL)
  - Northwest Chamber of Pichincha (Ecuador)
  - Belize Hotel Association (BHA)
  - Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA)

- **Academia:**
  - Universidad de Especialidades Turísticas (UCT) in Ecuador
  - Galen University in Belize

Future Impacts

- **Supply level:**
  - technical tools developed will benefit other countries

- **Market level:**
  - sustainability in the commercialization chain will have a future impact on trade relations of both tour operators and service providers.

- **Policy:**
  - national sustainable tourism strategies will also benefit from tools

- **Local capacity:**
  - local organizations will continue our work
Scaling up

- **Madagascar** - CI is working with Madagascar’s National Tourism Office to implement a Responsible Tourism Awards program in the fall of 2008. Good Practice guides used as a component in this awards program.

- **Guyana** – Good practice guides presented and disseminated to tour operators in Guyana through a series of Best Practice Workshops.

- **Galapagos** - Partnership with Galapagos National Park, IGTOA to provide continued monitoring of good practice adoption.

- **Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape** - Conservation effort is focused on engagement with the tourism industry to promote sustainable business practices. Good practice guides to be disseminated throughout the islands.

- **Mexico** – MARTI project in alliance with TOI and others.

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Scaling Up

- Rainforest Alliance work in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Peru.

- Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas.

- UN Sustainable Tourism Task Force.

- World Heritage Alliance.

- Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

- Partnerships with outbound operator associations and Internet travel companies.
Lessons Learned

- Businesses need **practical information** and easy-to-apply solutions in best management practices training

- **Strategic alliances** with local, regional, or international organizations pursuing similar objectives is the key to success

- Leaving **installed capacity** behind increases the project’s scope

- **Maintain flexibility** in face of a changing environment

- Keep good channels of **communication** open

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Lessons Learned

- **Measure impacts** to show entrepreneurs the benefits of participating

- **Service quality** is crucial for wholesaler and tour operator decision making and must complement environmental, sociocultural, and economic practices

- **Marketing activities** are the primary motivation for businesses to participate

- Need to **improve market recognition** of local certification programs

- The sound reputation of the partners opened doors and helped uptake
**Recommendations**

- Formulate and implement **national and local policy planning guidelines** and evaluation frameworks for sustainable tourism development.

- Help governments and NGOs develop **shared sustainability standards** and improve **infrastructure** and public services.

- Ensure that investments in the tourism sector **contribute towards conserving biodiversity and community development**.

**Recommendations**

- Help businesses implement sustainable practices. Make **technical and financial assistance** accessible to businesses of all sizes.

- Support sustainable tourism **public-private partnerships**.

- Support voluntary, accountability mechanisms such as third-party, independent **certification** that include biodiversity protection criteria.

- Increase **consumers’ access to information** to help them make responsible decisions. Good marketing!
Questions & Answers

For feedback and more information please contact:

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