

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Acknowledgements

The majority of the following material comes from:

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OVERVIEW

Taking advantage of the world-wide market for tourism can bring benefits to MPAs; it can also bring costs to the community, the economy and the environment if not managed properly.

Tourism is one of the largest global industries, with much of the growing market focused around pristine natural environments such as coastal and marine protected areas. MPAs are increasingly attracting interest from foreign visitors, as well as local residents. The regions around MPAs are also attracting the interest of investors and the travel industry, seeking new destinations and markets. Local communities can benefit through revenue generation and employment opportunities. However, if not properly managed, tourism development can also put pressure on natural resources, destroy habitat, disturb wildlife and pollute waters. Poorly managed tourism can result in social and cultural impacts, undermining local communities.

Many MPAs are promoting tourism and recreation as part of their management planning, thus need a clear policy on how to implement a sustainable tourism program. Part of sustainable tourism planning is identifying and adhering to being responsive to the carrying capacity limitations of the MPA, both in terms of impacts on natural resources and the local community. When carrying capacity is exceeded, it can also impact the experience for the visitor due to over-crowding (too many visitors) and degraded ecosystems.

IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM TO EFFECTIVE MPA MANAGEMENT

Well managed sustainable tourism can contribute directly to marine conservation needs and provide tangible economic opportunities to the local community. Sustainable tourism empowers the community to manage their own resources and cultural heritage in a sustainable manner. Sustainable tourism can also be used as a financing mechanism through the generation of revenues from entrance fees, user fees, taxes or concession fees, to fund marine protected area management.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To identify sustainable tourism mechanisms that provide conservation, social and economic benefits to MPAs and their local communities.
- ✓ To understand the planning and implementation process for a successful sustainable tourism program.

LINKS TO OTHER EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Community-based Participatory Processes

Sustainable tourism planning is a participatory process that includes government, development agencies, tourism industry, private sector, and local communities in incorporating marine conservation principles into the design, planning, development, and management of tourism products and services.

Zonal Management

Sustainable tourism planning includes prohibiting high impact visitor activities in buffer zones or conservation corridors, while encouraging low impact activities.

Alternative Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction

With developing countries carrying the majority of the growth in sustainable tourism, tourism can provide less destructive alternative livelihood opportunities to local communities. Sustainable tourism focuses on retaining tourism revenues within the local community and reducing revenue “leakage” to outside the community, or even country.

Marine Conservation

Sustainable tourism can make a direct contribution to marine conservation by managing and directing visitor use in sensitive areas; encouraging low impact activities; and educating visitors about the significant cultural and natural resources of the area.

Sustainable Financing

Sustainable tourism provides MPA managers with additional sources of revenue from visitor entrance fees, use fees, tourism taxes and donations which help to fund more effective MPA management and capacity building.

Awareness Building

Effective sustainable tourism planning includes raising visitor awareness through the training of guides, visitor centers, signage and brochures; promoting community involvement and interest in conservation issues; educating government officials and decision makers on building a governance framework and infrastructure that supports sustainable tourism; and educating tourism providers (airlines, hotels, boats, concessions, etc.) about best management practices.

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Program evaluation should be part of every MPA's management plan. A systematic approach needs to be taken to evaluate the effectiveness of the sustainable tourism program. Since sustainable tourism is not just about economics, but also about conservation and the community, there are three primary goals that should be achieved if the program is successful (The Nature Conservancy 2005):

- 1) Threats to conservation targets are reduced
- 2) Income is generated for conservation
- 3) Local communities are benefited

In measuring whether these goals have been met, it must be understood whether the benefits are actually generated as a result of the sustainable tourism program by itself; the sustainable tourism program collectively with other management programs; or as a result of some other activity. In order to measure the success of a sustainable tourism program, evaluations should take place on a periodic basis and reflect the established priorities of the MPA. Indicators should allow MPA staff to measure progress towards completion (maintenance) of an established goal. Goals and performance measures may also be based on Levels of Acceptable Change (LAC). Either approach involves monitoring change on the economic, socio-cultural and ecological environment.

Just as the planning of a sustainable tourism program is a community-based participatory process, so is the measuring of success of the sustainable tourism program. The identification of goals, selection of performance measures or indicators, and measuring of success should all be based on a participatory process.

LESSON PLAN

10.1 OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE

Discussion — What Do You Know About Sustainable Tourism?

Let's discuss how you think sustainable tourism is different from tourism, please give concrete examples.

- *How do you address tourism in your management planning?*

Sustainable Tourism, What Does it Mean?

The World Tourism Organization declared in 1988 that Sustainable Tourism is:

“Envisaged as leading to 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.”

Tourism has become an important economic activity in and around MPAs and other protected areas around the world. Well planned sustainable tourism programs provide opportunities for the visitor to experience natural areas and human communities, and learn about the importance of marine conservation and local culture. Additionally, sustainable tourism activities can generate income for both local communities and MPAs.

The International Ecotourism Society (2004) has described sustainability in regards to tourism as meaning:

Environmentally the activity minimizes any damage to the environment (flora, fauna, water, soils, energy use, contamination, etc.) and ideally tries to benefit the environment in a positive way.

Socially and culturally the activity does not harm the social structure or culture of the community where it is located.

Economically the activity does not simply begin and then rapidly die because of bad business practices; it continues to contribute to the economic well-being of the local community. A sustainable business should benefit its owners, its employees, and its neighbors.

When these three aspects are taken into account, it is called the “triple bottom line”. This is referred to as “doing well by doing good”. It means running a tourism business in such a way that it doesn’t destroy the natural resources –natural, cultural or economic - but rather brings an appreciation to the very qualities that tourism is dependant on. A business that is run on this principle can enhance conservation of natural resources, bring appreciation to cultural values, bring revenue into the community AND be profitable.

CONVENTIONAL TOURISM

1. Tourism oriented
2. Focus on entertainment/refreshment for tourists
3. Conservation not a priority
4. Communities not a priority
5. Quality of tourism services and products are standardized

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. Indigenous oriented
2. Focus on educational experiences
3. Conservation of natural resources a priority
4. Fosters appreciation for cultural diversity
5. Best management practices for products and services

Exercise 10.1 — What Attributes of Sustainable Tourism are Important to a MPA?

Based on your responses to the questionnaire each of you should:

1. *Discuss sustainable tourism concepts among small group members and come to consensus on most important attributes of sustainable tourism for a MPA.*
2. *Present findings to large group*

What are the Benefits and Threats of Tourism?

In many cases, conventional tourism practices of the past have posed a major threat to marine conservation due to lack of management controls and effective planning mechanisms. On the other hand, sustainable tourism seeks to both minimize the negative impacts of tourism, while contributing to conservation and the well being of the community, both economically and socially. Tourism often provides scarce sources of funding for both conservation programs and local communities, while providing incentives for protecting areas from practices and development that are harmful to the natural beauty of an area. Opportunities and threats can only be controlled through well-planned and managed sustainable tourism.

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BENEFITS TO MPAs FROM TOURISM

Revenue Generation

Bringing money into protected areas is a major concern for MPA managers. Governmental funding of MPAs is not keeping up with the conservation needs and demands, and many important natural areas will not survive without new and additional sources of revenue. Tourism offers opportunities to generate income in diverse ways, such as entrance fees, user fees, concession to the private sector and donations. These revenues allow MPA managers to enhance management capacity and efforts to better protect sensitive areas.

Entrance use or visitor use fees are charged directly to visitors while visiting a MPA. Visitor fees are collected at an entry point to a MPA for specific activities or the use of equipment: on a boat, as an add-on to the price of an excursion, or as a use fee for scuba divers or snorkelers. Typically, foreign visitors are charged more than local visitors.

Private sector concessions including gift shops, boat rentals, food stands and tours. All of those are privately owned and/or managed, with a portion of the profits going to the MPA. Many MPAs do not have authority over activities (or concessions) on the land, so agreements for securing portions of proceeds can often be tricky. For boats and user groups such as scuba divers, who are actually conducting their activities in the MPA, a use fee agreement is much easier to secure.

Donations may be solicited to support a special campaign, such as to raise funds for a visitor's center, "adopt-a-species" type program, or solicited on an on-going basis to support general management activities. A great time to solicit donations is after the visitor has experienced the unique natural qualities of a MPA and feels moved to contribute to marine conservation efforts.

Employment Opportunities

Tourism can bring new jobs to an area, considered one of the greatest benefits to local communities. To meet the demands of tourism in and around a MPA, residents may find employment driving taxis, as lodge owners, concession stand owners or tour guides. An increase in visitation to a MPA also increases the need for rangers, enforcement personnel, researchers and educators. Local residents are in a good position for tourism and MPA-related jobs as they are familiar with the natural and cultural resources of the area. Skills that many residents don't have that are specific to the tourism industry include language, handling of groups and interpretation skills.

Tourism also increases the demand for indirectly related employment including service sector jobs, construction jobs and purveyors of goods such as food supplies.

Justification for MPAs

The potential of sustainable tourism may sway government officials to provide protected status to an area or to strengthen the protective status of an existing protected area or reserve, particularly if it can generate income and provide other national benefits. And, as government officials begin to think more about the importance of managing natural areas, visitors are more likely to visit and support a natural area if it is protected, which in turn adds justification to the existence of protected areas.

Awareness Building Opportunities

Sustainable tourism provides an ideal audience for environmental education. Seeing coral reefs and marine mammals, visitors want to learn about animal behavior and coral reef ecology, as well as the challenges of conserving these resources. Many also want to know the economic, political and social issues that surround conservation.

Nature guides are one critical source of environmental education. Visitor surveys show that good guides are a key factor in a trip's success. For example, in 1996, the RARE Center for Tropical Conservation asked 60 conservation groups in Latin America to identify their most urgent obstacle to developing ecotourism (an important component of sustainable tourism); the lack of well-trained nature guides ranked second in their concerns (The Nature Conservancy 2005).

Visitor centers with displays, printed materials and videos are also an excellent means of environmental education. Additionally, interpretation in the form of on-shore signage can give important biological information and conservation messages. Interpretation for visitors is becoming increasingly creative and interactive.

Environmental education is an equally important opportunity to reach national visitors. Whether they are local school children learning about the resources that are valuable in their daily lives, or travelers from neighboring areas learning about the significance of their national protected areas, citizens are a key audience. Conservation messages have a special urgency for them.

Environmental education is most effective when pre and post-trip information is made available. Preparation encourages visitors to think about appropriate behavior, thereby minimizing negative impacts, and the use of follow-up materials continues the environmental education process.

Local community awareness is increased with sustainable tourism. It is common for people to not fully appreciate their surroundings and to take what they have for granted. Often, it is outsiders who take a fresh look and add value to our resources. Although rural residents who have grown up among spectacular coastal areas generally understand the intricacies and value its role in their lives, many have little idea of the global importance of their natural and cultural resources. On the other hand, adventurous nature tourists are often wildly enthusiastic about exploring new areas and communities. They pour into small communities and natural areas that were once little

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known, especially in tropical countries that are being promoted by the tourism industry.

Conservation efforts often increase as a result of growing appreciation and pride. Many residents are motivated to protect their areas and may change their pattern of resource use. Litter on beaches may be cleaned up. Water quality may be better managed. Local populations often learn more about conservation and modify their daily habits because of tourism.

Awareness often increases at the national level also, resulting in such improved conservation efforts as mandating and supporting marine protected areas. Even at the international level, sustainable tourism may engender an international constituency for improved conservation efforts and support for particular protected areas.

THREATS TO MPAs FROM TOURISM

Environmental Impacts From Visitor Use

Tourists pose other kinds of threats to marine protected areas. Impacts from improper or heavy use of an area by visitors can include trampling on sensitive intertidal habitats, mangroves or seagrass beds; disturbance to wildlife such as seabirds or marine mammals; damage to coral reefs from scuba or snorkel fins; and impacts to water quality from the increase in wastewater discharge or depositing of marine debris in coastal and marine areas. In addition to surface damage, they affect the intricate workings of nature, causing subtle changes and problems including the alteration of such animal behaviors as eating habits, migration and reproduction. Many changes are difficult to detect, but all are important indicators of the health of natural resources.

Marine protected area managers are starting to track these changes as equipment and methods become more sophisticated. Managers need strong baseline data about protected areas' flora and fauna. They also need good monitoring programs to document and analyze changes, allowing them to determine best practices of minimizing environmental degradation. Sustainable tourism planning should involve an analysis of the expected volume of visitor traffic and its potential impact on the protected area.

Economic Instability

If leakage is high, meaning if revenue benefits are not retained by the local community but rather land in the pockets of outside investors, there may be very little local support for the MPA or marine conservation. Even if some residents are able to generate revenue from tourism, if income benefits to the community are small, or not sufficiently linked to conservation efforts, funds may be re-invested in high impact and better return activities such as illegal fishing or mariculture. For those who do find stable jobs in tourism, few provide management or ownership opportunities.

New fields of employment in a small community also have the potential to create social and cultural changes and conflicts.

Additionally, nature tourism, like other forms of tourism, can be an unstable source of income. Many external factors influence tourism demand. These factors are completely outside the control of tourist destinations yet affect levels of visitation. For example, political conflict or rumors of unsafe conditions within a region or country can discourage international visitors for years. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, can easily destroy tourism infrastructure at marine sites. In addition, fluctuations in international currency can lead visitors to some countries and away from others.

These factors all play major roles in the decision to travel. No matter how much marine protected area managers and communities prepare, build and promote, much of tourism demand is determined by outside circumstances. A decline in tourism can mean disaster not only for individuals but for whole communities if their economies are dependent on the volatile nature of tourism industry.

Crowding (Exceeding Carrying Capacity)

A sense of crowding can be a problem within both the communities and the nature sites. Many local communities find themselves giving up traditionally used coastal areas to tourism infrastructure development including roads, hotels, restaurants, docks and piers. Tourists may start to compete with residents for remaining open spaces. These are the places the locals knew while growing up before they became international attractions. If access to these treasured spots becomes difficult, tensions often grow. Crowds can also be a nuisance for visitors, many of whom are seeking a quiet nature trip. International tourists may be disappointed to have traveled long distances only to be overwhelmed by other tourists.

Excessive Development

When a location becomes a popular tourist destination, local entrepreneurs will create lodging, restaurant and other services to cater to visitors' needs. In some cases where tourism demand is strong, people from other parts of the country will move to a community to take advantage of the increased economic opportunity. With the increased need for tourism services comes an increased infrastructure demand: hotels, restaurants and homes for recently arrived employees or entrepreneurs. These demands place pressure on basic services such as water supplies, wastewater treatment, electricity, etc. In addition to the burden put on municipal services, increased development typically occurs with minimal planning and can become an aesthetic problem as well as an ecological problem for both the community and the protected area.

Sustainable Tourism has the potential to reduce the threats posed by conventional tourism to natural areas and to the people who live in and around them via income generation for: conservation, local enterprise and employment, cultural exchange, environmental education,

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protected area justification and visitor appreciation. Successful sustainable tourism requires rigorous planning and management, however, to realize the potential.

Is There a Demand for Sustainable Tourism?

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism and its related economic activities generate 11 percent of Global Domestic Product, employ 200 million people, and transport nearly 700 million international travelers per year. This figure is expected to double by 2020. (Conservation International 2003)

Tourism represents one of the top five exports for 83 percent of all countries and is the main source of foreign currency for 38 percent of countries.

(Conservation International 2003)

The fastest growing regions for tourism are East Asia and the Pacific. Vietnam, which has increased from 250,000 to 1.89 million tourist arrivals in the last decade (a 756% growth rate), the implications are very significant in terms of negative impacts on biodiversity. The number of international arrivals in China topped 10 million in 1990, and nearly tripled to 31 million in 2000. (Conservation International) The patterns of growth are of particular concern since a significant percentage of new tourism facilities in developing countries with high biodiversity will likely be built in coastal and natural areas that harbor threatened ecosystems (Conservation International 2003). It is believed that nature tourism may comprise 40-60% of the tourism market, increasing at 10-30% annually.

Discussion—Tourism in MPAs

Answer the following question in groups:

- *What are the ways tourism has benefited or had impacts on your MPA?*

10.2 MANAGING VISITOR IMPACTS

Visitors and Carrying Capacity

MPA personnel may devote a large part of their time to managing visitors and recreational activities. A MPA manager may want to quantify or predict at what point environmental damage may occur from this and so needs to understand the concept of carrying capacity. Some of the key carrying capacity issues to consider when managing tourism within a MPA are described below:

Promoting recreation and tourism so that visitors can learn about and appreciate a MPA, without damaging the values for which it was established, can be challenging. Visitors potentially have many negative impacts including disturbing wildlife, trampling mangroves or seagrass beds, leaving rubbish, removing “souvenirs” and damaging reefs. Tourists may also unknowingly offend cultural standards; for example through improper dress or by taking photographs of people or traditional sites.

Visitors to a MPA may have different expectations of facilities and recreational and learning opportunities depending on their backgrounds and experiences. They also differ in their spending patterns and preferred activities. The main activities of interest are wildlife viewing, SCUBA diving and snorkeling, other water-based activities (e.g. swimming, sailing, and windsurfing), recreational and sport fishing and hiking. It is rarely feasible to meet all requirements, and some expectations may be inconsistent with the objectives of the MPA. But it is important to understand the main characteristics of different types of visitors, so that at least some of their interests can be matched with what the MPA can provide. Many tourists visiting a MPA want to increase their understanding of marine life and what the MPA is doing to reduce threats. Education and interpretation programs, materials and facilities are therefore very important and can greatly increase visitors’ enjoyment and appreciation.

Estimating Carrying Capacity

A MPA manager should understand how much use the MPA can withstand. The optimum number of visitors for any particular activity within an area (i.e. how much is possible before damage occurs and the visitors’ enjoyment is substantially decreased) is known as ‘carrying capacity.’ Quantifying carrying capacity is very difficult, and it will vary for each MPA depending on ecological conditions, the resilience of ecosystems to recover from disturbance (which may vary over time) and the behavior of the visitors. Often the information needed to estimate this not available.

***How much tourism activity is possible before damage occurs
and the visitors enjoyment is substantially decreased
is known as carrying capacity.***

Most published studies are concerned with the carrying capacity of coral reefs for divers. Research in the Red Sea and Bonaire (in the Caribbean) indicate a maximum carrying capacity of 4,000-6,000 divers per dive site per year but there is great variation between reefs. Large numbers of divers and snorkelers may in fact cause less damage than fisher people using unsound fishing methods. Few studies have measured the number of fish that a reef can support, although figures on sustainable yields (i.e. kg of fish per hectare per year) provide one estimate.

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Thus, carrying capacity may have limited practical application. In the case of diving, it assumes that the amount of diving is a reliable indicator of damage to the reef, whereas the behavior of divers, the activities they carry out, and the physical and ecological characteristics of a reef all affect this. Spending resources on trying to quantify carrying capacity may therefore not be useful, as figures generated would not be applicable indefinitely and would vary in different parts of a MPA. However, it is important to be aware of the concept and to recognize that too much use will ultimately damage the habitats or species within a MPA, the cultural and heritage values, social customs and the visitor experience itself.

The behavior of divers, the activities they carry out, and the physical and ecological characteristics of a reef all affect carrying capacity.

The concept of *Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)* may be a more practical approach in that standards are set for the minimum acceptable conditions (note that these are not the desired conditions, but they are also not unacceptable). This involves defining the limit of ecological or sociological change (which may involve some degradation) that will be allowed at a site. The management actions needed to prevent change beyond the limit can then be identified. Monitoring is essential to indicate the point at which management should intervene i.e. when the minimum acceptable condition is reached. The LAC approach has been applied in Saba Marine Park, Netherlands Antilles. South African National Parks have developed another method, based on what is termed “Thresholds for Potential Concern” for determining when management intervention is needed in a certain situation.

Handout 10.1: Addressing Carrying Capacity

CASE STUDY: Seychelles Management Approach to Carrying Capacity

Exercise 10.2 — When is too Many too Much?

Addressing Carrying Capacity

If it seems that a MPA is suffering from too many visitors, actions that can be taken include:

- Seasonal or temporal limits on use, e.g. limiting visiting times, or restricting car parking, accommodation facilities or public transport.
- Regulating group size, particularly for specialist activities, or require pre-registration (visits only by prior arrangement), and providing guided tours that allow for more control, ensure

visits occurs at appropriate times of day (which may vary diurnally and seasonally), and maximize enjoyment.

- Ensuring that visitors stay on specified routes and do not trample vegetation or disturb animals and that noise and the use of light at night (e.g. during visits to turtle nesting beaches) is minimized.
- Using zonation (e.g. closing area to visitors, or reducing visits to ecologically important areas).
- Increasing entrance fees at peak periods.
- Constructing facilities and trails that reduce impact but allow more visitors and help them to see the wildlife (e.g. boardwalks (see sheet J8), hides and pontoons).
- Providing rubbish bins and information boards, to encourage visitors to not leave litter.

Visitor guidelines and codes of conduct can be made available at the MPA or distributed through tourism facilities. The standard advice of “take only photographs, leave only footprints/bubbles” is always valid. Experienced guides can make a big difference to a visitor’s experience and willingness to return. A good guide should be able to help tourists understand the best way to view wildlife, be well-informed of global and local environmental issues and preferably have some knowledge of the languages of the most common visitors. Guides should provide a briefing on safety and appropriate behavior before a visit starts, and ensure that the MPA regulations are observed. Field guides, maps, charts, checklists, first aid, and drinking water should be made available as appropriate. A guide should be able to say “I don’t know” if that is the case when asked a question, should never offer an experience that is not feasible and should explain that some species may be difficult to see. It may be necessary to adjust interpretation programs to match the abilities of tourists.

Best Management Practices

Many visitors come to MPAs to directly experience a mangrove forest, coral reef or sandy beach. Reef walking, scuba diving, boat trips all have potential impacts on the natural resources. If managed properly, impacts to the natural resources can be significantly reduced. The following tips will help you get started on developing best management practices for visitor use in different habitat types:

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR VISITING MANGROVES

- Construct a boardwalk for easy and safe access to mangroves
- Fill existing paths with gravel or stone to encourage their use instead of alternate routes.
- Encourage snorkeling during slack high tides, visibility will also be best then.
- Use non-motorized vessels like kayaks or canoes when possible to minimize noise and pollution.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR VISITING REEFS

- Reef visits should be planned in advance, taking account of the tide, and publicized, particularly reef walks which can only be done at low tide.
- Pre-departure briefings by tourism operators or MPA personnel should be essential, using or adapting existing codes-of-conduct.
- Regular meetings can be held with boat and dive operators to inform them of MPA activities and opportunities for participation and to discuss visitor issues; if appropriate support can be given to local communities to set up reef tourism operations.
- Responsible boat management should be required.

Source: Managing Marine Protected Areas: A TOOLKIT for the Western Indian Ocean

*Handout 10.2: TAKING ACTION—
Visiting Coral Reefs and Mangroves*

Awareness Building

Sustainable tourism provides attracts an ideal audience for environmental education. Visiting mangroves and coral reefs, seeing marine mammals and other marine life, visitors want to understand what they are experiencing, as well as the challenges of conserving these resources. Providing education about best management practices and issues such as carrying capacity, broadens the awareness of the visitor, tourism provider, resource managers and government officials making decisions about resource usage. Some pointers on how to get started in building an awareness plan or campaign include:

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND AWARENESS BUILDING

- Before initiating any awareness-raising activity, identify the message and the target audience clearly and the most appropriate method and language for communicating the message (e.g. what is the level of education of the audience and is it literate?).
- Check all publicity materials, press releases and other products for accuracy, and to ensure that they are in line with agreed policy. Disseminating incorrect information about a MPA can do more harm than disseminating no information, and misreporting of controversial issues can be very damaging – the media unfortunately often prefer to report on a controversy or negative event rather than on something positive.
- Keep the messages to be delivered concise (KISS – Keep It Simple and Straightforward). Messages should be interesting, avoiding unnecessary background details. Pictures, diagrams and images should be used whenever possible since ‘a picture paints a thousand words.’
- Develop a ‘house style’ or design theme that is used for all publicity materials, incorporating the logo where appropriate; this helps to make materials about the MPA immediately recognizable.
- Following dissemination of publicity material, evaluate and quantify their usefulness so that improvements can be made in the future;
- Develop a logo – either for the MPA itself, or for the management agency.
- Hold focus groups with target audiences to test materials before they are printed in large quantities

Source: Managing Marine Protected Areas: A TOOLKIT for the Western Indian Ocean

Handout 10.3: Strategies for Dealing with Hypothetical Stress

Exercise 10.3 — Developing Management Responses to Tourism

Work in groups of 2 to develop specific management responses to impacts from tourists as shown in handout 10.3.

10.3 THE PLANNING PROCESS

What is a Sustainable Tourism Plan?

A sustainable tourism plan must meet the conservation objectives of the MPA.

A sustainable tourism management plan is a tool to guide the development of tourism in a protected area, built through a community-based process around the conservation objectives for the site. A sustainable tourism plan considers the benefits and impacts of tourism on the environment, the community and the local economy.

The general management plan usually makes a determination that sustainable tourism is the kind of tourism that is desired for a particular marine protected area and that sustainable tourism development, or perhaps public use, will be a specific program to be carried out by the MPA. The general management plan will also define the zoning configuration for the area, which in turn will designate those sectors that will be available for tourism purposes.

Discussion — MPAs and Sustainable Tourism

- *How many of the MPAs have a sustainable tourism plan, who was involved in that plan, and how long did it take to implement?*

What are the Prerequisites for a Successful Sustainable Tourism Program?

A careful assessment of the MPA's resources, human capacity and tourism potential is essential prerequisites for sustainable tourism

It may seem to make a lot of sense to prepare a management plan for your MPA, especially if it is an area whose management objectives emphasize recreation or tourism as well as resource protection. Before embarking on a full-scale plan, however, careful assessments of the MPA's resources, human capacity and tourism potential are essential prerequisites to sustainable tourism. Certain fundamental issues must be considered:

1. The MPA should have a **general management plan** that sets out the broad guidelines on which to base a sustainable tourism plan: overall MPA management objectives and zoning structure and recommendations for public use/tourism management programs. The general management plan should mention the need to use sustainable tourism as a guiding concept or at least make the argument for low-impact, revenue-generating tourism activities.

2. There must be **acceptance of and commitment to the principles of sustainable tourism** by the protected area's staff. This means accepting that mass tourism is not an option and that the protected area administration must diligently manage tourism impacts. It means fully accepting the involvement of communities, tourism industry representatives and others in the planning and implementation of sustainable tourism activities and committing to working closely with them to make decisions about tourism and public use within the protected area. In many cases, the decision to move ahead with sustainable tourism means that the MPA administration must undergo a change in its relationship with and expectations of the general public in all aspects of the protected area's management, not just tourism. Meaningful involvement and participation of the protected area stakeholders in the area's management is essential and often challenging.
3. There must be a reasonable expectation that the **required funding and the technical and logistical support** will be available when needed. Carrying out a sustainable tourism plan can be costly. Involving stakeholders early in the process enables one to see what they can bring to the table to help with the planning process.
4. The **appropriateness of applying sustainable tourism to the MPA** must be seriously considered. Will existing legislation allow or facilitate sustainable tourism? Have threats been identified that sustainable tourism can respond to? Will current/traditional tourism patterns within the MPA and/or the region make it difficult to implement the sustainable tourism concept? Do the circumstances of the MPA make it appropriate for visitor use?

How to Finance a Sustainable Tourism Program

NGO's like The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International and World Wildlife Fund provide technical assistance and funding for selected MPAs with priority going to sustainable tourism development.

Any planning process costs money, and a sustainable tourism management plan is no exception. The total expense for a sustainable management plan can be significant, usually beyond the capacity of a protected area's budget to absorb. There are basically four different sources of funding for a sustainable tourism management plan:

International Assistance

International assistance can be found in a number of different ways, and each country and protected area will have a different situation. Through its local partners, NGOs like The Nature Conservancy provide technical assistance and funding to MPAs, with priority going to sustainable tourism development. International environmental NGOs such as Conservation International and World Wildlife Fund are other possible sources of assistance.

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Multilateral assistance projects (involving assistance from many countries or parties) implemented by, among others, the World Bank (especially through the GEF Program), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Central American Development Bank (CADB) are potential sources of funding. Due to the scope and bureaucratic procedures associated with multilateral projects, it is advisable to be involved in their initial planning to ensure that one's particular priorities are addressed. Many standard development projects such as road building have environmental components that could potentially fund protected area projects.

Bilateral assistance agencies (assistance from one country/party to another), usually government to government, such as DANIDA (Denmark), USAID (USA), GTZ (Germany), CIDA (Canada), and JICA (Japan), may have projects which involve protected areas, environmental protection or tourism development and may be able to help fund a sustainable tourism management plan.

National Sources

There are more and more funding sources available at the national level in developing countries. Most of these sources are foundations or trust funds that have been developed using international as well as national sources. Requests to these organizations usually have to be made about a year in advance to allow them to plan budgets.

Private companies and businesses are becoming aware that supporting environmental programs is good business and provides them with some positive publicity. Some of these potential donors, especially the more high profile ones, may be willing to provide funding for your sustainable tourism plan. They will probably require that their contributions be mentioned in public presentations and in the related documents that are produced.

Local Communities/Governments

MPAs are not isolated, although it may seem that way at times. The area they occupy is adjacent to, in some cases claimed by, local communities and governments. Increasingly, these entities are becoming interested in MPAs not only for their potential to produce revenue for local people and governments, but also for the prestige of association with a MPA.

The Conventional Tourism Industry

In most cases, there will be conventional operators already working in or around the MPA and others who may be interested in doing so. Some of them should be represented on the planning team. They should all be asked to help support the planning process with transportation, lodging or funding, especially those who have been using the MPA without paying for the privilege through a concession or other user fee. Travel agencies and tour guides may also be interested in participating by providing logistical or financial assistance.

While it may seem easier to seek a lump sum source of support for the sustainable tourism plan, it may be more productive in the long term to look for different sorts of support among a wide

range of sources. In this way, the protected area develops relationships with companies, organizations and individuals who may become important future contacts in terms of logistical support, information and even direct monetary contributions.

CASE STUDY: Cat Ba Sustainable Tourism Program

Who Prepares a Sustainable Tourism Plan?

Sustainable tourism, by definition, is based on a participatory process. The planning process should represent the point at which all relevant stakeholders become involved in the decision making about sustainable tourism.

A sustainable tourism plan should be based on the input and agreement of:

- Tourism professionals (operators and guides) interested in and/or involved with the MPA;
- Representatives from communities who will be impacted by sustainable tourism;
- Representatives from local governments, government agencies, NGOs and others who have an interest in sustainable tourism development in the region; as well as
- MPA staff who know the area well and who will be responsible for the plan's implementation.

Handout 10.4: Checklist for Strategic Planning & Recommendations for Sustainable Tourism

Handout 10.5: Sustainable Tourism Implementation Checklist

Preliminary Site Evaluation

Sustainable tourism is sometimes viewed as the solution to all of a protected area's problems. However, for sustainable tourism to work as a viable management strategy in a given situation, certain conditions need to exist. This section is designed to help you determine whether or not sustainable tourism management and development are the right strategies for your particular circumstance.

Exercise 10.4: Preliminary Site Evaluation

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Full Site Diagnostic

If the Preliminary Site Evaluation (see above) was positive, then the next step is to proceed with a Full Site Diagnostic (FSD). This is what most planners would consider as the main Diagnostic Phase of the sustainable tourism plan. At this point, the planning team has definitely decided that sustainable tourism is what it wants to plan for, which means that it needs to gather a certain kind of information. Before it does that, the team should consider how it would gather information.

What You Need to Know

At the end of this data gathering process, the team will be in a position to provide informed answers to the following questions:

- What are the major threats to the site/protected area and what strategies might be used in the sustainable tourism plan to address them?
- Where is sustainable tourism going to take place?
- What kinds of activities will be carried out to implement sustainable tourism?
- Who will be in charge of implementing these activities and what precautions need to be taken?
- By whom and how will this be monitored and funded?

Data Analysis Phase

Once the data have been collected, the team needs to analyze it and begin to make decisions about what the sustainable tourism plan will recommend. A lot of data will have been accumulated, and planners need to be able to use this information. A useful beginning point is to look at the opportunities that have presented themselves, as well as the obstacles. Is there a lot of potential interest in establishing a sustainable tourism program in the protected area? Are local communities already involved in sustainable tourism? What are they doing? Are they doing it well? What do they want to do in the future? Is there an international donor interested in providing funding? Are there potential development projects that may impact (positively or negatively) sustainable tourism implementation?

A key result of the analytical phase must be some conclusions about:

- What the major threats are to the site/protected area and how the sustainable tourism plan might address them;
- Where sustainable tourism is going to take place;
- What kinds of activities will be carried out to implement sustainable tourism;
- Who will be in charge of implementing these activities and what precautions need to be taken; and
- By whom and how this will be monitored and funded.

10.4 GREEN CERTIFICATION

What Does it Mean?

Certification programs are voluntary programs that set standards to ensure tourism service and product providers are minimizing impacts to the environment and improving the social and economic conditions of the community. Certification programs are generally governed by an awarding body that recognizes and rewards tourism providers for their use of best practices by including the providers as a member of the certification program. There are over 100 sustainable tourism certification programs in existence world-wide. Some of the original programs were developed for industries such as forestry, organic farming or fishing; now they are becoming more common for the sustainable tourism industry and models have been in place for many years in locations like Costa Rica and Australia.

Who Benefits From Certification

- Visitors benefit from knowing that a standard has been set for best management practices in the operations of the tourism businesses; and that attractions will be well-maintained in their natural state. Certification programs often set standards for health and safety as well.
- Businesses benefit by attracting visitors who are interested in sustainable tourism. Businesses benefit from having “standards” to adhere to. Businesses benefit from the cooperative marketing opportunities and expertise often provided by the certification program. Note that certification is not a replacement for good business planning and practices and will not always bring in more customers.
- The natural and cultural resources of an area benefit from attracting visitors that are coming to an area because of their appreciation for the natural environment that sustainable tourism certification programs are trying to protect.

Handout 10.6: A Simple User's Guide to Certification for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism