

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

24TH MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (SCST-24) AND 2ND PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE 3RD MEETING OF MINISTERS OF TOURISM OF THE GREATER CARIBBEAN (TMM-3) Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, July 16-17, 2013

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean Indicators in Ethnic and Indigenous Communities of the Greater Caribbean¹ linked to attainment of the Millennium Development Goals

1. Introduction

This brief entails the proposal for a Pilot Project focusing on Implementation of the Regional Sustainable Tourism Indicators of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC) in Ethnic and Indigenous Communities of the Greater Caribbean linked to attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

The brief will provide an overview of the STZC Indicators; the MDGs; inform on the relationship between Tourism and attainment of the MDGs; and outline the proposal for a pilot project utilising the STZC indicators. **The primary objective in this regard is to contribute to the social and economic development of Ethnic and Indigenous Communities, through cultivation and/or enhancement of the Tourism sector.**

2. The Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC) Indicators

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It is an increasingly important source of income and employment in many countries and its multi-sector nature makes it highly effective as a tool for sustainable development (including poverty reduction) in developing countries. For the countries of the Greater Caribbean, tourism has become one of the most important industries, as persistent turbulence in other economic sectors has served to enhance the relative importance of the industry. Today many countries are turning to Tourism, to capitalise on its contribution to economic development and also for its potential to advance development objectives related to community development, entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and cultural/heritage preservation.

Aware of the importance of this industry for the region and recognising the need to ensure that the natural, cultural, social and financial resources needed for its development were managed in a sustainable way, the regional Heads of State and/or Governments of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), signed the Convention establishing the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC) at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the ACS in December 2001.

¹ Indigenous and Ethnic Communities include the Garifuna, Kalinago, Maroons and other native, racial, cultural or tribal communities found in the countries of the Greater Caribbean.

The STZC Convention recognises the different conditions of the tourism destinations in the Greater Caribbean as one of the main challenges to establish the Zone. In order to facilitate this process, a set of Regional Sustainable Tourism Indicators was created as part of the Convention to harmonise the criteria for the inclusion of destinations in the STZC. The Indicators were developed with the following objectives:

- To contribute to the achievement of sustainability in the tourist destinations through categorization, which would include indicators that define the various stages of development and would also serve as instructive and motivational mechanisms for attaining this objective.
- To determine Tourism Indicators which would bring about changes leading to the attainment of Sustainability in this field, as a means of generating awareness on the rational use of tourist resources in the social, cultural, environmental and economic spheres.

The Indicators, which were developed in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-ROLAC), are a comprehensive list of criteria for evaluation and categorization of tourism destinations to become part of the STZC.

There are 13 Indicators encompassing economic, social, cultural as well as environmental criteria, consisting of three dimensions: baseline, generic and specific. The indicators cover issues such as natural resource management; solid waste management; water and energy consumption; employment of local populations including women; labour standards including policies against sexual exploitation and child labour; the question of access to the destination and accessibility at the destination; tourist security; Hazards mitigation; and climate change risk assessment and adaptation.

Through a Benchmarking Assessment Report called a Dynamic Action Plan, countries can assess their performance against these indicators to monitor and measure sustainability, and improve as necessary. The Action Plan includes guidelines for monitoring, data gathering, actions needed to obtain the data, and recommends activities to improve results.

The STZC remains an innovative, viable and practical approach to contributing to the sustainable development of tourism and by extension socio-economic development in the Greater Caribbean. They have been recognised by the UNWTO as an important tool for destination managers. To date, twelve destinations in ten countries have completed their evaluation process.¹

3. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

¹ The City of Roseau in Dominica, Bayahibe in the Dominican Republic, Ocho Rios Resort Area in Jamaica, Cozumel, Mexico, Portobelo, Panama, Verte Vallé and Saint François-Pointe de Châteaux in Guadeloupe; the Community of Saint Anne and the Caravelle Peninsula in Martinique; Awala Yalimapo in French Guyana; Buccoo Reef in Trinidad and Tobago; and the Richmond Site in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. The Declaration was translated into a roadmap setting out the eight time-bound and measurable goals to serve as numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions. The aim of the MDGs is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries.²

The MDGs build on agreements made at United Nations conferences in the 1990s and represent commitments by all countries to reduce poverty and hunger, and to tackle development issues such as ill-health, gender inequality, lack of education, lack of access to clean water and environmental degradation. There are **eight (8) goals** with twenty-one (21) quantifiable targets that are measured by 60 indicators as follows:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

4. Establishing the link between Sustainable Tourism and the MDGs

During the 1980s, the world became more aware that there was an element of uncertainty and risk in relation to the effects of human activities on global environments. The concept of sustainable development came from this realization, defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Simultaneously, increasingly conscience-focused travellers demanding more environmentally and socially responsible travel and vacation options, led to the emergence of the Sustainable Tourism market.

Building on the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Agenda 21 principles that evolved from the Rio Earth Summit, June 24, 1992, sustainable tourism has been defined as an approach to tourism development that aims to achieve an effective balance among the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism, in order to guarantee long-term benefits to recipient communities.

According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations. As such sustainable tourism

² UNDP (2011). What are the Millennium Development Goals? Retrieved at <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>

ascribes to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity; essential ecological processes; biological diversity; and life support systems. One of the main aims of this approach to tourism development is to ensure that tourism is a positive experience for local people, tourism businesses and tourists themselves (UNWTO, 2009).

The MDGs are broad over-arching goals that transcend the tourism sector. However, it is evident that there is a relationship between the practice of sustainable tourism and the quality of life of communities, by extension the attainment of the MDGs. In this regard, the practise of sustainable tourism both complements and reinforces country's efforts to meet the MDGs. Well-planned and implemented tourism projects can improve local governance and contribute to achieving other important national development goals. Tourism has proven to revitalize cultures and traditions and can provide an economic incentive to conserve natural and cultural assets. In addition, ecological and cultural assets are one of the few truly unique features of countries and regions, giving them a competitive advantage, while being a low-cost product development opportunity for a destination. Tourism also represents one of the few economic opportunities available to remote communities and provides real opportunities to reduce poverty, create employment for disadvantaged people, and stimulate rural development. Thus, there is a mutually reinforcing and co-dependant relationship between the practice of sustainable tourism and the quality of life of communities, that would contribute to attainment of the MDGs.

Today, destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean have largely adopted the principles and practises of sustainable tourism, as a guiding strategy to shape their tourism development efforts. This was spurred by the changing consumer patterns and demands which necessitated rapids responses from Governments and private sector enterprises in efforts to maintain their market share and better position themselves to attract the new and emerging niche market segments. However, despite its lofty and laudable objectives, sustainable tourism remains widely misunderstood by critics and cynics alike. Does sustainable tourism fulfil its aims? Can tourism be sustainable or is the concept a paradox in itself?

Such concerns heightened the awareness of the need for accurate and credible tools for information and measurement. Over the last 10 years various instruments have been developed to try to operationalise the idea, including indicator sets such as the STZC and other regional and international tools for measurement. Such instruments will become more and more important as conventional tourism is forced to meet tougher environmental requirements and increasingly conscientious traveller demands, will challenge Governments and private enterprises to act more responsibly and prove 'sustainability'.

The STZC and other like instruments have the potential to serve as effective mechanisms to assist destinations in meeting sustainability guidelines, providing a credible resource to prove validity and measure progress. **The challenge however is to advance these initiatives beyond indicator measurements, to facilitating the development of plans, partnerships and projects at the destination level to improve local livelihoods, increase opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship, and enhance the appeal and capacity of the destination for tourism and investment.**

5. Project Proposal

Considering that the STZC indicators can serve as a foundational framework, since they have the most direct relevance to the tourism industry and the Greater Caribbean Region. It is proposed that to focus on MDG **Goals;1** -Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; **3** -Promote gender equality and empower women; **7** -Ensure environmental sustainability; and **8** - Develop a global partnership for development, which have already been benchmarked by the UNWTO and have the most compatibility to the STZC and the practise of sustainability in tourism. In this regard the proposed intervention is outlined below.

Phase 1 – Research Publication

Publication on the history to present day evolution of Ethnic and Indigenous communities in the Greater Caribbean with a focus on Garifuna Communities, inclusive of a mapping of the respective communities, indicative of tourism assets, stage in development (based on Tourism Life Cycle Assessment) and growth/development potential.

This research activity will answer the questions:

- (i) Who are they and where are they;
- (ii) How do they subsist (present day circumstances); and
- (ii) What are the challenges and opportunities for development of these communities relative to Tourism development and/or growth potential?

Phase 2 – Community Assessments

Pilot Assessment of select Ethnic and Indigenous communities with Tourism potential based on STZC Indicators.

This exercise will be conducted utilizing the tools developed as part of the STZC Sustainable Tourism Indicators Project to include:

- Guidelines for the Selection of Applicant Destinations – which defines the basic qualifying criteria for destinations and its tourism uses.
- Destination Profile Form Template – requires information such as climate, geography, tourism facilities and products available and statistics.
- Destination Evaluation Form/Indicative Guide to Destination Evaluation Form – which provides quantitative and qualitative benchmarks to guide evaluation and assessment of a destination based on STZC criteria.
- Dynamic Action Plan - An individual gap analysis and Plan of Action for each destination, which outlines intervention strategies to address areas of weaknesses.
- List of Suggested Sectors Stakeholders for attending Destination Workshops.

Phase 3 – Destination level Projects, Plans and Partnerships

- Hosting of capacity building exercises on Destination Evaluation and Management incorporating Training of Trainers on the STZC evaluation process, implementation of the Action Plan and functions and use of the STZC Tools, Website and Resources.

- Hosting of local Public/Private partnership workshops to facilitate Tourism Planning and Cluster development at the destination.
- Support the improvement and/or establishment of local governance mechanisms such as a Destination Management Association/Network.

•

Phase 4 – Local to Global Community Outreach

- Hosting of a Greater Caribbean Symposium which will facilitate the presentation of the study and project outcomes.
- Explore the development of Regional Tourism Heritage/Cultural routes linking the Ethnic/Indigenous communities.
- Facilitate exchanges between diverse Ethnic/Indigenous communities for academic, cultural and tourism purposes.
- Support Marketing and Outreach to relevant Tourism and Global Distribution Networks and channels.

6. Conclusion

Given that the tourism sector is one of the most, if not the most important industry in the countries of the Greater Caribbean, considering its significant contribution to GDP, employment and local community development, it can be argued that tourism at the core of the development experience, is therefore a mechanism that could generate programmes and methods to sustain the attainment of the MDGs.

Successful tourism destinations are communities where the principles of sustainable tourism have been integrated as a key component in national plans, as opposed to within a sub-sector of the vast tourism arena. Proper tourism planning and management strategies, such as those offered by the STZC contribute to ensuring that sustainable tourism can achieve its promise and function effectively as a tool for conservation, livelihood creation and the attainment of countries' development goals and objectives.