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Adaptation to Climate Change in the Tourism Sector in the Fiji Islands- A joint collaboration by the Fiji Ministry of Tourism, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Tourism has become an increasingly important economic sector in Fiji that brings foreign exchange earnings, employment and regional development. At the same time, the Fiji tourism industry faces major issues resulting from climate change, such as shoreline and beach erosion, temporarily reduced water availability, interrupted supply chain, coral bleaching, and physical damage to property.

Fiji's biodiversity and ecosystems, particularly marine and coastal, are at considerable risk due to climate change while at the same time they are of critical importance to the tourism industry as well as for the protection against climate impacts.

The Ministry of Tourism, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme are working on a project to reduce tourism's vulnerability from climatic impacts by implementing adaptation initiatives. The project will contribute to the long term viability and sustainability of tourism in Fiji

Fiji is greatly fortunate to be one of the three (3) countries that were chosen as pilot projects for the Small Island Developing States, due to the high vulnerability of SIDS to the impacts of climate change and their high dependency on tourism. Fiji was selected due to the country's high vulnerability to current climate change risks and climate variability, high need for adaptation actions and the high level of commitment of the government, especially its Tourism Ministry.

Based on the government's requests, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) has been coordinating with the Ministries of Tourism of Fiji, the Seychelles, and the Maldives, to implement three(3) demonstration country projects on climate change adaptation in the tourism sector. The proposed national, sector and community-scale demonstration projects will have high upscaling potential hence the experiences generated and lessons learnt by these three (3) SIDS can be applied at other island and coastal tourism destinations.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and coastal zones are most vulnerable and many are already experiencing impacts consistent with climate change. Such activities can have a high impact on local economies dependent on tourism hence the high level of vulnerability and limited access to natural resources is coupled with a low capacity to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.. Understanding vulnerabilities, managing risks, building capacity, and implementing adaptation policies and measures is therefore urgently needed in SIDS and will achieve the greatest immediate benefit within the whole tourism sector.

Climate-change related hazards, such as cyclones increasing infrequency or intensity, have the potential to substantially reduce existing tourism income and severely undermine efforts to attract new investment from within Fiji and overseas.

Scope of the proposed project

Fiji's Tourism sector faces major issues resulting from climate change such as shoreline and beach erosion, temporarily reduced water availability, interrupted supply chain, coral bleaching and physical damage to physical property due to extreme climatic events and others.

The aim of this project is to further develop and demonstrate adaptation initiatives that will reduce the vulnerability of the tourism sector, and its natural and human resource base, to the impacts of climate variability and change. Such is intended to enhance the sustainability of the natural resources and the quality of life of the people of Fiji.

The project has been initiated to develop according to the framework of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and its Focal Area which is on **Climate Change**. GEF has approved to facilitate the first phase of the project development which will involve defining of a full project proposal enhanced through stakeholder consultations. Feedback acquired will then be submitted to GEF for approval in August-September of this year. The duration of the project will approximately be of 3-4 years and will be funded from the GEF Special Climate Change Fund. Acquisition of this fund will have to be matched by co-funding, therefore the initial phase will also serve to identify donors and supporters for the full project.

Given the experience and project portfolio of GEF implementing agencies (IA) in the three countries, it was agreed that UNDP will act as the IA for Maldives and UNEP for Fiji and Seychelles. WTO will be the executing agency for all three (3) projects in order to ensure effective coordination as well as full integration of the project outputs and outcomes.

GEF projects are "implementation oriented" with country driven processes, hence the active participation and support of national stakeholders is the main determinant of the successful project development and implementation.

A specific focus of the project is to build and utilize the capacity of Fiji to integrate responses to concerns related to climate variability and change into a broader risk management framework, strategy and plan for the tourism sector.

Objective of the Workshop

The critical aim of this forum is communicate the project and what it encompasses, to key stakeholders at the climate change and tourism interface. Exchange of information, knowledge, views and expertise on climate change and variability and its interactions with the tourism sector will be shared through a wide range of presentations and discussions (consultations). This avenue will allow the workshop participants to determine relevant policy needs and capacity building requirements. In addition, possible adaptation measures will be discussed and potential demonstration projects will be evaluated.

Participants represent key Government agencies, industry representatives, research organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations and aid agencies. The purpose of the workshop is to engage stakeholders for further project coordination, gather information on available studies and policy-documents, identify climate change impacts and adaptation options in tourism, and assess capacity building and policy needs.

A Steering Committee will also be formulated and will be responsible for acquiring input from all participants and determining the next steps and phases of project development. Therefore, to enhance the proper formulation and establishment of the project, the initial workshop will be scheduled to agree on the full project proposal.

Projected Outcomes (Outcomes from the consultations and workshop)

- ✓ A strategy for resource mobilization, partnerships and institutional arrangements
- ✓ Commitment by the steering committee
- ✓ A work plan for completing the GEF (Global Environment Facility) proposal
- ✓ Identification of current and potential climate change impacts in the tourism sector
- ✓ Review of policies related to tourism and climate issues
- ✓ Strategies for capacity building and awareness raising
- ✓ Preliminary selection for demonstration projects
- ✓ Identification of co-funding for the full project

Conclusion

Tourism can be powerful ally for nature conservation, by generating much needed revenues for the maintenance of natural areas and reserves and through environmental education and awareness for both the local population and tourists. Through its multiplier effect, Tourism has great potential to provide socio-economic benefits for wider local economies, involving sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and handicrafts and if properly planned and managed, it can bring improved standards of infrastructure, health and education; food security; gender equality, personal safety, and self-esteem; improved natural resources and their management; and participation in policy making and planning.

The country studies will be critical to improve our wider understanding of climate change impacts on tourism, including adaptation opportunities in other island destinations, coastal zones, and for tourism worldwide.