

Sustainable Tourism Criteria For India
'Practicing Responsible Tourism,
STCI Workshop, Gangtok, November 28,29, 2018

Evaluation Report

Signed by

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MoT-ESOI workshop on Responsible Tourism with a special focus on STCI, Nov 28,29, 2018, Hotel Lemontree, Gangtok

Registration- 930-1030 am onwards

Inaugural session - 1030-1115

- Welcome: ESOI & Workshop agenda- **Mr. Rakesh Mathur**
- Address by Sikkim Tourism
- Dir Tourism
- Dy Dir Tourism

Tea ; 1115-1130

Technical Session - 1: Setting the Context 1130-1300

- Ecotourism ; the means & motive for Conservation – **Dr H.S.Pabla**(40min)
- Q & A(5min)
- Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India- **Dr. Anjuna Dhir** –(40min)
- Q & A(5 min)

Lunch: 1300-1400

Technical Session-2 : Technology of Being Responsible (1400-1500)

- Role of Hotels in Ecotourism- **Mr. Rakesh Mathur**
- Tourism industry in Sikkim as a whole in the context of global responsible tourism - **Mr P K Dong** (20 min)
- Panel discussion- **Moderator Mr Rakesh Mathur** (45 min)
Sustainability Practices in hotels the challenges & solutions

Q & A(10min)

Tea ; 1515-1530 ;

Technical Session-3: Challenges to being Responsible 1530-1545

- Climate change & Challenges Posed by it- **Mr Rajarshi Chakraborty** (25min)
- Ethics of Conservation **Ms. Usha Lachungpa** (25 min)

End of day 1

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DAY - 2

Technical Session - Realities to being Responsible 1000-1145

Issues facing Tourism industry & Way Forward

1. Sikkim, the green state- **Mr. Karma Gyatso-** (20 min)
2. Responsible tourism – How do we maintain standards-**Mr. Atul Kaura (20min)**
3. The Dangers of Being Too Successful – **Mr. Pema Gyaltshen Bhutia(20 min) (KCC)**
4. Forest laws in the context of Ecotourism - **Dr. H.S. Pabla** (20 min)
5. ECOSS- Sikkim Tourism policy – **Mr. RP Gurung** (20 min)

Tea ; 1145-1200

6. STCI –the road map – 1200- 1245 (45min)-

Session Moderated by H'ble Mr P.D Rai, MP

Participants- All audience in a workshop format

Recap of the two day Workshop- 1300 - 1330

Vote of thanks

Lunch

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The MoT-ESOI workshop on 'Responsible Tourism' took place in Gangtok on November 28, 29, 2018 with a good attendance from the industry, industry associations, civil society and academics. The workshop had presentations from area experts as well as very active participation in the various discussions that happened between the various stakeholders.

It does seem that Sikkim is ready for practicing Sustainable tourism and the Sikkim industry could be one of the first in the country to accept Sustainable tourism.

A detailed report of the various sessions is as enclosed here-with.

REPORT OF THE SESSIONS

Venue: Conference Room, Deliberations

Time: 10.00 am - 1:00pm

Setting the Context for Responsible Tourism

Welcome Address: Mr. Rakesh Mathur (ESOI)

These **STCI familiarisation and capacity building** workshops are extremely beneficial as they help the Tourism service providers in **Demystifying the concept of Sustainability** in every day Tourism business- by breaking it into easy, to do, 'sustainable' steps that are easy to emulate and apply.

The workshops aim at setting corrective and curative measures with regard to Tourism practices with ecological sensitivity and conservation of nature and community development in the region. These practices will be highlighted by speakers who practice them in their businesses and yet benefit financially along with creating a lighter footprint and supporting the local communities and environment.

The workshop shall not only familiarize participants with concepts of Sustainable Tourism and STCI, but also involve the understanding of its nuances and applicability. Hence it should be considered as training in 'Sustainable Tourism'. Each participant will receive a certificate of participation and training which would be handy whenever such a parameter based incentive is announced by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Special Address by Sikkim Tourism:

1. **Mr Tseten Dorjee Bhutia** (Director, Finance, Sikkim Tourism) – tourism has been an important vehicle of economic Stability in Sikkim. Sikkim has benefitted from tourism

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and Tourism has benefitted from Tourism. There are increasingly more tourists who are visiting Sikkim and that is leading to both positive and negative results.

2. We look upon this workshop to find out some real time solutions to the problems that are arising out of this activity. Though the Govt is aware and is taking a number of tourism promotion measures, we would like to understand from the experts and their experience of other places the real options available in front of Sikkim for further growth. We wish the workshop a success.

3. **Ms Leepandi Tagrain** (Dty Director Sikkim Tourism) addressed the audience next and declared the workshop open. She also expressed support of Sikkim Tourism to ESOI and its activities. Ms Tagrain expressed that Sikkim Tourism officials shall attend the workshop and hope to imbibe and implement its learning.

Technical Session - 1: Setting the Context 1130-1300

Ecotourism ; the means & motive for Conservation – Dr H.S.Pabla

Dr Pabla has an extensive experience in forest based ecotourism. Having retired as Chief Wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh, he remains a lone forester who sees tourism as a tool for conservation. Dr Pabla is currently also an advisor to the Madhya Pradesh Ecotourism Board.

His presentation focused on his belief of Conservation being exclusively the aim of ecotourism and how there is a natural symbiotic relationship between the two . He gave examples of how it is done in other countries and what can the forest states of India (like Sikkim) imbibe from these countries. He also touched the topic of human – animal conflict and how a successful ecotourism business can minimize this by satisfying the needs of both the stakeholders at the same time.

Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India- Dr. Anjuna Dhir

Dr Dhir began her presentation by discussing the negatives of tourism and how there are now voices against tourism, even in Sikkim- which has been a relative late-comer to the tourism scene because of many socio-political reasons. She went on to talk of how all tourism needs to be sustainable for the business to survive. STCI is India's National Standard based on Sustainability parameter and is based on Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. It is a soon to be launched certification plan to check on our sustainability quotient. Accepted and launched by Ministry of tourism government of India. Sustainable tourism is a responsibility for all including types of destination, including mass tourism. It is based on the Four Pillars of sustainability such as;

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1. Economic viability
2. Socio- cultural responsibility
3. Tourism management plan
4. Environmental and biodiversity accountability.

To achieve the above, STCI scans:

1. Policy
2. Procedure
3. Training
4. Records
5. Complaint mechanism amongst many other documents.

Dr. Dhir highlighted the Principles, sub-principles and indicators of STCI. She also detailed the certification process and the STCI based certification plan for accommodation and tour operator industry. STCI certification is ;

1. A seal of confidence.
2. Informing consumer choice
3. Stimulating market development
4. Encouraging continuous improvement

The presentation was followed by a healthy discussion and question –answer session of 20 minutes where all present showed a lot of interest in the process.

Lunch: 1300-1400

Technical Session-2 : Technology of Being Responsible (1400-1500)

Role of Hotels in Ecotourism- Mr. Rakesh Mathur

Mr. Rakesh Mathur is an ardent hotelier who has become a champion of Sustainability practices in hotels of all categories. He believes that adopting such practices shall be good for business, environment and social footprint of the hotel. Highlighting a few Sustainable Practices for Accommodation service providers, Mr Mathur discussed why cant we look at Perpetual sustainability and what does it involve.

His presentation highlighted;

Guidelines for Ecotourism Projects in Hotels

1. Avoiding artificial room fresheners.
2. Regular servicing and changing of air filters.
3. Treating of water properly.

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4. No smoking area signages.
5. White and reflecting colours on walls.

Water:

1. Water conservation & Water recharging system
2. Changing bed linen every day to be avoided.
3. Reutilization of water.
4. Regular checking of water distribution system for leakages.

Energy

1. Using gas or inductions over electric systems like ovens.
2. Usage of solar power.

Proper Waste Segregation

1. Wet garbage can be converted to compost whereas Dry garbage needs to be recycled.
2. Reusable cloth Laundry Bags.
3. Purchase amenities in bulk.
4. Use of natural products.
5. Encourage, train and motivate staff for waste management.

Sewage

1. Onsite sewage treatment plant
2. Recycle and reuse of waste water

Guidelines for Natural and Wildlife Lodges

1. Rain water harvesting.
2. Use of renewable energy resources.
3. 3 R's policies also including the 4th r of reducing.
4. Local food products.

New Ideas and Innovations.

1. Bucket bath
2. Small mirror size
3. Aircraft size toilets.
4. Use of rubber boards instead of teak etc
5. Solar reflection on windows, to generate power.
6. Reduce room sizes

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7. Cotton mattresses
8. Use of potted plants instead of cut flowers.
9. CFL, LED use at every stage
10. Ban on plastic items.

Mr Mathur spoke to an interested audience of 35% hoteliers for 40 minutes

Tourism industry in Sikkim as a whole in the context of global responsible tourism - Mr P K Dong

Mr P K Dong has been involved with the business of tourism for more than four decades and he has seen the tourism scenario changing in more than one way. Though tourism has become a blessing for most residents of Sikkim, with it employing maximum number of people, there needs to be proper planning and a vision of how to take it forward from here. Mr Dong also spoke of the students of the institutes where he is involved in teaching tourism and informed of the changing / progressing vision of the students and wondered if these students would really be the agents of wisdom of sustainable tourism in Sikkim. The key points;

- Health of the destination is the main parameter. When we fail to give the tourist what he is looking for, sustainability is suspect.
- Water is already a problem, We are already buying water
- Tourism dept cannot tackle this alone; we all need to do this together

He also gently eased the audience into the Panel discussion happening next, that was moderated by Mr Rakesh Mathur

Panel discussion- Moderator Mr Rakesh Mathur

(Sustainability Practices in hotels the challenges & solutions)

The panelists showcased all spectrum of the industry with representation from Academics, Tour operation sector, Hotel sector as well as ESOI and Standards sector.

All the panelists talked about Sustainability practices as understood and practiced by their individual sectors , the highlights being;

- a. Sustainability is a much used , less understood, complicated subject.
- b. People understand it but are vary of taking any steps as it is a multi-pronged monster and frequently the action is outside the control/ purview of an individual industry.
- c. It certainly needs a strong govt support/ push for it to have any affect.

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- d. Climate change is here to stay and we all know it, but it still doesn't form a part of every day discourse.
 - e. Unless industry gets very strong incentives to push sustainability- it is difficult to implement it.
 - f. The problems are same every where- it's the solutions that concern us and worry us.
- Individual Panelists statements were;

Samrat Laha;

We need to decide, whether we want quality or quantity 12lakh people vs 16000 beds

We don't want to be Darjeelin – with depleting water.

Parking, waste etc should be carefully

MK .Pradhan;

Quality control has to be predominantly main.

Visit to sensitive areas like Changu lake need to be only permit led. For religious places

Training needs to be given to bot the industry and the tourist. Subject of environment, energy pollution needs to be taught in school itself

Prof Jigme Bhutia

Try & create a local platform to bring the agencies together. Run some skilled programs

My Biswajit, Mayfair Hotels

Sikkim is unmatched. Tourists bring a lot of unwanted stuff with them. Restrict vehicles in Sikkim, Emission norms-

Q & A(10min)

The panelists were asked questions to specifically if and how they execute sustainable practices in their own individual practices.

A discussion was also carried on whether these practices are adoptable oif they form a part of the classification criteria

Tea ; 1515-1530 ;

Technical Session-3: Challenges to being Responsible 1530-1545

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Climate change & Challenges Posed by it- Mr Rajarshi Chakraborty

Mr Chakraborty is a consultant with UNDP and works on its Climate related projects. He highlighted how Climate change is reality which is fast becoming visible in not only macro environmental changes but also micro environment changes as visible in our every day surroundings. He gave examples and data from longitudinal time based studies over last 25 years on the geographical features of Sikkim and its surrounding places.

He stressed that Tourism industry shall have to face and find answers to these realities sooner than later as these will begin affecting visitor numbers very soon.

Ethics of Conservation Ms. Usha Lachungpa

Ms Lachungpa is a veteran conservationist with a lifetime spent in the process, being a forest officer. She presented the realities of 'Then' & 'Now', highlights being;

- More talk on paper, less action on ground
- Conservation is a responsibility of all- including visitors
- Conservation is the only development that we should allow for us to have any future
- Only regulation that will work is self regulation

Ms Lachungpa also welcomed the move towards creating standards and certifications , emphasizing that all positive action is welcome action.

Day 1 ended on a positive note with the audience promising to come for day 2 too- As this was a topic that they all felt passionately involved in.

End of day 1

Technical Session - Realities to being Responsible 1000-1145

Day 2 of the workshop saw a more relaxed environment as the participants were aware of what's and who's of the workshop. All walked in at a leisurely pace and got together to listen to the speakers.

Mr Mathur welcomed all to the workshop and invited the first speaker of the day the veteran, Mr Karma Gyatso, former Chief secretary Sikkim.

Heralded as the man who started tourism in Sikkim, Mr Gyatso has seen the changes happening – both as an insider in the govt and as an outsider . He has been a policy maker and has seen the effects of the policies as made by his team , in his time.

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Sikkim, the green state- Mr. Karma Gyatso

Mr Gyatso got a rousing reception from the audience and was hailed as the father of Tourism in Sikkim. His address referred to the following main points;

- a. Tourism is a good industry and responsible for development of Sikkim
- b. Its time now to take strategic decisions, based on the current realities of the new Sikkim- which is developing as a modern destination with air connectivity, roads and lot of buildings but also landslides, pollution and other ill effects of development and tourism.
- c. The strategic direction that tourism needs to take has to involve locals, communities and traditional practices – enveloped in modern amenities such as technological breakthrough .
- d. Homestay culture should be promoted- Sikkim may go for High value, low impact tourism.

Responsible tourism – How do we maintain standards-Mr. Atul Kaura

A long time tourism professional, Mr Kaura has seen all the sides of the industry- by being involved with hospitality, tour operations and technology. Marrying all the three, he now uses technology to promote homestays in the region. His address highlighted the following;

1. The world is technology driven, so it is a good idea to use technology to ones advantage
2. He promotes homestays in the northeastern region and hence feels that standards are absolutely necessary for customers to trust a particular facility. It is also important for the industry to grow as baseline standards ensure a quality service which is what get repeat customers to a destination.
3. His company has created some standards for homestays in the northeastern region. They would like to study STCI work out the commonalities and other areas.

The Dangers of Being Too Successful – Mr. Pema Gyaltshen Bhutia

Mr Pema Gyaltshen Bhutia is associated with the Kanchenjunga Conservation committee and highlighted the KCC experience and learning in his address

1. More tourism may mean more business – but does not mean more /better returns.
2. The increased trekking groups in the Kanchenjunga National Park have left a lot of waste, route degradation, loss of bio-diversity in its wake. The loss is irreversible in most cases and continues at an unabated pace.
3. There is an urgent need to create and implement guidelines; if these can be national guidelines, all the more better.

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4. Certification and standards and certification for the nature guides in Kanchengunga conservation committee to prevent
5. Support staff accompanying group also needs identity cards.. and checks and balances
6. Within the national park, minimal infrastructure, quality is very poor,
7. Designated camp sites are not there. That should be there- follow the trail.. and regulation in the park is needed

Forest laws in the context of Ecotourism - Dr. H.S. Pabla

Sikkim is a forest based economy. Forests form 73% of the state and are responsible for the lifestyle of the people. Hence- a general statement that reflects the belief of people is that – all tourism in Sikkim is Ecotourism.

With this background Dr Pabla, focused on the different aspects of forest based tourism and the various laws applicable in such a scenario. Predominantly focusing that Ecotourism is not recognized as a forest activity as per the forest laws and how do other states get around this 'problem'

Dr Pabla also spoke about Ecotourism activity being an important tool for conservation of biodiversity of the region and how this should be the top priority of bot the state and the industry. He quoted the situation as being below;

Protected area Vs Wildlife Corridors.

India has 700 national parks and sanctuaries. Having national parks doesn't serve the movement of animals, buffer zones had to be come up with. We came up with forest corridors. India lacks land space for forest corridors. Wildlife management needs intervention.

Animal rights Vs Conservation

Wild animals can be protected in 2 situation. If they are not a threat to society or as a source of revenue and benefit to the society and community. Wildlife creates in employment but also creates loss to the people who live in close contact with them. Wild animals destroy crops, life and property because we conserve it.

Minimize conflict, Generate Benefit

When Panna national park was created there was a conflict by the locals as their lands were under the conserved area. Though it created a lot of tourist jobs at the cost of the local

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property. Eco tourism is the only tool made wild animal acceptable to the masses and acted in conservation. 10% jobs in the world is through tourism.

ECOSS- Sikkim Tourism policy – Mr. RP Gurung

Ecotourism & Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS) is a foremost body of Ecotourism and related activities in Sikkim. ECOSS is also the Ecotourism partner of Sikkim Tourism and helped in the creation of the new Sikkim Tourism policy of the state. Presenting the Salient features of the Policy, CEO , ECOSS- Mr R.P Gurung highlighted the following;

Guiding Principles

- **Environmental sustainability**

Tourism development will not be at the cost of degradation of the environment and natural resources of the state.

- **Cultural integrity**

Tourism development will ensure appreciation, promotion and conservation of Sikkim's diverse culture.

- **Equity Inclusiveness & Social Justice**

Opportunities and benefits of tourism shall not exclude those disadvantaged by gender, remoteness and poverty, and tourism practices shall ensure the upholding of human rights and justice.

- ***Atithi Devo Bhava***

Tourism development shall focus on providing quality experiences and services for all visitors and ensure their safety and satisfaction.

1. Establish and strengthen Institutional Structures to promote, manage and implement responsible tourism in Sikkim
2. Ensure that Sikkim has the highest level of skills and capacity for quality service delivery through consistent human resource development
3. Promote Standards and Certification for the Tourism Industry
4. Promote sustainably managed tourism destinations, quality tourism infrastructure and

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safe transport

5. Promote high value and high quality tourism products
6. Ensure strategic and sustained marketing and publicity
7. Promote enabling environment for tourism stakeholders
8. Facilitate inter-sectoral coordination and convergence
9. **The STCI**

The Ministry has recently announced the Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) and its indicators. It is now imperative that the tour operators and accommodation industry in the state adopt the STCI through their various associations and also take steps for its implementation. Sustainable tourism criteria also needs to be developed for rural tourism, homestays and other tourism service sectors.

Standards & Certification for Accommodation Sector & Tour Operators

The Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India and Indicators recently announced by the Ministry for accommodation sector and tour operators shall be taken up for ratification by the industry associations in the state. Implementation of the criteria and indicators (for tour operators and the accommodation sector) and the development of criteria and indicators for rural tourism and home-stays, and other sectors will be taken up subsequently along the guidelines/suggestions, support mechanisms and action steps as laid down by the Ministry in this regard.

Tea ; 1145-1200

6. STCI –the road map – 1200- 1245

Session Moderated by Dr Anjuna Dhir after H'ble Mr P.D Rai, MP after Mr Rai regretted his presence

Participants- All audience in a workshop format

All the audience were divided into various groups based on their industry ; so we had the

Hoteliers, the tour operators the NGOs, the govt, the academics as the various group of stakeholders. All the groups were decided to work on the priority areas which are important to implement Sustainability in their industry and their individual practices

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After due deliberations, it was decided that a STCI Steering committee be formed in SIKKIM to propel the STCI forward.

This committee shall have participation from all the industry associations and the govt as well as the NGO sector and shall have a Nodal officer situated in the Sikkim Tourism Office.

The ECOSS shall have a steering role in STCI implementation

The Steering Committee shall ensure that STCI can take due roots into the industry and begin its path to implementation

The formation of STCI steering committee was welcomed with a lot of enthusiasm and all hope that Sikkim would become the first state to be declared as the most 'sustainable State'

Valedictory function & declaration by Sikkim Tourism

Sikkim Tourism declared its support to ESOI and its activities by becoming a Grand patron to ESOI. Ms Leepandi Tagrain (Dty Director Sikkim Tourism) addressed the audience and Sikkim tourism declared its support and adoption of STCI as laid by the Ministry of Tourism Govt of India and its intention to become the first fully sustainable state in the country.

ESOI thanked all present for their valuable contribution and invite all for lunch

The workshop was declared closed.

Lunch