

LESSONS ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

from the

World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002

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BACKGROUND to the WSSD 2002

The World Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa from August 24-September 4, 2002 brought together heads of government, national and international delegates of NGOs and business leaders to assess the progress of the global plan of action for sustainable development (known as 'Agenda 21') which was adopted by the international community at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The 2002 WSSD aimed to deepen the global commitment to Agenda 21 while identifying quantifiable targets and concrete actions for achieving sustainable development worldwide.

The Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ) funded the participation of three NGO representatives from Jamaica, who were selected by the members of Jamaica's Preparatory Committee for the WSSD. They were Wendy Lee, who represented St. Ann Environment Protection Association (STAEPA), the National Environmental Education Committee (NEEC), and the Sustainable Communities Foundation (SCF); Jean Jackson, Executive Director of the Negril Chamber of Commerce (NCC); and Joan Grant-Cummings, Coordinator of the Coalition for Community Participation in Governance (CCPG).

Lessons on sustainable tourism were featured in a number of workshops we attended, including:

- A two-day **Biodiversity Conservation Symposium** held in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal, hosted by *Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife* (the biodiversity conservation agency of that province).
- A two-day workshop ***Engaging People in Sustainability*** (education for sustainable development) hosted by the World Conservation Union's Commission on Education and Communication (IUCN/CEC)
- A seminar entitled ***Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty***, hosted by the World Tourism Union (WTO) and the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), with presentations from Jordan, Cambodia, Mauritius, Tanzania, Uganda, Korea, and the Global Environment Facility Small Grants fund representative.

SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

We found that Sustainable Tourism is increasingly seen as the main prospect for alleviating poverty in developing nations, with the potential to make a major contribution to Sustainable Development in general. Based on the information presented and discussions at the WSSD workshops mentioned, we can conclude that Sustainable Tourism depends on the following critical factors:

1. Maintaining BIODIVERSITY / protecting the environment
2. Ensuring ECONOMIC and SOCIAL BENEFITS of tourism to local people
3. Effective WASTE MANAGEMENT and POLLUTION CONTROL
4. EDUCATION for all involved
5. CAPACITY-BUILDING for Sustainable Development
6. Perceptions of PERSONAL SAFETY

1. Maintaining BIODIVERSITY / protecting the environment

- ☞ Direct values: scenery, wildlife, natural products, culture and traditions associated with nature
- ☞ Indirect values: forests (water, lumber, habitat, climate, soil); agricultural products (traditional crops, food security); marine resources (fish and other seafood)
- ☞ Marine as well as terrestrial ecosystems are vitally important for tourism. Marine and coastal ecosystems are extremely threatened (global warming, overfishing, pollution)
- ☞ Accommodations must be in harmony with nature, landscape and traditional art forms.
- ☞ Revenue from tourism must be applied to natural resource conservation.
- ☞ Local people must be involved in planning and management of natural resources
- ☞ You can transfer principles of conservation, but not complete models, from place to place.

2. Ensuring ECONOMIC and SOCIAL BENEFITS of tourism to local people

- ☞ Cultural values and behaviour will only change when the realities related to survival change
- ☞ Rural development and poverty alleviation is better accomplished by gender-sensitive, home-based commercial activities in rural areas surrounding a conservation area, than by focussing on the protected area itself as a source of benefits or 'resource bank.'
- ☞ Short-term involvement in communities creates expectations but does not solve problems; you need a minimum time frame of 8-15 years of sustained efforts to achieve results.
- ☞ A Community Levy is imposed on tourism revenues for each park in South Africa, with 90 percent used for community projects in the immediate area, and 10 percent used in areas that have little or no tourism income.

The Minister said that extensive research had shown that visitors regarded the people of Mauritius as its main tourism resource. This led the government to decide that the National Goal for tourism would be "***to create the best interaction between local people and visitors.***"

- ☞ The tiny island of Mauritius (see box above) has a Social Responsibility Fund into which each developer must put US \$1m for each area developed, and has a policy of developing localities en route to major attractions as “stopover” sites to spread the benefits and promote interactions
- ☞ Assistance must be provided to rural people in developing viable products to market, e.g. crafts and natural foods.
- ☞ Souvenirs must be functional and sustainably produced, as well as attractive.

3. Effective WASTE MANAGEMENT and POLLUTION CONTROL

- ☞ Garbage, dirty water and disease outbreaks will kill tourism (e.g. SARS linked to sewage)
- ☞ Water, Sanitation and Hygiene are key issues for the world and tourism.
- ☞ The Pikitup Programme aims to be socially responsible, providing “a secure and supportive environment” for employees, as well as economically viable, generating “acceptable returns to its shareholders.”
- ☞ Urban waste management agencies run comprehensive education programmes in schools and communities and distribute containers such as bags, bins and skips to support their waste reduction, separation and recycling programmes.

5. EDUCATION for all involved

- ☞ Environmental education: “Engaging people in sustainability”
- ☞ Strategic communication and social marketing approaches to environmental education are used by major NGOs such as the IUCN and the Academy for Educational Development.
- ☞ The *Earth Charter* is being used as a tool for Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (see box at right).

The Earth Charter is a widely endorsed declaration of values, principles and practices for building a just, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable global society, urging people to:

- Respect and care for life
- Protect ecosystems
- Protect human rights
- Ensure economic justice
- Strengthen democracy
- Promote peace

6. CAPACITY-BUILDING for SD

- ☞ Partnerships with businesses are increasingly common, e.g. the Business Trust in South Africa helps to fund projects in environmental conservation, primary education, crime reduction, and tourism.
- ☞ Relevance of organisations such as SCF and community-based NGOs

4. Perceptions of PERSONAL SAFETY

- ☞ Perceptions of safety are based on low crime rate, stable political climate (= PEACE)
- ☞ Freedom to move around a destination without fear of harassment or harm