

TOURISM POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR TIMOR LESTE

Based on Report of - UNWTO - UNDP Project on-- SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING - REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE (ID 00047804) - PHASE I - (FIRST STAGE) – December 2005

(1) Policies Related to Tourist Attractions and Tourism Resources

1. Develop and Disseminate Promotional Material to Mend Timor-Leste's Image

NDT's promotional material should build on the image of Timor-Leste as a peaceful, friendly and SECURE place for visitors. If this aspect cannot be accomplished then all the physical attractions will not succeed in bringing holiday makers and other interested visitors.

2. Preserve Marine Resources

Establishment of one or more marine parks the north and east of Timor- Leste, including Atauro Island, to protect fish stocks and related tourism attractions, should be a priority in discussions with that State Secretary, as should an early solution to establish territorial limits to the nature protection areas and the National Park already under study. In addition, the environmental impact of the future gas pipeline and refinery should also be assessed in relation to tourism attractions. Discussions on this latter issue should also involve the Cabinet of the Prime-Minister (responsible for Energy Policy) and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries and State Secretary for Environmental Coordination.

3. Conserve and Promote Cultural Resources

The NDT should form a close functional partnership with the relevant offices within Ministry of Education and Culture to develop ways and means of reviving and strengthening traditional Timor-Leste cultural aspects, while also maintaining a permanent dialogue with NGOs whose activities touch upon cultural aspects of interest to especially community-based tourism.

(2) Policies Related to Tourist Infrastructure

4. Accelerate Infrastructure Development

GTL accelerate provision of adequate access and technical infrastructures throughout Timor-Leste, perhaps by allocating a much higher percentage of the revenues derived from its hydrocarbon resources. This is not just advantageous for tourism development but will minimize direct costs to the sector and permit the whole country to develop at a much faster rate. Aside from obvious economic advantages, anticipating higher thresholds of development would positively affect the general quality of life, through better access to markets, schools, and services, and better health levels due to adequate water and sanitation provision. Bringing forward the general infrastructures provision programme would also help solve the serious question of high unemployment among the unskilled, if public works opted for labour intensive methods to carry out its projects, and gave incentives to private firms for adopting similar strategies. Given close family ties in Timor-Leste, each person employed would also support a significant number of dependents.

5. Study of Air Travel and Transport

GTL, by itself or with foreign assistance, commission an integrated study concerning air travel to, from and within Timor-Leste. Though such a study would be required in the short term, ideally it should be coordinated with the strategic tourism planning study to be carried out in Phase II of the present Project, and also take into account the already cited Road Programme, especially during the 2007-2009 period, as this would be chronologically closer to Phase II.

6. Identify Scenic Roads and Design Principles for Tourism

That a selection of roads of scenic interest for tourism should be identified by NDT, perhaps as part of TORs for strategic tourism plan to be prepared in Phase II of the present Project, and Ministry of Public Works should be persuaded to incorporate appropriate design principles for improving existing roads satisfying these selection criteria and to design and build future access roads using these principles.

(3) Policies Related to Tourist Superstructure (Buildings and Services)

Town Planning Aspects of Tourism

NDT discuss with Dili and Baucau municipality and other entities responsible for the built environment (**see Policies-2.2, aspects concerning physical and aesthetic impact of built environment, in tourism, from planning to architecture and design*). Future measures to improve existing standards, should be in both urban areas and buildings, as well as with visual and aesthetics values in natural areas and traditional settlements, evaluating location and appearance of structures eg. billboards, signs, nameplates, and landmarks, electric poles, etc. Instituting some form of development control in urban development and conservation measures in natural environments, especially when native style architecture or historical heritage elements are involved.

Engage Architect/Designer at NDT - to Ensure Tourism Considerations are Incorporated into Tourism Projects and Master Plans for Urban Areas

As budget allows, NDT should hire an architect / designer, to assist in assessing tourism project proposals and also for dialogues with regional and local government (especially Dili and Bacau) on addressing concerns about buildings, urban planning and architectural matters.

Until it is possible to implement this policy, NDT should approach Portuguese aid with a view to securing technical assistance in planning and architectural professionals working in GERTiL, for assistance on matters concerning the built environment. This would make sense also because of their present involvement in preparing master plans for Dili and Baucau.

In anticipation of proposals for new hotels, or the construction of a marina in Dili, or any important projects for tourism in the capital which appeal to foreign entrepreneurs who have visited the country, the NDT should discuss with GERTiL possible locations for such ventures in Dili, or suitable adjoining areas close to the capital but presently outside the territorial limits of the master plan being prepared.

Renovate Existing Tourist Facilities

NDT should consider opportunity provided by coming spare accommodation situation to initiate a campaign for upgrading tourism accommodation in Dili and Baucau. This may require legal backing and/or some sort of incentives, and would have to be followed by careful inspection on the ground. In addition it should assess adequacy of facilities for Meeting, and Conventions MICE now available in Dili, especially in relation to past performance and anticipated future market potential.

(4) Policies Related to Tourism Marketing, Promotion and Product Development

7. Go for Supply Led Tourism Strategy – ie. People who are already in Timor-Leste

In the short term, marketing and promotion campaigns should be supply-led, gradually changing to demand-led, in accordance with sustainable marketing principles. The supply-led strategy should prevail until weak tourism infrastructure, superstructures and human resources improve to the point of justifying a more conventional tourism marketing approach.

8. Work with and Support Tour Operators in Marketing – existing and future

NDT should take a proactive approach in marketing and promotion activities, by selecting reliable tour operators experienced in dealing with targeted market segments—small volume-high value market. As is known, the profile of this segment is characterized by a high education and sensitivity to local socio-cultural and environmental conditions, with particular preference for blue and green ecotourism products and including pilgrimage travel.

NDT should encourage existing tour operators (and brief future ones), on the need to improve tourism product—based on research, better training and management of natural and cultural heritage, on a par with the low volume-high/value market segments targeted.

NDT should encourage introduction of interpretative aspects in tourism products offered by operators and set an example by establishing interpretation facilities in Dili*—not only for visitors, but also to educate people of Timor-Leste on Tourism and Culture. (* Proposed Tourism / Culture Center)

(5) Policies Related to Developing and Promoting Community Tourism

9. That, given the particular difficulties surrounding the assessment and preparation of communities for establishment of community-based tourism, Ministry of Development should request a suitable foreign donor, to assist by providing experts with a sociological and/or anthropological background and solid experience in negotiations at community level, to help shorten the time consuming tasks required before such projects can be established.
10. The Ministry of Development, through the NDT, should attempt to find private donors or NGOs willing to undertake, in the short term, pilot-projects as suggested above. Ideally these projects should be initiated in the Second Stage of Phase I and be completed during Phase II, to benefit from the participation of consultants on the Project team.

(6) Policies Related to Institutions and Legal Issues

11. Funding for NDT

The Ministry of Development must make the strongest possible efforts to get approval from the Government for a dramatic increase in the present budget for the NDT. This could be achieved through this Directorate being allocated a much higher percentage of revenues from entry visas and departure taxes, presently totaling over USD 500,000. Government should consider a bed/night levy that would revert entirely to the NDT. This could represent a very significant amount and would be applied not exclusively to finance the intensive promotional activities and other needs expected of the NDT including: expanding quantitative and qualitatively its human resource base.

12. Cross Sector Cooperation

NDT should adopt multi-sectoral approach with respect to rural communities (inland and coastal), together with authorities responsible for protection and conservation of natural resources, by arranging regular meetings in Dili, and at District capitals, for effective co-ordination of stakeholders' concerns affecting tourism development in their territories.

The Ministry of Development, directly or through NDT, must take the initiative of regularly meeting pertinent Ministries and District and Sub-District Administrators, as well Regional State Secretaries, on matters affecting tourism resources.

NDT should meet regularly with tour operators to discuss mutually agreeable measures to prevent harm to tourism attractions before it happens, to avoid their destruction or inappropriate use, including negative visual impacts caused by structures built close to tourism attractions or resources.

NDT should establish close working relationship with State Secretary for Environmental Co-ordination, Territorial Planning and Physical Development, and City administrators of Dili and of Baucau.

NDT should maintain a regular liaison with private sector tourism agencies, Tourism Association, and with the tourism industry (hotels, restaurants, recreation and transport companies, to improve co-ordination on all matters of mutual concern.

NDT must establish a permanent and friendly relationship with the local media. Television is particular effective, as in Timor-Leste the image seems to have a stronger impact than the written word, even in areas where access to this medium is limited by the number of sets and the vagaries of power supply.

NDT must co-operate with the Secretary of State for Culture to lobby Ministry of Finance to make funds available to rehabilitate and adapt the building known as 'Uma Fukun Timor' as a Tourism and Culture Centre, for housing a Tourism Information Office, among a number of other facilities linked to tourism and culture. See Appendix I for proposal.

Ministry of Development should lobby the Ministry of Justice to accelerate the process of sorting out the land ownership and registration impasse, a serious problem adversely affecting the needed upgrading of many tourism superstructures, especially in the capital. It is also holding back new tourism development, including in rural areas, where community-based tourism is likely to be located.

Ministry of Development should secure approval for establishing the mechanisms for an on-going dialogue with other Ministries and public authorities responsible for aspects directly or indirectly affecting the development of tourism, or of its products, in Timor-Leste. Crucial to link with Govt. Agencies such as:

- Planning and Finance – investment regulations for tourism,
- Public Works – roads, access to tourism areas,
- Municipal Govt. - sanitation and clean attractive environments, sign boards, amenity planting
- Transport and Communication - tourism access , internet etc to promote and make reservations, etc between agents, tourists and hotel operators.
- Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries – agro tourism (coffee, etc), forestry tourism (sandal wood) keep the reefs and beaches clean and healthy for tourism (diving, etc), glass bottem boats for fishing communities to take the tourists around.
- Health and emergency response – responses to accidents, illness involving tourists – hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, ambulances etc.,
- Justice, Education and Culture – training for tourism staff & managers; development of cultural programs for tourists, music, videos, shows, etc.
- Land – survey and clarification of titles in order to stimulate investment in tourism
- Work and Community Reinsertion (employment generation of rural community-based tourism enterprises)

(7) Policies of Central Government

There should be a permanent ‘open line’ to the Prime- Minister, who favors Tourism and is also Minister of Natural Resources, and Minister of Minerals and Energy Policy.

Formulation of interim legislation aimed at safeguarding tourism resources until tourism development plans and policies are in place is a priority.

Tourism development in Timor-Leste must first and foremost address the objectives for tourism, expressed in the National Development Plan of 2002, of poverty alleviation and of community capacity building and involvement. Such development should also be sustainable and diversified and its benefits made to reach, socially as well as spatially, as many of the country’s citizens as possible.

A general policy of gradual tourism development should be followed, where such development is critically monitored and evaluated in consultation with all stakeholders, and feed-back utilised to improve future development. As far as possible such development should also be coordinated with other sectors of the economy and the country’s infrastructure, to achieve balanced growth, avoid direct costs to the tourism sector, and generally optimize opportunities while minimizing waste.

While safeguarding national interests, especially its pristine natural environment and the wellbeing of its people, the Government of Timor-Leste recognizes the fundamental role of the private sector for the development of tourism in the country. Consequently it pledges itself to create favorable conditions for its investment and the protection of its legitimate interests in the tourism sector.

The GTL should establish a platform for maintaining a permanent dialogue with its neighbor on matters affecting both sides of the Island, and especially the enclave of Oécussi, whether caused by natural forces or by man-made policies or decisions. For Timor-Leste’s future tourism development, this will be especially important in what concerns inter-dependent resources, and border crossings, etc.

Whenever opportune, at international conventions, fora, and other events, especially those concerned with Tourism, the representatives of the GTL should stress the role their young nation wants to play in fostering friendly relations between all people, through sensitive and sustainable tourism development. The slogan should be: - **“COME AND VISIT US – WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW YOU !”**