TRANSFORMING TOURISM INITIATIVE

2023

SDG Midterm Stocktaking

Tourism and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A collection of perspectives from civil society and academia

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Introduction

2023 marks the midterm of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. With its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the agenda – which was adopted eight years ago – marks an important reference framework for sustainable development worldwide.

In 2023, the United Nations and its members draw a sobering midterm balance. Of the 169 sub-goals, more than half are seriously behind schedule, and more than 30 percent have even regressed – especially in the areas of poverty and hunger reduction, as well as climate and environmental protection.

What role does the tourism industry play in all of this? Connecting to other industries such as infrastructure, gastronomy and culture, tourism is a highly cross-cutting sector accounting for about 10% of global GDP in 2019. The industry is expected to almost recover to pre-pandemic levels in 2023. While certain sustainable tourism trends emerged over the course of the pandemic – such as a tendency towards nature-based travel – the negative pre-pandemic trends are back on track: mass tourism, overtourism and the ignorance towards social or environmental carrying capacities.

These are very disconcerting developments, and although tourism is only explicitly mentioned in SDGs 8, 12 and 14, the sustainable transformation of tourism is a prerequisite to the achievement of any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is against this backdrop that we published the Compendium on Tourism in the 2030 Agenda in 2017. In light of this year's UN SDG Summit, we are reflecting on the developments throughout the past few years and the ways forward. To this end, we asked TTI members or affiliates – from civil society groups and activists to academics – to share their thoughts with us.

The results add to the sobering picture of the broader SDG midterm review and go to show that the tourism sector is equally "off track" when it comes to making progress towards the SDGs. At the same time, the contributions show that avenues towards progress continue to exist. It is still possible to transform tourism and, in doing so, contribute to the wider goal of achieving the SDGs. The following authors' contributions aim to shed light on the road we must take to get there.

SDG 4 – EDUCATION

Educational Travel Experiences For A Sustainable World

By Sumesh Mangalassery | Kabani

Education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development. It is not just meant for acquiring knowledge, but also liberates the intellect, unlocks the imagination, and is a source of self-respect (The Global Goals, n.d.). Tourism can facilitate education in multifaceted ways if carefully designed and managed.

As a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), education is considered synergistic, which means that strategic interventions in education could generate progress on several other goals. In turn, this also means that setbacks may have major repercussions in many other areas. The COVID-19 pandemic took a major toll on education. Students experienced learning setbacks due to prolonged periods at home. To maintain access, teachers had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and methods, for which many were unprepared. Lost learning due to COVID-19 may affect an entire generation of students. The introduction of digital ways of teaching created a revolution in the education sector. But at the same, it also created a digital divide, denying access to education for many.

According to the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 (UN, 2023), the impacts have been greatest in low-income countries, and for low-income households, as well as for women and girls, persons with disabilities, migrants, and refugees. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was off-track for achieving quality education at all levels by 2030. According to the report, one success for girls' education, however, is that the world has come closer to gender parity: At all three levels of education the gender gap is estimated to be less than one percent. Overall, the largest gaps identified in access to education are not by sex, but by income and location.

Tourism presents opportunities to contribute to the achievement of SDG 4, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UN, n.d.), at many levels such as industry, academia, travellers, local communities, and destinations. Tourism plays a role as an engine for contributing to progress towards education for all. But we also need to look at education within the tourism industry and for its various stakeholders in order to achieve sustainable tourism. Considering the size and the impacts of the tourism industry (both positive and negative), ensuring sustainable tourism is significant for achieving sustainable development. Uncontrolled tourism development can undermine the achievements towards various goals.

Tourism academia

While the role of academia in ensuring sustainable development in the context of tourism is very important, sustainability issues are not adequately addressed by current tourism education. One can see a considerable discrepancy between tourism education provided and the needs of the sector in order to address the challenges of the industry and destinations in general.

Many academic institutions have started integrating the SDGs and sustainability into their tourism related curricula. But more concrete efforts are required to incorporate sufficient emphasis on sustainability

principles, responsible tourism practices, relevant policy topics, social and environmental considerations into courses related to hospitality, tourism management and other disciplines.

Emphasis on promoting sustainability and resilience has special significance in today's education in the context of the issues of over tourism and impacts of climate change. This kind of education should be encouraged at academic and destination levels. Since tourism is an interdisciplinary subject, other academic disciplines such as architecture or design should also include tourism in their curricula.

More in-depth research is required to make tourism practices sustainable, e.g. on environmental and social impact assessments, community engagement, cultural preservation, sustainable tourism strategies and the impacts of tourism on local communities. This research can contribute to innovative practices that can bring more resilience and sustainability to the sector and contributions to achieving the SDGs.

Consumer education

Tourism is about people and places. The sector is highly sensitive to social and environmental challenges. Thus, formal and informal education for all stakeholders involved in tourism is very much required. Educating consumers is key in any kind of tourism development. In today's digital era, many destinations are popularized by social media. This can lead to a sudden "bombshell" moment of tourism development and tourist influx (mostly local tourists) even to rural areas, creating overtourism and unplanned tourist flows without infrastructure support.

Many developing countries are facing this problem. Local travel with the interest of 'authentic experiences' significantly increased, especially post-Covid. This situation demands widespread consumer education across the world. This education should include the subjects of carrying capacity, sustainable travel decisions, and respecting local environments and cultures.

Local community

In many cases tourism is presented as a panacea of development for local communities. The relationship between holistic development and resilience of a tourism destination and tourism development is not adequately addressed. Education of local communities in this regard is important in order to plan, manage and monitor tourism locally. The attractiveness of a destination is subject to many factors such as climatic conditions and community health. Covid-19 revealed that high health risks can thwart the performance of the tourism industry completely. The impact of pandemics, political instability and other disasters showed that tourism is one of the most vulnerable industries and lacks pro-active risk mitigation. This shows the relevance of education on sustainable tourism at various levels, especially local community level.

Industry

The role of the industry is crucial in tourism education. Current education is mostly limited to the application side of the industry such as hospitality aspects. Education on design thinking, sustainability and resilience is lacking in most curricula. Industry should place more emphasis on these aspects to make tourism more sustainable. They should also encourage more learning by offering volunteer opportunities, cultural exchange programmes, programmes which can revive resilient local practices and traditional knowledge, post travel reflections and engagement, etc. These all ensure education on various aspects, as well as meaningful exchanges between guests and hosts.

Digital platforms and their influence on travel is a reality today. Travellers can be informed about the local culture, environment, and social issues of their destination through booking platforms and pre-trip materials. These resources can highlight the importance of responsible behaviour, such as respecting local customs, minimising waste, and supporting local communities.

Industry should also invest more in vocational training for local people, especially youth and women. Many value-added services can be created through linkages and will help to achieve holistic development of destinations.

The tourism sector can provide incentives to invest in education and labour mobility, inclusive of youth, women, senior citizens, indigenous peoples and those with special needs, also helping to teach values of tolerance, peace, global exchange and citizenship. A well-trained and skilful workforce is crucial for tourism to prosper.

Ways forward

Policy level

One of the major challenges tourism faces today is overtourism. Education on destination management is very important to tackle many of these issues. Tourism policies at various levels should address this. Governments should use the cross-sectoral nature of tourism to strengthen public-private-civil society partnerships and engage stakeholders (international, national, regional, and local) to work together to achieve the SDGs. Tourism education is important to improve the performance of a destination, especially emerging destinations.

Capacity building

Capacity building and skill training is an important aspect in making tourism sustainable. This can be done at various levels. The interdisciplinary nature of tourism provides an opportunity to address education through tourism in multifaceted ways. Educating about the 17 SDGs can be done through tourism. The SDGs can be included in tourism capacity modules, e.g. on gender, food security, biodiversity, climate change, etc. Practical applications of these topics in tourism can be included in capacity building programmes in tourism.

Building resilience through tourism education

Promoting traditional knowledge through tourism and educating about it can help to promote more resilience – understood here as systems adapting to new contexts – in tourism and in general. Education on such knowledge can be promoted through tourism as an authentic experience. At the same time, it can create more awareness and revival of such knowledge.

Suyatri: Educational Excursions For A Sustainable World

Providing students with transformative educational experiences that go beyond the confines of the classroom is the concept of Suyatri, a Bengaluru-based social enterprise travel start-up in India. It involves exploring new places, meeting people, and gaining knowledge and skills through direct experiences. Suyatri's programmes convert school excursions into more meaningful learning experiences for the students, connecting classroom learning with real-life situations. Most of the conventional school trips are confined to water theme parks and conventional tourism places. Suyatri designed programmes

for educational institutions on topics related to the Sustainable Development Goals, resilience, climate change, design, vernacular architecture, etc.

These visits of urban children in rural areas help villagers earn an extra income by providing various services such as home stays, guiding, providing food, and as resource persons. “We never knew that our school excursion could help villagers generate a much needed income”, says a 12-year-old student of a public school in Bengaluru. She also understood that many of the cultural activities they learned from communities were in danger of getting obsolete and their trip helped in reviving them. Besides, she found that the activities in the villages were “so much fun”: ploughing agricultural land, trying her hands in planting seeds, playing traditional games, and listening to stories from the elders of the village. She learned where their food comes from, about the hard work involved in producing it, and about challenges like the impacts of climate change.

“These kinds of interactions definitely help the children to become more sensitive towards nature and more compassionate towards people”, says the mother of an 11-year-old girl. The villagers act as teachers, sharing traditional knowledge with the children, like centuries old water conservation methods or their knowledge about plants and seeds. Most of these repository knowledge systems offer more resilient and climate resistant agricultural and other sustainable practices. These are excellent learning experiences which the children don’t get at school.

The children also become aware of the importance of travelling sustainably to preserve natural and cultural resources and support the local economy. The elders in the villages help them understand sustainable practices which exist in the villages, e.g. related to agriculture, food processing, and traditional toy making. All the field visits offer further in-depth programmes based on children’s interest in these topics. There are opportunities for field level follow-up research, volunteering and internships. The excursions are providing a meaningful urban and rural connect.

“We are happy to see children from the city coming to our village and enjoying our culture and learning our way of life. We feel we ourselves need to prepare and learn more about these practices, as many of them are no longer in use. Our old dance forms and songs are no more available in the village because our younger generations are not interested in them. But now we feel proud about them and try to revive them”, says Siddappa Gowda, a farmer and village head of a village called Girigowdana Doddi, close to the Indian city of Bengaluru.

Suyatri conducts pre-travel workshops on “thoughtful travel” for the kids at school, entitled "Discover Your Inner Animal and Inspire Travel Adventures”. These participatory workshops help them understand how to travel responsibly when they visit the villages. Students try to understand animal movements, like a bird flying, as examples of sustainable travel: They don’t require fossil fuels, nor do they need resource-intensive facilities. The workshops are meant to inspire meaningful and thoughtful travel experiences among the young travellers by helping them develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the natural world. Suyatri created a travel card called “Inner Animal Movement (IAM) Card” which helps them cultivate sustainability in their own lives and track their own actions, behaviours, and awareness related to environmental responsibility and harmonious living while travelling. They define their personal sustainability goals and identify sustainable actions, opportunities for creative initiatives, collaboration and leadership.

In these ways, Suyatri’s programme combines education on travel, its potentials, benefits and impacts (both positive and negative) with SDG-related learning for a more sustainable world among the young generation of urban Indians.

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SDG 8 – DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

When will we see decent work in tourism?

By Ernest Cañada & Carla Izcara | Alba Sud

As part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), goal number eight was established as "Decent Work and Economic Growth". In its drafting it therefore committed to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". This is one of the few goals to explicitly mention tourism. Target 8.9 of this goal announced that by 2030 policies would be devised and implemented "to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products". And the document Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators, of 10 November 2016, which detailed its indicators proposed: "8.9.1) Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate. 8.9.2) Proportion of jobs in sustainable tourism industries out of total tourism jobs and growth rate of jobs, by sex". These indicators placed an emphasis solely on economic growth and insisted on the traditional contribution of tourism in terms of economic growth, without including anything relating to the quality of this employment. Nevertheless, this bias should come as no surprise, as the SDGs, since their initial approach – according to Raoul Bianchi and Frans de Man (2020) – have pursued sustained economic growth based on market principles and a prioritization of capital interests.

Leaving decent work out of the system of indicators should not be taken for granted. According to the International Labour Organization, decent work "involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men". Consequently, the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda should be addressed: job creation, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue. However, none of this is reflected in the SDG 8 indicators. The focus is therefore limited to the growth of tourist occupancy and not the quality of such. The lack of this perspective in the specification of the SDGs has since their formulation held back expectations as to their potential for social transformation.

Post-pandemic scenario: increased precariousness

Six years after the Berlin Declaration, which saw the establishment of the Transforming Tourism Initiative, when we already detailed the corporate obstacles stopping tourism from becoming a promoter of decent work, we stated that there was an evolution in the opposite direction to that announced with the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic and the worsening of multiple global issues (climate emergency, increase of fossil fuels, scarcity of rare minerals, exacerbation of geopolitical tensions, among other factors), which have resulted in a state of polycrisis (Tooze, 2022), have further increased the instability of employment, which was already built on structurally precarious foundations (Cañada, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an unprecedented global paralysis of tourism and involved millions of job losses. This highlighted the extreme vulnerability of these kinds of jobs. In addition, the social protection measures in those countries that managed to implement them did so under the responsibility of their respective states and, as such, using public resources. Companies rarely maintained their staff

using their own means. Furthermore, the collectives facing the most insecurity, with temporary or outsourced work, were hardly able to access social assistance. In the case of informal work, the lack of assistance was even more notable. This has led to an increase in poverty and inequality, above all in areas with more tourism, where most of the population depends on the activity.

After this period, far from acting as an invitation to reflect and make changes in tourism work, we return to business as usual with an increase in capital pressure to recover "the money and time lost". The post-pandemic reactivation of tourism, beyond the practical recuperation of the number of tourists has intensified already existing trends that have worsened the quality of tourism employment, making it even more precarious. It is therefore already possible to identify some trends in progress.

First, many people who during the pandemic were able to switch to other economic sectors, with better hours and salaries, such as logistics, commerce or running their own businesses, have significantly decided to stay on in these activities and not go back to tourism. This has led to a considerable lack of personnel in the sector. The corporate response, far from improving employment conditions and therefore making it more appealing, has consisted of pressuring their respective governments to facilitate the entry of an immigrant workforce prepared to accept these conditions. This situation has, in turn, resulted in greater entrepreneurial pressure to make work more flexible and intensify work with more versatility given the lack of personnel, greater workload and an attempt to take advantage of any legal loophole, or simply subvert it, to reduce labour costs, as we have been able to document in the case of Barcelona (Cañada & Izcara, 2022).

Second, during the pandemic digitalisation processes and changes in the management of work accelerated in multiple economic sectors. This has also affected tourism. For example, in large events, some personnel in charge of passes have been substituted to prioritise online check-ins, or in an ever-increasing number of airports some of the operations prior to boarding are performed by the passengers themselves, rather than the personnel hired. In many tourist accommodation flats, the people in charge of receiving the tourists in these rented homes are being replaced by automated entry systems. At hotel receptions too, guests complete part of the registration process online beforehand. In fast food chains, personnel are being replaced by machines where you can place your order and pay. This dynamic has justifiably caused alarm regarding the reduction in certain jobs. However, whether this can become widespread is unclear and the impact of digitalization could be more complex. It is highly likely that jobs will be replaced if it means a reduction in labour costs for companies but if it is possible to access a cheap and flexible workforce, these kinds of processes will not advance in the same way. Or, rather, it may allow for an accentuation of the mechanisms of control over workers to reduce periods of dead time and intensify their work even further. This is the case, for example, with hotel room cleaning. The work of the chambermaids, who are mostly women and many are immigrant workers, is not being replaced by technological innovations and digitalization processes. At best, live information systems are improved to ensure a continuous flow of work or new work organisation systems are innovated to further standardise work and reduce the autonomy of these workers.

Third, during and especially after the pandemic, a whole series of changes gained pace in the corporate structure of large tourism corporations, as well as in the composition of their capital, which has direct consequences on labour. Corporate concentration, the growing weight of financial capital, and the accentuation of the importance of platform capitalism are some of the elements of an accelerated transformation that seeks to reduce labour costs in any way possible. The increase in inequality is weakening workers' bargaining power in the face of companies that are increasingly making short-term decisions. As a result, labour relations, where there is still capacity for resistance, are hardening.

Increasingly further away

The SDGs established a horizon on which to propose public policies that would supposedly improve common well-being. However, the failure to question the global framework in which these goals were proposed has made it impossible to develop effective policies that actually lead to decent work in tourism. If the quality of tourism work, far from improving, shows clear signs of deterioration, an advocacy agenda will need to be composed that effectively contributes to its transformation. In tourism studies, in addition to an analysis of the number of jobs, we must delve deeper into the quality of such, taking into account how the workers live on a daily basis, what their working conditions are and the violations they suffer. Within companies, strengthening trade union organisation will be essential. Public policies must take this situation into account and promote greater control over working conditions, especially when committed to their development. It is up to NGOs and social movements to highlight, inform, raise awareness, mobilise and influence in order to transform tourism work, which is increasingly distancing itself from the various formulations that claim to want to improve it. In the meantime, for many tourism workers, daily life has become a nightmare.

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SDG 10 - REDUCING INEQUALITY

By Christina Kamp

2023 marks the mid-term of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals which were adopted by United Nations member states in 2015 and are to be achieved by 2030. On this occasion, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warns that "Halfway to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda, we are leaving more than half the world behind". There have been setbacks also with regard to SDG 10, the goal of reducing inequality. "Inequalities are at a record high, and growing", Guterres said.

Inequality in the distribution of resources and opportunities can be found in different spheres of life. The dimension most commonly measured is inequality in income. SDG 10 calls for a significant reduction of inequality both within countries and between countries. It is one of the most synergistic SDGs, as inequality has serious consequences for the achievement of many other SDGs. Unequal societies tend to be less environmentally sustainable and may experience higher social tensions.

Income inequality between countries

Over the past twenty years, global inequalities between countries have generally declined. However, the pandemic has caused the largest rise in between-country inequality in three decades. In some countries with low income, especially some island developing states, tourism from richer countries has contributed to an upward trend. However, the more a country relied on tourism, the more vulnerable it was during the pandemic when tourism almost came to a standstill.

Post-Covid recovery has been uneven. High-income countries with generally higher rates of vaccination and effective relief measures found it easier to recover. In many poor countries, a slow recovery is now compounded by increasing debt burdens. In addition, the global impacts of the war in Ukraine and price increases for energy and food affect different countries and different groups differently.

According to data by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Europe recorded 585 million international tourist arrivals in 2022, amounting to nearly 80 percent of pre-pandemic levels (-21percent over 2019). The Middle East enjoyed the strongest relative increase across regions in 2022 with arrivals climbing to 83 percent of pre-pandemic numbers (-17 percent versus 2019). Africa and the Americas both recovered about 65 percent of its pre-pandemic visitors, while Asia and the Pacific reached only 23 percent, due to stronger pandemic-related restrictions. By subregions, Western Europe (87 percent) and the Caribbean (84 percent) came closest to their pre-pandemic levels.

Potentially, tourism would contribute more to reducing inequality between countries if more segments of the touristic value chain were in national and local hands, if leakages were lower and multiplier effects higher. For tourism to reduce inequality between countries, these factors need to be addressed through policy interventions in a target manner. Individual players in the tourism sector contribute at the micro-economic level. As many low-income countries are in fragile situations, facing high inflation and debt distress, there is a danger that inequality between countries will widen further.

Income inequality within countries

According to the "Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023", post-2019 data on inequality are still sparse and inconclusive. However, emerging evidence indicates that inequality within countries may have worsened as a result of the pandemic, with surveys in 2021 showing that poorer households lost incomes and jobs at slightly higher rates than richer households. Before the COVID-19 crisis, the trend had been positive, with incomes of the poorest people rising faster than national averages. Now the impacts of the pandemic and uneven recoveries threaten to reverse the trend.

Economic disparities increased and tourism was one of the sectors most affected during the pandemic. The impacts were greatest on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and on the many women and temporary workers they employ. During lockdowns, migrants who faced more restrictions and had less access to relief measures were among the most affected workers.

As tourism is a sector that has spatial distribution effects, the benefits during good times turned into disadvantages during the Covid-19 crisis, badly affecting tourist destinations. Many service industries such as tourism and restaurants have a high proportion of low-paid workers. These workers and many others in the informal sector have little cover from social protection. Once out of jobs, they were forced to leave the tourism sector which is facing difficulties in attracting new staff now that tourists are coming back.

Inequalities in access to travel and immigration processes

According to the United Nations' "Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022", "The pandemic has also exacerbated structural and systemic discrimination". Roughly one in five people have experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, age, gender, disability, religion or sexual orientation.

In travel and tourism, persistent inequalities remain in access to travel. The international arrivals counted by the World Tourism Organization do not mean that these are the numbers of people who actually travel internationally. Many of those who do are repeat travellers who cross international borders more than once a year, while the large majority of the world's population does not travel, or does not travel internationally. Crossing borders often requires a "good passport" that facilitates immigration, discriminating against people of less fortunate nationalities – often from low-income countries – who have to undergo tedious, bureaucratic and expensive visa application processes if they want to travel abroad.

Ways forward

According to the "Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023", reducing both within- and between-country inequality requires equitable resource distribution, investing in education and skills development, implementing social protection measures, combating discrimination, supporting marginalized groups and fostering international cooperation for fair trade and financial systems. Many of these key areas of action are highly relevant to the tourism sector, opening up major opportunities for tourism players to help reduce inequality through targeted measures.

To reduce inequality, the concept of "inclusive growth" – economic development coupled with equal opportunities – is frequently advocated. It entails the need to create employment opportunities specifically for disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups. While to some degree, discrimination is entrenched and systemic, a good fraction of it can be overcome through pro-active

interventions at the business level – provided that businesses are aware of the need for change and are willing to do things differently.

Haven, a social enterprise in Siem Reap, Cambodia, provides an example of how this can be done. As a restaurant set up for training purposes, Haven prepares socially disadvantaged young people for the labour market. With a solid 16-month vocational training, it enables young adults who grew up as orphans to start their careers as qualified service or kitchen staff in the hospitality sector.

Relying on strengths, ensuring market access

For the non-governmental organisations Sasane in Nepal and !Khwa ttu in South Africa, too, training is the key to the much-needed career opportunities for people who would otherwise hardly get a chance, because of their fate, adverse circumstances beyond their control, or as members of an indigenous group. The NGOs specifically focus on their trainees' strengths. As survivors of human trafficking, the women working with Sasane have been through terrible ordeals. However, they are very familiar with the region where they grew up and as tour guides they are well equipped to share the culture and nature of their mountain villages. The indigenous San working with !Khwa ttu use their skills and knowledge of their cultural heritage to design the products and services they want to offer to tourists.

In India, the social enterprise Open Eyes works with the NAB India Centre for Blind Women & Disability Studies, which trains blind women as massage therapists, relying on their well-developed sense of touch. As a tourism company, Open Eyes secures placements for these qualified women with tourism providers, thus improving their market access and raising their income. Open Eyes also cooperates with the Chhanv Foundation, an NGO working for the rehabilitation of acid attack survivors. The Chhanv Foundation runs "Hangout Cafés" in Lucknow and Agra, which also provide space to raise awareness of their "Stop Acid Attacks" campaign. In Agra, tourists mainly come to admire the beauty of the Taj Mahal. When visiting the café on a Solidarity Action Tour organised by Open Eyes, they also get confronted with the ugly reality of violence against women in Indian society.

Raising awareness

Survivors of acid attacks often suffer from social exclusion. The sluggish judiciary and lack of actual punishment of the offenders prevent many women from taking action against the perpetrators and from raising their voices in public. Open Eyes calls their café a "space of hope and self-improvement". "In the programme, these women are presented as strong survivors and not as victims, which is also how the women see themselves," expert Dietmar Quist wrote in his award rationale for the TO DO Award Socially Responsible Tourism which Open Eyes received in 2019 from the Institute for Tourism and Development.

Open Eyes makes use of the opportunities offered by tourism as an interface to build contact between tourists and people who successfully assert their legitimate claim to social participation against all odds. The guests not only ensure employment and income for marginalised people, but will also find that touristic programmes can raise their awareness of social issues. They do not just receive a simple service, but also learn a lot about problems and solutions in the society they visit. And what's more: Like the companies, they, too, become part of the solution.

Turning the tide

However, to turn the tide and get the world "back on track" with regard to SDG 10, much more effort is needed, also in tourism. Governments must ensure the protection of vulnerable and marginalised groups through adequate policies and legislation. For example, this includes social security for workers in both the formal and informal sector, and progressive tax systems that adequately tax profitable tourism enterprises and make government revenues available for the benefit of disadvantaged groups of the population, including those who might suffer from the impacts of tourism. Governments need to introduce adequate policy frameworks to ensure companies' due diligence related to possible adverse effects of their business activities.

NGOs and social enterprises provide good examples of how to facilitate social participation in tourism. However, in order to achieve a broader reduction of social inequality, such initiatives need to be scaled up, replicated and used as inspiration. Many more initiatives of this kind are needed in all sub-sectors of tourism. This also applies to companies that have so far not considered promoting inclusiveness and social change in line with the 2030 Agenda to be one of their main tasks. Some companies are already taking steps in terms of corporate social responsibility (CSR). They, too, could and should significantly strengthen their commitment to the common good, making social impact an integral part of their business models and contributing to SDG 10 on a larger scale.

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SDG 11 – SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

By Erick García | UNAM & Alba Sud

Introduction

In 1995, the keynote speech of the Conference of Sustainable Tourism in Lanzarote, Spain, recognised that tourism should contribute towards developing the communities located in tourist destinations. This premise is based on undertaking a variety of social, economic and environmental actions so that such contribution is evident at local and global level. Twenty years later, the United Nations declared the urgency of achieving 17 articulated goals by 2030, in order to reaffirm the need for a change in lifestyles and manner of consumption. It has therefore been reasserted that tourism has to contribute to the scope of said goals, one of which is goal number 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

The main actions that goal 11 proposes entail the assurance of the following by 2030: safe and affordable housing (11.1), sustainable transport systems (11.2), inclusive urbanization (11.3), protect the world's cultural and natural heritage (11.4), reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters (11.5), reduce the environmental impact of cities (11.6), provide access to safe and inclusive green and public spaces (11.7), strong national and regional development planning (11.8), implement integrated management of disaster risk at all levels (11.9) and support least developed countries in sustainable and resilient building (11.A) (www.globalgoals.org). In addition, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) argues that said actions will improve the infrastructure of tourist destinations, promote better use of the local heritage and provide a healthier environment for tourists and local residents alike (www.unwto.org).

Despite the wishes and actions recommended by international institutions, we must reflect upon the complexity of the interaction between local residents, their environment and tourists. In other words, the sustainable development goals cannot be achieved so long as the belief remains that there will naturally be no conflicts with tourists, that natural resources will be managed optimally and that there will be equal opportunities for participation and decision-making by groups of local people. In addition, what has happened in some parts of the world is that tourism – under an urgent need for economic growth – has been driven by public policies as a priority activity of a specific region, a fact that rather than promoting sustainability, has interfered with everyday social life and has degraded local ecosystems.

Tourism and resilience

Given this uncertain scenario that the residents of various tourist destinations experience, it is worth delving into the area of resilience; even goal 11 alludes to the term. However, it is only on very few occasions that its link to sustainability is specified as well as the importance of taking this concept into account for adequate tourism management. The truth is that, depending on the field of the approach, the term can have different meanings. In engineering, for example, it can refer to the resistance of materials (Fielding, 1937), in ecology it can be a capacity for adaptation and equilibrium (Holling, 1973) or in psychology it can refer to how people face catastrophic situations (Scoville, 1942). From an

interdisciplinary and complex perspective, therefore, resilience can be understood as the ability of a social ecosystem to face different adversities and overcome them by means of a process of adaptation or transformation (Folke, 2006). It is consequently assumed that in order for a tourist destination to be sustainable all of its components must be resilient. However, and mainly from the social sphere, the main questions to answer are: do all tourist destinations have this ability? Can everyone adapt to the changes caused by tourism in their community?

Major challenges

Local agency and training

A core element for developing resilience in tourism destinations is based on adaptation. However, it must be recognised that, especially in rural contexts, not everyone has the same opportunities (housing, education, income, etc.) or possibilities to change in the short term from their traditional activities to the provision of tourism services. In addition, public policies to promote tourism are sometimes focused on financing infrastructure. In fact, they neglect the opportunity to provide training on topics that are central to sustainability, and which goal 11 takes into consideration, such as road safety and environmental education, the interpretation of heritage, the circular economy and the management of accommodation and food services. The promotion of free courses for residents to broaden their knowledge and skills in tourism is essential for active local participation and proper management that represents more equitable benefits for its inhabitants.

Commodification of culture

While biocultural heritage is a major factor in motivating tourists to visit a tourist destination, its management must be carried out with caution and knowledge in order to avoid overcrowded visits to monuments, selling souvenirs that are not representative of the region, or viewing local dances and rituals for show rather than for the sake of understanding their significance. Furthermore, an inappropriate interpretation of heritage can promote stereotyping. It is not enough to argue that tourism strengthens intercultural dialogue, if it is not executed in a sense of equity, respect, and under the same conditions of interest in its knowledge.

Governance

The decision to implement public policies that promote tourism in a given place is often made without the consensus of its residents. There is even tolerance towards business owners to approve tourism projects without the prior knowledge of local residents. In addition, other local stakeholders who are not directly involved in tourism, but who could and should be involved and benefit from it (such as farmers or traders), are often segregated. The active participation of citizens' committees and civil society organisations is essential in order to define decisions that are more equitable and of greater benefit to the inhabitants of a tourism destination.

Simplicity over complexity

When talking about tourism globally, the focus is always on economic output, the number of jobs generated, or the number of tourist arrivals and departures. While there is no denying the economic importance of tourism in the world, this comes before the equanimity that must be maintained in its analysis with the three pillars of sustainable development. It is therefore necessary to make the social and

environmental aspects of tourism and its dynamics more widely known. Their study and dissemination with an interdisciplinary approach can lead to a better understanding of the situations caused by tourism, but also to an improvement in its local management.

Tangible Ways Forward

For a tourism destination to be sustainable, resilient, safe and inclusive, it requires that individuals know their environment, interact with others and have the ability to make decisions about tourism management in their community. Sustainability in a human settlement thus depends to a large extent on the capacities of social collectives to adapt and cooperate in order to achieve collective benefit (García, López and López, 2022).

Public policy of Pueblos Mágicos in Zacatlán

Since 2011, the town of Zacatlán de las Manzanas, located in the Sierra Norte of the State of Puebla, Mexico, has been part of the Pueblos Mágicos Programme. However, the economic benefit has been concentrated in the municipal capital of the town and has remained in the hands of few people. In addition, there is a higher population density and saturation of public space, poor management of the biocultural heritage and little influence in decision-making by local residents who are not directly linked to tourism activity.

Faced with this situation, since 2021, the Citizens Committee of Pueblos Mágicos has collaborated with academic institutions and local residents of different profiles to co-create solution strategies that promote the decentralisation of the benefits of tourism activity through the construction of local agency and social capital. The following proposals are currently underway:

Elox Park-Coacuila ecotourism route; the aim of the project is to offer tours to localities surrounding the municipal capital, which are rich in gastronomic heritage, handicrafts, the living culture of native peoples, landscapes and agricultural activities, and to ensure that various communities participate in tourism and benefit from it. The tourism services committee, farmers from Coacuila and Eloxochitlán, tourist guides, forestry engineering students and the environmental committee are all involved.

Digital platform "Intégrate Zacatlán"; artisans, farmers, restaurant owners, administration students and members of the ecology department, seek to articulate different commercial trades in order to promote the purchase and sale of typical products both within and outside the municipality, thus reducing the participation of intermediaries to promote local consumption and fair trade.

Development of a botanical garden: it is a space not just for the interpretation of natural heritage, but also for the study, valuation, conservation and dissemination of the diversity of plant species representative of the location.

Recovery of the Náhuatl and Temazcal in San Joaquín, Tomatlán; guides and students of tourism administration seek to recover and preserve ancestral practices of herbal medicine and temazcal through the creation of an interpretative trail.

Improvement of apple orchards in the Eloxochitlán ejido [communal land]; owners of this communal land of Eloxochitlán and social services students, seek to promote agro-ecological alternatives that in the medium and long term will lead to improved production in the orchards, the production of preserves rather than selling the fruit for juicing (due to not meeting certain requirements for sale as fruit), and the implementation of interpretative trails in the orchards.

The proposals and actions are incipient, but they may well represent a starting point for disseminating new options for collaboration, fostering trust and collective action among more actors and encouraging consensual decision-making with greater representation of diverse social groups with a view to promoting social resilience and a more sustainable destination.

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SDG 12 - SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Reflections on the status quo and the way forward

By Markus Buderath | Tourism Watch

Tourism is a dominant service sector that contributed about 10% to global GDP in 2019, with 2023 numbers expected to nearly recover to pre-pandemic levels. Through linkages with other sectors such as transportation, infrastructure and gastronomy, tourism consumes large amounts of land, water, energy and food. While certain sustainable tourism trends emerged over the course of the pandemic, negative pre-pandemic trends – specifically mass tourism – are on the rise again, and the sector's resource consumption levels are increasing again too. The current post-pandemic developments in tourism therefore appear to go in a different direction than what is needed to deliver Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.

In order to generate sustainable consumption and production patterns in tourism, we need to stop measuring success through purely economic indicators such as GDP and employment figures. We do not just need more jobs, but better ones: Workers deserve fair wages, as well as safe and healthy labor conditions. Similarly, we need to move from top-down tourism development to participatory models, and we need to ensure environmentally and climate-sensitive travel. While these changes obviously require significant efforts in the tourist destinations, we must not forget that consumption and production are mutually dependent. Therefore, it is imperative that we hold source markets responsible and shift demand from unsustainable tourism products to those considered more sustainable.

Target 12.b calls for the development and implementation of "tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products." As corporate practices in the source markets affect tourism production in the destinations, target 12.b – albeit it does not specifically say so – also requires source markets to take action. Specifically, strong legislations and public support in the tourist sending countries are needed to accompany businesses on a transformative pathway to sustainable tourism and drive the development of adequate monitoring tools.

Supply chain due diligence: a legal "push" for sustainability?

Supply chain due diligence marks a significant chance in this regard, because it requires companies to both monitor the human rights impacts of their business activities, and to take measures to prevent, mitigate and remediate negative human rights impacts along their supply chains. Tourism supply chains do not just involve hotels, transportation and excursions, but also bars, restaurants, and local souvenir shops. Besides, tourism relies heavily on the informal sector. Informal workers such as street vendors or rickshaw drivers, who often find themselves in particularly vulnerable situations, account for about half of all tourism jobs worldwide. As a concept, supply chain due diligence requires tourism and travel companies to consider these aspects and to carefully assess and monitor the human rights impacts of their own business activities. If put into legislation (as is increasingly the case), it will drive companies to come up with adequate monitoring instruments, which – to date – are often missing.While the due diligence concept originally emerged as a means to assess and address human rights risks in supply

chains, recent pieces of legislation also refer to environmental risks, albeit to varying degrees. While the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG, by its German acronym) includes environmental due diligence requirements, the latter are limited to environmental impacts that directly affect human rights. A direct responsibility to address environmental risks is limited to three binding international legal instruments (see endnote 1) while climate change is left out altogether.Another weakness is that the German law only applies to companies of 3.000 or more employees (the number will decrease to 1.000 in 2024), making it only marginally relevant for the tourism industry as a whole. As of today, only the largest four out of 3.000 German tour operators are affected by it. Nevertheless, it paved the way for more ambitious legislation to follow, with the European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) currently under way. The latter will apply to European companies of 250+ employees and a sales volume of 40+ million euros. In its current form, it will require more thorough risk analyses (the German law only covers Tier-1 suppliers) and include stricter sanctions mechanisms for those companies that fail to comply. While many small and medium-sized tourism companies will continue to be exempted from the legal requirements, one can hope – and efforts must be undertaken to ensure that this is the case – that the legislative changes will lead to improved sustainability standards across the industry as a whole.

While the CSDDD includes a specific article on climate-related risks (Article 15), business partners and supply chains are exempted from this article (see endnote 2), and the obligations imposed under Article 15 are far lower than those imposed under the articles covering human rights risks. They include instructions to ensure compatibility with the Paris Agreement's 1.5° C target and, where climate change has been identified as a salient risk, the setting of emissions reduction objectives. In terms of climate-related risks, therefore, supply chain due diligence does not yet appear to be an adequate instrument for change.

Science-based targets: on the road to effective emissions reductions?

The setting of emissions reduction targets is the primary aim of the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi). Covering GHG emission scopes 1-3 (see endnote 3), the STBi has popularized a number of methodologies to assess whether or not a company's emissions reduction objectives align with contemporary climate science, specifically the long-term global warming scenarios and the ambitions set in the Paris agreement (well below 2° C compared to pre-industrial levels, with efforts to further limit the increase to 1.5° C). To this end, the science-based targets (SBT) depart from the assumption that there is a global carbon budget, which cannot be exceeded if the commitments set in the Paris agreement are to be met. Over the past few years, an increasing number of tour operators and airlines have begun to have their emissions reduction plans validated by the SBTi. This constitutes an important development, as the industry has long been plagued by misleading net-zero schemes, in which carbon offsets are promoted as an effective means towards net-zero. The SBTi marks a significant improvement in this regard (see endnote 4), as it clearly acknowledges that carbon offsets do not replace the urgent need to slash emissions. The SBTi therefore only considers offsets as an option for companies wanting to engage in sustainability practices beyond value chain mitigation.

In this way, the SBTi is successfully setting a new bar for corporate climate action across the globe. However, the SBTi does not assess the actual transformation measures taken at the company-level, as it only validates emissions reduction plans. Further oversight and monitoring instruments are needed to ensure that these plans will translate into actions. So far, the SBTi validating team seems too small to meet this huge responsibility.

How to encourage consumers to make sustainable travel choices?

While tourism and travel companies should be the ones to bear the primary burden when it comes to reducing emissions and increasing sustainability, consumer choices matter too. But what drives consumer behavior, and what options do companies have to steer such behavior?A Booking.com study recently found that 76 percent of travelers want to travel more sustainably within the coming 12 months. While these results seem promising, the intention-action gap is known to be high in tourism, and the question remains how to close it. To this end, the Booking.com study uncovers insightful findings: about half (49%) of travelers want economic incentives to book sustainable travel options, while 43% state that they would be willing to pay more for sustainable travel products.There is no doubt that governments play a significant role in fostering sustainable travel, and this entails ensuring that such choices remain reasonably priced in comparison to less sustainable alternatives. From this perspective, it is foremost imperative that unsustainable government subsidies – such as exempting airlines from paying a kerosene tax – are removed. Instead, governments should strive towards increasing the availability and affordability of sustainable travel options such as train travel. At the same time, product prices must reflect the true costs of production. In other words, travel products must be priced in such a way as to enable fair wages, good labor conditions and sound environmental standards. While this does in some cases lead to price increases, the reality is that much can be done to increase sustainability in tourism without major price hikes.Indeed, travelers often have the possibility to book sustainable – or rather more sustainable – travel options at affordable prices. Yet they often fail to do so, which perhaps has more to do with a lack of trust than with purely economic considerations. How do consumers know what brands and what labels to trust? When looking for sustainable travel options, consumers are confronted with a wide array of sustainability labels and certificates. Determining which ones to trust can be challenging for consumers exploring sustainable travel options. The process takes time and effort, which is why intermediaries (such as travel agencies and booking platforms) should step in to inform and encourage consumers to make sustainable travel choices. This holds especially true in today's digital age, where a growing number of individuals arrange their travels online. Prominent booking platforms such as Booking.com or Skyscanner have enormous market power and they can – and should – use this power to leverage sustainability. They can do so, for instance, through prioritizing sustainable accommodations and travel options in their search rankings, as well as through informing consumers about the sustainability risks of a given travel product prior to purchase.

Conclusions

While we have seen a number of important legislative and corporate developments over the past few years that move us somewhat – albeit very marginally – closer to ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns in tourism, we remain "far off track" (UN, 2023) in delivering SDG 12. In order to sustainably transform the tourism industry as a whole, actions are required at all levels: political-legislative (from municipal to state level), corporate and individual. The fact that SDG 12 includes an explicit target on tourism goes to show that the SDG framework recognizes the sector's crosscutting nature and strong economic weight. However, target 12.b remains flawed in that it only speaks to the need to develop monitoring instruments for sustainable tourism. While the latter is important, target 12.b leaves out the question who should be responsible for developing such instruments. Indeed, the question of responsibility remains inadequately addressed throughout SDG 12 as a whole. In order to deliver SDG 12, states, corporations and consumers must all take action, and the SDG's targets could specify who carries what type of responsibilities. Sadly, however, they fail to do so.

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Endnotes

- The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.
- The reasons for this are complex and include legal considerations that forcing Global South industries to abide by climate-related limitations set by the EU could contradict existing international climate legislation.
- Scope 1 covers those emissions that a company generates directly while performing its business activities, whereas scope 2 relates to indirect emissions that arise from purchased energy, and scope 3 covers indirect emissions that occur in the value chain.
- Nevertheless, the SBTi does not remain without criticisms. For a discussion of some of the controversies, see the following article: https://www.technologyreview.com/2023/05/16/1073064/inside-the-little-known-group-setting-the-corporate-climate-agenda/

SDG 13 - CLIMATE ACTION

By Ben Lynam (head of communications at the Travel Foundation) & Paul Peeters (professor at BUas)

Travel and tourism's carbon footprint

If we were to provide a scorecard for the travel and tourism industry on progress made towards SDG 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" – and corresponding international climate targets - it would be a low score for the most part.

Current estimates on tourism's carbon footprint vary, usually depending on which emissions are included within scope, but tourism accounts for at least 5-8% of global greenhouse (GHG) emissions and up to 10-11% of total climate change. Transport represents some three-quarters of these emissions, with direct energy use associated with accommodation (cooking, heating, cooling) the next biggest source.

Though the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) claims that tourism growth has decoupled from emissions growth (WTTC, 2023), this is extremely premature. Aside from the temporary blip caused by COVID-19, emissions have been increasing at a steady rate for decades and are expected to continue to rise on a similar trajectory for most of this century. In fact, if things continue as they are, by 2050 tourism related emissions will be up by 73% on 2019 levels. If this "business as usual" scenario is allowed, tourism would use a staggering 66% of the world's carbon budget remaining, based on keeping the temperature from rising above 1.5°C between 2023 and 2100.

Of course, this is completely at odds with internationally agreed targets based on the Paris Agreement and reflected in the UNWTO's Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism (One Planet Network, 2021), requiring us to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 at the latest, to keep global warming below 1.5C. The challenges ahead are enormous.

What needs to happen?

Because the travel and tourism industry has been so slow to respond to the climate emergency, and tourism itself (number of trips taken globally) will continue to grow in line with global demographics, we found very few scenarios which will take us to zero emissions by 2050. In fact, we found only one. Decades of inaction means our options have narrowed and we must now do "everything, everywhere all at once" as UN secretary general António Guterres put it. Even in our single "tourism decarbonisation scenario" (TDS) we miss the 2030 target to halve emissions, not reaching that milestone until Spring 2036.

If we are to have any chance of achieving a sharp fall in emissions as soon as possible, reaching net zero by 2050, we must only grow the areas of tourism that are low emissions or most ready to decarbonise. Electrification of the tourism industry, powered by 100% renewable energy, will be the route to net zero for most accommodation and both surface and water transportation modalities over the coming decades. That will be a huge undertaking, but at least road and rail transport providers, ferry and hotel companies can introduce solutions that are readily available. The difficulty comes with aviation. There are two big issues here:

1. Aviation is particularly polluting: flying was responsible for 55% of ALL tourism's emissions in 2019 - but was only 23% of all trips taken. Longest distance trips (over 16,000kms return trip, equivalent to flying from Shanghai to Sydney - or further - and back), were responsible for 19% of all tourism's global carbon emission yet accounted for just 1.9% of all trips. And emissions from these longest haul trips are set to quadruple by 2050. So clearly, any plan for decarbonising travel and tourism needs to tackle aviation's impact.

2. Aviation is also a "hard to abate" activity: Unfortunately, we are many decades off from having global fleets of hydrogen-electric planes, especially for long haul trips (Eurocontrol, 2023). Significant emission reductions will only emerge after 2050, though regional aircraft may start to become zero-emissions in the 2030s (Norris, 2023). A more ready alternative to zero-emission technology is to use so-called sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) which can "drop in" to existing jet planes. But in 2019 the amount of SAF produced globally was only 0.1% of the 300 million tons of jet fuel used in commercial aviation. Increasing biofuels and waste-based fuels are problematic, as there are serious limitations around land use and availability of organic waste. So in our scenario we ultimately use synthetic SAF, also known as e-fuels produced through the "power to liquid" process (Schäppi et al., 2022). The main planetary limitation here is the availability of the renewable energy required to sustainably produce synthetic fuel, particularly in a decarbonising world where demand for renewable energy will increase across all industries. Also, the cost of e-fuel, 4-6 times current fossil fuel, hampers free market introduction.

The only way to give SAF production the chance to catch up was by assuming a global mandate on SAF blending, starting at 1% in 2025, 4% in 2030 rising quickly to reach 100% by 2050 plus restricting growth on the total number of flights globally so that jet fuel demand remains close to 2019 levels.

The one measure we didn't use in our scenario was offsetting. As we discuss in more depth in our report, simply relying on offsets as a substitute for real reductions in carbon emissions and fossil fuel use is hugely problematic and at worst (and increasingly more likely) a diversion of investment from longer term emission reduction strategies that keep the fossil fuels in the ground.

In summary, for the Tourism Decarbonisation Scenario, we used the following levers:

- Mandated use of e-fuels for aviation up to 100% in 2050.
- Investment in electrification of transport and accommodation, alongside massively acquiring/developing renewable energy.
- Investment in technology and infrastructure (e.g. hydrogen and fuel cell aircraft, high speed rail).
- Subsidies on ticket prices for sustainable travel modes.
- A global limit of the number of flights to keep jet fuel demand close to 2019 levels until zero-emissions aircraft take over the skies and renewed growth becomes possible within planetary boundaries.

How does this change the shape of travel and tourism?

In our decarbonisation scenario, total revenue, number of trips and guest nights increase roughly in line with business as usual estimates. We can continue to travel – and even fly - to see the world without heavily damaging it. However, future growth comes from the areas of tourism most ready to decarbonise

– with a move away from rapid growth in long distance travel and aviation, with the biggest growth areas coming instead from medium and short-haul trips by rail, road, coach and ferry. Those who travel long-haul will take fewer long-distance trips but are more likely to stay longer, in energy efficient accommodation. Flying will also be much more expensive, reflecting the higher costs of SAF, but alternatives will be available and cheaper (e.g. high-speed trains). And travelling shorter distances provides a huge saving.

There will be huge opportunities for travel and tourism entrepreneurs who "lean in" to the decarbonisation scenario. New destinations will be created and discovered. Through new partnerships and digital technologies it will become easy to book end-to-end travel with multiple stops and modes of transport. While it requires trillions of dollars of investment, this represents no more than 2-3% of overall travel and tourism revenue across the same period - and of course that investment is likely to yield good returns for investors.

Action required today

Although travel and tourism has been slow to act, there are increasing signs that real change is finally coming, through a hardening of policies and public attitudes. For example, the French government recently banned short-haul flights on routes where other, less polluting alternatives are available. Germany has doubled taxes on tickets for short-haul flights, and in 2021 a government-industry agreement was made to ramp-up Power-to-Liquid e-fuel production, to power the equivalent of 1/3 of domestic flights by 2030. In June 2023, the Dutch government became the first in the world to apply for a reduced cap on airport capacity for environmental reasons, and by 2026, western Norway's fjords will only allow zero-emission electric ferries, cruise ships, and tourist boats. And there has been a crackdown on "greenwashing" claims being made by travel and tourism businesses, for instance with the lawsuit being brought against KLM and their "Fly Responsibly" campaign.

However, this is all rather slow and piecemeal. For real change to occur, greenhouse gases from travel to and from destinations must be fully accounted for at a global level. Currently, international emissions from aviation and shipping fall outside of the Paris Agreement. There are now two possible solutions: a global cap on airport slots or bringing international aviation emissions back into national carbon budgets (via "Nationally Determined Contributions" – NDCs, which form part of target 13.2 of SDG 13, which aims to "integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning"). The first option is an opportunity for a fair distribution of air transport among developing and developed countries. Currently, tourism's benefits are very unequally distributed over destinations in developing and developed countries. Therefore, less-developed economies could still be allowed some growth of slots, delivered by affluent countries. The NDC-solution would allow countries to weigh air travel emissions against emissions from other industries and households. Without these changes, national aviation policies, responsible for airport capacity and bunker fuels, will only record the benefits of growing aviation, without being held to account for the emissions caused.

As such, many of the recommendations in our report are aimed at high-level governments and policymakers – because we need the investments, incentives and rules of the game to be reset at a global scale. But here are five practical things that all of us working in travel and tourism can do now:

- Support the call for global coordination of policies, innovation, investment and data whenever you get the chance – at conferences, in articles, in discussions with suppliers, when speaking to ministers. Be a leader – and collaborate with other leaders. Make it clear you want a level playing

field when reducing your emissions, and you don't want to increase your dependency on hard to abate aviation at a time of global decarbonisation. Demand from national governments they support the idea of either bringing international aviation into the NDCs or let ICAO develop a global slot distribution system with limited growth.

- Evaluate your long-term planning against the decarbonisation scenario. Question any plans that rely on growth from long haul markets, and have greater confidence in plans that tap into the growth areas we identify in the report.

- Ensure emissions from travel to and from the destination are fully accounted for in tourism plans, and recognise carbon as a "cost" when developing new products and growing markets. For instance, one study of US visitors to Barcelona found US visitors spend 70% more than Europeans, but they have a 100-300% bigger carbon footprint. They would need to spend 3x as much to match the average "income-to-carbon" ratio, or stay an extra 3 weeks to have the same daily footprint as Europeans.

- Start identifying and providing low and net-zero emissions tourism options. We should be seeing more and more of these coming to market within this decade.

- Sign and implement the Glasgow Declaration. This is the UN's global initiative where you can align with others and find support to take action.

No scenario ever is 'likely' because out of hundreds of possible futures, only one will materialise. But the Tourism Decarbonisation Scenario is achievable. We simply have to make it work, starting now, through the decisions we make every day.

Earlier this year, the Travel Foundation published a report "Envisioning Tourism in 2030 & Beyond" (Peeters & Papp, 2023), in collaboration with the Centre of Expertise in Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality, (CELTH) Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUas), the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI), and the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions (NBTC). Paul Peeters and Bernadett Papp were the principal authors. In this article, Paul Peeters (professor at BUas) and Ben Lynam (head of communications at the Travel Foundation) draw on the findings of the research to consider the current situation for tourism and climate action.

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SDG 15 – LIFE ON LAND

Glimpses of its implementation at the mid-term point of the 2030 Agenda

By Cornelia Kühhas/respect_NFI | Naturefriends International

Beautiful landscapes and the designation as a World Heritage Site, Biosphere Reserve, National Park or Nature Park are among the main reasons why tourists visit a destination. According to the World Travel Tourism Council (WTTC), 80 % of travel and tourism goods and services directly or indirectly rely on nature's resources and functioning ecosystems (WTTC, 2021). In short, natural ecosystems and biodiversity are important tourism assets.

To protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss is what SDG 15 wants to achieve. However, the road to implementing these targets has been bumpy so far, as the United Nations notes in its "Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023" (UN, 2023) – a mid-term review of the 2030 Agenda, so to speak: "Despite some progress in sustainable forest management, protected areas, and the uptake of national biodiversity values and natural capital accounting, most improvements have been modest." It is also up to the tourism industry to contribute more here.

Lack of funding

The SDG Report 2023 also emphasizes that the conservation of terrestrial ecosystems is not only essential for the survival of humankind, but also an important economic factor, contributing to more than half of the world's GDP. As the WTCC points out, nature-based tourism generates annual revenues of over 600 billion US dollars, supporting millions of jobs and providing opportunities for countries to grow and diversify their economies while protecting their biodiversity and natural heritage. The United Nations estimates that for every US dollar spent on nature restoration, between three and 75 US dollars in economic benefits can be generated from ecosystem goods and services (UN, 2020). However, between 598 and 824 million US dollars were lacking for effective nature conservation even before the pandemic, according to the World Bank. It therefore recommends governments to promote sustainable tourism in protected areas as part of their post-pandemic economic recovery strategies to achieve a triple win: recovering from the economic consequences of the pandemic, addressing long-standing development problems and conserving biodiversity (World Bank, 2021).

Tourism´s pressure on nature is growing

Often, it is fragile natural areas that attract tourists due to their beautiful landscapes, such as mountains, forests, wetlands or coastal regions. Protected areas receive an average of 8 billion visitors per year worldwide (World Bank, 2021). Thus, the pressure on these sensitive areas is great, and there is an urgent need to focus on their effective protection.

Mountain tourism, for example, represents between 9 and 16 % of international tourist arrivals worldwide; this corresponds with 195 to 375 million tourists in 2019 (UNWTO, 2023a). And the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly given mountain tourism a boost, as the desire to spend time and engage in

exercise in nature – with its benefits for human health and wellbeing – has significantly increased. This is also reflected in the fact that many mountain sports clubs have seen their membership numbers increase in recent years (ÖAV, 2022). However, this also means that more people are out in the mountains and the pressure on nature, which is particularly vulnerable in these places, is increasing. This pressure must be alleviated through visitor guidance, awareness-raising, the extension of the seasons and the expansion of the tourist offers.

Lack of data

In order to implement this effectively, data – in addition to funds – are needed on which the appropriate measures can be taken. However, relevant and significant data – such as visitor numbers, impact measurement, etc. – are often not available or not of sufficient quality, as the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) and the UNWTO state: "The lack of reliable tourism data and indicators in most mountain destinations worldwide significantly challenges the monitoring and evaluation of the positive and negative impacts of tourism activities, especially in developing countries"(FAO & UNWTO, 2021). Data is also needed “for further research on tourism development, demand and impact in mountain regions” (FAO & UNWTO, 2023).

(Plastic) waste – tourism is littering its own livelihood

Littered beaches, as well as rubbish along trekking routes and tourist hotspots reveal another massive threat to nature: plastic pollution. The tourism industry produces tons of waste – and thus damages its own capital: an intact, livable nature and environment. In many destinations, the waste infrastructure is completely overloaded with the amount of waste generated by tourism, often there is no money for waste treatment.

According to the UN Environmental Programme, 19 to 23 million tonnes of plastic waste leak into aquatic ecosystems every year, polluting lakes, rivers and seas (UNEP, n.d.). WWF Germany states that the financial damage to the tourism industry from plastic pollution in the Mediterranean alone amounts to 268 million Euros per year (WWF, 2019).

In January 2020, the “Global Tourism Plastics Initiative” was launched under the auspices of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UNWTO in cooperation with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (UNWTO, n.d.). The initiative is part of the “One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme”. It aims to build a global alliance to combat plastic pollution in tourism, to support the tourism industry and to define concrete roadmaps to prevent and reduce plastic waste. So far, more than 100 leading tourism companies, suppliers, trade associations, non-governmental organisations, consultancies and certification schemes have joined.

Sustainable food supply supports biodiversity

One sector that plays an important role in tourism is food. At the same time, it is precisely in the organisation of food supply that accommodation facilities and gastronomy have an important lever for nature and biodiversity protection in their hands: Local, seasonal and organic agricultural products have a small ecological footprint, foster biodiversity and also support the regional economy.

“One visible aspect of the efforts to make the agriculture sector more sustainable is the raise of organic agriculture, the main feature of which is its avoidance of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides”, states the

FAO in its Statistical Yearbook 2022 (FAO, 2022). Organic agriculture also produces fewer greenhouse gases than conventional agriculture – currently, global agriculture is responsible for about a quarter of climate-relevant emissions (WRI, 2018).

According to FAO (2022), in 2020, the agriculture area under certified organic status was 75 million hectares – out of a total of 4.74 billion hectares worldwide. As an important sector of the economy, the tourism industry has the potential to strengthen organic farming through an increased offer of organic food in restaurants and hotels and thus an increased demand for organic agricultural products.

In 2020, 337 million tonnes of meat were produced worldwide, 45 % more than in 2000. About 70 % of agricultural land is used for animal husbandry in the form of pasture and arable land (FAO, 2022). An important contribution to the ecologisation of nutrition can be made by the increased offer of vegetarian and vegan meals in gastronomy and the hospitality industry.

Nature tourism raises awareness

With all the challenges that sustainable tourism poses in nature (conservation) areas, nature tourism has great potential to raise awareness and sensitize visitors to nature conservation and environmental protection, and to encourage them to act sustainably in their everyday lives. Because, as the late Konrad Lorenz said: "You only protect what you love, you only love what you know." However, this requires an appropriate infrastructure, such as guides, well-maintained trail systems, visitor information, visitor guidance measures, and good management to ensure the financing.

During the pandemic, we were clearly shown the negative impact that a lack of revenue can have on protected areas. One example is the "Bwindi Impenetrable National Park" in Uganda, which is visited by numerous tourists from all over the world because of its gorilla population, and where many locals earn their living as guides. When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, the park was locked down in March 2020, leaving many people without jobs and income from one day to the next. Shortly after the lockdown, poaching in the national park increased, as local people hunted wildlife either for food or for income (Mongabay, 2021).

Set the framework!

In order to advance the achievement of the goals of SDG 15 – and this also applies to all other SDGs – a (legal) framework and concrete “roadmaps” for achieving the goals are urgently needed. Recently, some international legislative initiatives have been launched that also have the potential to promote sustainable tourism development and, in particular, nature conservation and to reduce negative impacts on biodiversity.

As examples, the EU Supply Chain Law (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence and amending Directive) and the EU Nature Restoration Law can be mentioned. The EU Supply Chain Law (also see the article on SDG 12) obliges companies operating in the EU internal market to ensure compliance with international environmental and human rights standards along their entire value chain. The European Union´s Nature Restoration Law now obliges all EU member states to restore destroyed nature to a good ecological condition, thus safeguarding the stocks of pollinators, natural resources, clean air and clean water.

At the COP15 in Montreal in December 2022, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance presented the “Nature Positive Travel and Tourism Initiative” (WTTC, n.d.). Signatories from the travel and tourism

sector pledged to protect biodiversity, reduce CO2 emissions, use resources sustainably and protect and restore nature and wildlife.

Initiatives by the tourism industry like that are an important step in the right direction, but now the declarations of intent must be quickly followed by concrete action!

The fight against the climate crisis is the top priority

Success in maintaining an intact environment with rich biodiversity stands and falls with the successful tackling of the climate crisis. This year, we have been made particularly aware of how threatening climate change is: devastating forest fires, hurricanes, floods, extreme heat and drought have claimed hundreds of lives and destroyed natural areas, forests and coasts all over the world. Just as in the promotion of biodiversity, the tourism industry holds great responsibility and potential to actively contribute to the fight against climate change (see the article on SDG 13).

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SDG 16a – Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and Build Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels

By Andy Rutherford | Fresh Eyes – People to People Travel

Overview

There is a widespread consensus among academics and activists that we collectively face three interlinked fundamental challenges: Climate crisis and biodiversity loss; Authoritarianism and discrimination; and Growing Inequality. These interlinked crises have major influences on the lives, livelihoods and felt futures of the majority of people across the world.

The corresponding challenges, and their expression in political and economic decision-making processes at local and national levels, have significant influences on the limited or regressive progress towards tourism and travel's contributions to achieving the SDGs, including SDG16, "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." Disturbingly, all of these challenges have become more acute and pronounced since 2015.

The fundamental changes required in tourism and travel are put forward in A Just-Green Deal for Tourism (see Rutherford, 2019), which lays out the foundations for just, equal, inclusive and environmentally respectful tourism and travel.

Introduction

At local and national levels, there is a significant democratic deficit with respect to participatory planning and consultation on travel and tourism. There is rich documentation of planning decisions prioritising the interests of large and medium-sized companies at the expense of citizens and the environment globally. As such, citizens and communities are excluded from key decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Both corruption related to planning and infrastructure development and myopia of agreed environmental and health standards remain widespread (e.g. Das & Dirienzo, 2010). Overall, there is a dearth of community-based, reliable, appropriate, democratically accountable planning and monitoring processes related to travel and tourism.

The overall conclusion "that the success of the 2030 Agenda will depend on our ability to sustain stable, secure and inclusive societies governed by states that are essentially trustworthy, responsive to constituents, free of corruption and committed to eliminating violence" (Zuber, 2016) is extremely pertinent to tourism and travel.

Core reflections - Overview of trends since 2015 and their effects on progress towards SDG16

There is a widespread consensus among academics and activists that we collectively face three interlinked fundamental challenges: Climate crisis and biodiversity loss; Authoritarianism and

discrimination; and Growing Inequality. These interlinked crises have major influences on the lives, livelihoods and felt futures of the majority of people across the world.

These challenges, and how they express themselves in political and economic decision-making processes at local and national levels, have significant influences on the limited or regressive progress towards tourism and travel's contributions to achieving the SDGs, including SDG16. Disturbingly, all of these changes have become more acute and pronounced since 2015.

Covid-19 has dramatically highlighted the need for just, equal and inclusive social and economic initiatives, alternative policies and practices. These need to be sincerely implemented, supported by law and applied to an increasing number of communities and countries. We have a fundamental need for more just, equal and inclusive societies that respect and protect the social, economic and political rights of all. Special attention must be paid to marginalized groups.

Our conclusions from 2017 remain disturbingly pressing

Tourism requires significant reforms in order to contribute positively to the building of just and inclusive societies that are based

1. on respect for human rights (including the right to development);
2. effective rule of law and good governance at all levels;
3. transparent, effective and accountable institutions.

With these objectives in mind, the reforms must repurpose the relationships between large and medium-sized businesses, political and legal planning processes at both local and national levels, and citizens in 'host' communities.

Reforming the relationship between business stakeholders and local decision-making

Citizens and workers in the host communities have the biggest stake in ensuring a form of tourism that protects their cultural and natural environment and contributes to fulfilling their social and economic rights.

Many of today's challenges can be addressed if functioning relationships are built between communities and local tourist operators, working through local and national participatory and accountable decision-making, planning and monitoring processes, rooted in more inclusive democracies. This is a complex and challenging task, but an essential one (Mason, 2016).

Integrated participatory planning

Approaches to sustainable development must be co-ordinated nationally and locally. There are some examples of this type of planning within tourism. They show that it is possible to promote diversified forms of tourism to ease concentration and allow for alternative ways to flourish, encouraging more socially just and environmentally respectful activities. However, to be viable and sustainable, they all depend on citizen/community/public control and participation.

Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism

Planners and government officers at both the local and national level, as well as representatives of trade unions, tourist operators, travel agents, and 'host' communities must be equipped with guidelines and 'best practices' for sustainable tourism. Such guidelines must aim to bridge the large gap between rhetoric and reality (Biosphere, n. d.). These guidelines must be generated through a network of "Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism".

One step forward is to put in place regulations and legislation that effectively protect local citizens and communities from harmful tourism as well as mechanisms that require travel and tourism businesses to compensate for losses and repair the damage they have created, especially if operators end their activities in an area.

Clear, transparent, and accessible mechanisms of accountability

Accountability mechanisms are needed to empower people(s) to monitor and hold governments, financial institutions, development agencies and the private sector in tourism accountable for their actions.

At the transnational level, an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations with respect to human rights is required. This should contain clear and strong provisions prohibiting the interference of corporations in the process of forming and implementing laws and policies, as well as administering justice, at all national and international levels (TNI, 2015).

Local communities and indigenous peoples must have a central position in the new models of sustainable tourism, understanding them as a means of enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing of local populations, including mainstreaming gender considerations in sustainable development.

There is a growing number of community-based initiatives enabling host communities to have a stronger voice in the development and monitoring of travel and tourism. Many of these come from associations and not-for-profits that build on participatory development approaches to community development. Each provides some key contributions to more sustainable and just travel and tourism.

Core questions to assess trends since 2015 and their effects on progress of tourisms contributions towards SDG16

Are national and international institutions more effective, inclusive and transparent than before?

Disturbingly not. The growing trend towards authoritarianism has weakened spaces for citizen-government engagement, which in turn had a negative effect on international and multi-national institutions. While some regions, such as the EU, are continuing to strengthen options for citizen engagement, this too is beginning to be challenged.

Is decision-making at all levels becoming more responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative?

Disturbingly not. Since 2015, the respective UN Special Rapporteurs have consistently shared concerns about growing pressures and limitations on public access to information, protection of fundamental freedoms and the promotion of non-discriminatory law. Policies for sustainable development have evolved in the contested context of national responses to the 'climate emergency', with some important and exemplary progress countered by a majority of inadequate trends and contradictory responses.

Does current tourism practice enable local, national and international institutions to be more transparent, accountable, inclusive and effective? Does tourism contribute to economically and socially just and inclusive societies?

On a government level, a lack of strategic planning and policy commitment to sustainable tourism continues. With respect to travel, there has been some significant progress in terms of monitoring CO^2 emissions and communicating emissions data to travellers to encourage tourists to make 'greener' travel choices. This has led to increased transparency on emissions. However, there are rising concerns of 'green-washing' in many so-called CO^2 offsetting schemes, with doubts as to whether actual company practice has significantly and adequately changed (see also the articles on SDGs 12 and 13).

There is a widespread view that commercial and corporate led tourism is not contributing to economically and socially just and inclusive societies as per the expectations and aspirations of the internationally agreed SDGs.

Are there community-based, reliable, appropriate, and democratically accountable planning and monitoring processes and systems related to tourism and travel?

Disturbingly not. The growing trend of authoritarianism in an increasing number of countries has expressed itself in limiting, co-opting, controlling, truncating and simply closing down community-based, reliable, appropriate, democratically accountable planning and monitoring processes and systems.

Has the knowledge about sustainable tourism indicators, tools and mechanisms in the tourism industry improved?

There have been significant developments with respect to monitoring CO^2 emissions (also see the article on SDG 13), sometimes across supply chains. Additionally, there has been a trend to a less 'visible' use of some plastics. This has tended to be 'public facing' and not reflected across supply chains. There has been a growing trend to marketing and promoting tourism products as 'eco', 'green' or 'sustainable' (World Tourism Organization, n. d.), which has shifted expectations of some travellers.

In addition, there has been a continuing development of community-based, environmentally respectful tourism initiatives (SASANE, n. d.). These are recognised by awards, such as the TO DO award (ITB, 2022), yet some initiatives have struggled with the costs and processes of certification.

Has government level strategic planning and policy commitment to sustainable tourism improved?

Generally not, with some notable exceptions. Some countries, including Costa Rica and Bhutan, have embraced sustainable tourism. Few, such as Bhutan, have consistently linked this to limiting numbers of tourists (Rai, 2023) in the clear context of overall sustainability.

Is there systematic environmental, social and economic monitoring of the effects of tourism and travel on people's social and economic rights as well as on the rights of marginalised and indigenous peoples?

This remains absent overall. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (OHCHR, n. d.-a) requires all states that have signed and ratified CEDAW to report on their progress and adopted measures relating to the rights described in the convention. In addition, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States (OHCHR, n. d.-b). These mechanisms, however, do not require systematic monitoring of the effects of

tourism and travel on vulnerable groups. It remains vital that human rights defenders, trade unionists, women's rights activists and others record and share the lived experiences of communities affected by aggressive and unsustainable tourism and travel developments. As shared in Transforming Tourism events, this can be challenging and even life threatening (TTI, n. d.-a).

Does corporate impunity remain a significant issue and do its effects still cascade down, negatively affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions of people?

Disturbingly, yes, but with some potential for future progress. Notwithstanding efforts from some national governments and coalitions of civil society organisations, progress of the UN's Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group (OEIGWG) with the mandate "to elaborate an international legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises" (TNI, 2018) has been stalled.

Meanwhile, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework claims to be the global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights involving business activity. They provide the internationally accepted framework for enhancing standards and practices with regards to business and human rights (OHCHR, 2012).

On a positive note, in 2023 the European Parliament adopted the directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDDD) (European Parliament, 2023). The CSDDD requires in-scope companies to conduct due diligence on, and take responsibility for, human rights abuses as well as environmental harm throughout their global value chains (see also the article on SDG 12).

On a global level, has there been an increase in networks and partnerships working on sustainable tourism at different scales? In addition, have participatory planning processes and shared learning among industry stakeholders increased?

The Transforming Tourism Initiative (TTI, n. d.-b), building on the consensus developed in the Berlin Declaration (TTI, 2017), emerged in response to the realisation that global collaboration on sustainable tourism is lacking. The work of TTI continues, with a clear interest to invite people and organisations to join the collaboration.

As a whole, the tourism and travel sector would greatly benefit from integrating and networking with civil society networks and movements working for more inclusive as well as environmentally and socially just tourism and travel.

Conclusions

In summary, tourism and travel face fundamental, interlinked challenges that require priority responses. In times of growing authoritarianism, inequalities, climate-related disasters, and biodiversity loss, there are growing imperatives to strengthen and link civil society with parliamentarians and corporate players, whose decisions dramatically influence the current and future lives and livelihoods of people globally. Finally, the Just-Green Deal for Tourism (see Rutherford, 2019), which was jointly developed by civil society members in 2019, provides an important framework for how to move forward.

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SDG 16b - PEACE

Building Peace Through Tourism For Those Who Cannot Travel

By Maria Youngsin Lim | Imagine Peace

Progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 is threatened by rising levels of conflict, war and instability. According to the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023, SDG 16 on peace should be seen as an enabler for other SDGs. Across all SDGs, progress relies on peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice for all and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

Crossing borders and travelling the world is possible mainly for those with a "good" passport, a "good" nationality, and who can afford it. During the COVID-19 pandemic, border controls have become sharper, filtering out those who cannot travel. The purpose of these stronger borders is not just to control the movement of travellers. While the World Tourism Organization enthusiastically proclaims 'tourism for all', an increasing number of people are risking their lives crossing borders to escape from war, conflict, poverty and disasters.

The UNHCR Global Trends Report 2022 stated that there are 108 million people displaced globally by war, persecution, violence and human rights abuses. 35.3 million are refugees. Refugee numbers had been increasing every year prior to the pandemic. However, the recognition rate decreased. The freedom to move, to escape war and find peace, is most urgent for people who are suddenly displaced due to wars and conflicts. But in many cases, the world denies the right to travel and freedom of movement to those who have become refugees because they do not qualify as "nationals". People crossing borders to escape war and violence are too easily considered "dangerous", coming from a "bad" country. In an era of unending war, conflict and climate-related disasters, the values of SDG 16 on peace and inclusion become even more important.

Between 'nationals' and 'refugees' in Thailand

On the Thai-Myanmar border, the long-running issue of refugees came to the fore in February 2021 when the Myanmar military took power and declared a "coup'd'etat" for the whole country. Offensives were launched against its citizens including the Karenni people in Kayah State, forcibly displacing people to Myanmar's bordering countries to seek protection. It is estimated that more than 100,000 have been displaced and have become refugees in Thailand since 2021. However, the exact number is unknown. This population is not officially recognized as 'refugees' by the host country, but as 'displaced persons'. Those who are lucky to arrive alive at the border crossing are only allowed access to temporary safe zones. Once in the temporary shelters, they are not permitted to leave and are stuck within the confines of the vicinity. They are not allowed to travel to any other part of Thailand. If caught outside of the temporary safe zones, they can be subjected to penalty for violating the regulations.

Exploitation of undocumented refugees from Myanmar, who are paid only about one third to half the wages of Thai workers, is widespread in the many farms and factories along the border. And the unfair treatment that they constantly experience remains unheeded. Meanwhile, more people are fleeing war and violence and get stuck at the border between Thailand and Myanmar.

Weaving hope with refugee women

In the 1990s, WEAVE (Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment), a non-profit foundation, began to support the education, health, and economic empowerment of refugee women. Right from the beginning, WEAVE knew that that without refugee women's economic independence, safety and health are unattainable goals. In the empty hands of the Karen and Karenni refugee women, who had no freedom, no resources, and no support for economic activity, WEAVE found the intangible heritage and life skills of weaving. The amount of money that could be earned from a single handmade scarf, woven in three days while looking after a child, was not insignificant. It was the equivalent of a day's wage for a refugee labourer outside the camp.

Some women in the camps were young mothers in their late teens and early twenties who had already experienced multiple burdens from childbirth, divorce, or rape. WEAVE's Fairtrade project that started in 2012 provided a safe and enabling space for refugee women to have access to productive activities and a gainful and dignified income while healing themselves through weaving and in creating beautiful handmade products. WEAVE strongly believe that economic independence and provision of social capital contributes to women's capacity to build their dignity and lead independent lives. More than money, weaving has given them hope, a new rhythm of life and sense of identity.

WEAVE, a registered enterprise in Thailand, contributes the proceeds of its profits to public causes, e.g. for the refugee girls' school, for childcare support, nursery school buildings, or empowering women and training them as peace mediators. According to Mitos Urgel, President of WEAVE, his organization helps refugee women become agents in solving the problems in their communities rather than merely being receivers of assistance.

A peace journey that connects inside and outside borders

In 2022, WEAVE launched the "Dignity Pouches for Refugee Women" campaign with Imagine Peace South Korea to help the new wave of refugees and vulnerable women that arrived in the temporary shelters. WEAVE women refugee artisans decided to sew dignity pouches to hold essential items that vulnerable girls and women need, including sanitary napkins, towels, soap, underwear, whistles for self-defence, lanterns, and sarongs (traditional skirts). South Korean peace travellers who were connected through fair trade and fair travel took responsibility for the items in the pouches. Members of the Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO) and students from the Women's Study Programme delivered the pouches to over 1,000 women.

WEAVE's Women's Study Programme, a ten-month residential school programme for refugee girls aged 17-24, uses a curriculum that teaches women's rights, peace, innovation, and social values. Students learn to identify and solve problems collectively. In one workshop during a peace trip, the girls were asked what they needed most in the refugee camp, and the girls unanimously replied, "a space to experience peace." There is an overwhelming lack of peaceful spaces in the prevailing harsh living conditions. The president of WEAVE, Mitos Urgel, said: "Refuges are valuable and women can only be stronger if we cultivate peace building initiatives to prepare young refugee women to become peace makers in their families and communities."

The Peace Library Project

The travellers listened to those voices and began to take steps of solidarity. Although their trip ended, their efforts to create space for peace did not stop. In July 2022, WEAVE's artisan women and the girl students designed a peace library to be built together: Not just for books, but to create a safe space to draw and listen to music, to learn and teach peace. In the refugee camps, women's peace workshops are being conducted to discuss and devise ways to create a space and culture of peace. The travellers started a campaign project to support the peace library. The memories built through travelling have transformed the spirit of connection into the power of solidarity.

In July 2023, a few months after funding for the Peace Library was sent, we received photos: The ground was cleared, the pillars were put in place, and the roof was put on. The people doing the work were not men, not engineers, but women: artisan weavers and refugee girls attending the girls' school. As they hand-picked the soil, erected bamboo poles and walls, and set-up the roof, a peace library was built in a refugee camp in the middle of the jungle. One girl's idea of having a place to drink water and wash hands on one side of the library for those who walked to it in the heat of the day on dirt paths was being implemented. Without the support of a major foundation or the handiwork of experts, the Peace Library is just a small, ramshackle building in the middle of a refugee camp. But peace thrives there thanks to the power of the memories of peace and the relationships that enabled its creation.

In this way, cross-border travel and encounters create cracks in the walls and carry the narratives of people trapped in places outward through the memories of the travellers. Through the time spent in the borderlands, unspoken words become stories and expand into social memory. Through reflection and awareness of what builds and maintains boundaries, and steps across boundaries, barriers are broken down one step at a time.

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SDG 16c - CHILD PROTECTION

Responsible tourism companies and sustainable development

By Nelson Rivera & Sergio Rivera | Fundación Renacer - ECPAT Colombia.

Tourism is an economic activity that, in its essence, can generate significant opportunities for the economic and social development of communities. In its complexity and multiplicity of actors, it has the possibility of generating social order processes that not only benefit a few - company shareholders, for example - but also enhance common development. However, for tourism to fulfill its true potential as an engine of development, it must focus on sustainability, ethics, and the promotion of human rights. In this context, the prevention of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (CSEC) and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.1 become imperative.

The World Code of Ethics for Tourism of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) - today a Convention - proposes that tourism is a privileged means for individual and collective development. This principle aligns with the United Nations SDG 16.1, which seeks the elimination of all forms of violence and promotes peaceful and inclusive societies. Tourism, when practiced ethically and sustainably, can contribute significantly to achieving this goal. However, for this to happen, it is essential that tourism activities promote gender equality and fully respect human rights.

The Code of Ethics also emphasizes the importance of protecting the specific rights of the most vulnerable population groups, including children, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. Critically, ethical tourism cannot coexist with the exploitation of human beings in any of its forms and, even less so, when it affects children, since this tolerated coexistence not only violates the fundamental objectives of tourism but also constitutes a denial of its essence.

In this context, it is essential to recognize that ethical tourism committed to sustainability must strive to eliminate or reduce risk factors associated with sexual exploitation that may be directly linked to its operations or present in its environment. Unfortunately, reality shows us that tourism has sometimes become a vulnerable terrain for human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Although tourism itself is not responsible for these abuses, it does have the power and multiple opportunities to take measures to prevent them and contribute to the promotion and defense of human rights.

This implies different areas of action for tourism service providers -mainly companies-: firstly, they must promote decent, fair and equitable work, taking into account the disparities and inequities historically linked to social gender roles. At this point, a clear contradiction arises with SDG 16.1, which seeks to eliminate all forms of violence, since the tourism infrastructure has not escaped the reproduction of these inequalities to the detriment of the rights of women who suffer exploitation. and workplace harassment. Although tourism companies generate millions of jobs, they cannot limit themselves to hiring local labor from the towns where they operate, but must actively commit to building democratic social environments that protect children and the community in general.

The contribution of companies to local development cannot focus solely on the delivery of materials and tangible goods, which, although they may contribute to mitigating some community needs, are never sufficient to counteract violence and the causes of sexual exploitation; Tourism companies must be

actively involved, as social actors, in the generation and sustainability of opportunities for the social and community development of the populations in the tourist territories based on the recognition of the needs and dynamics of these populations that constitute risk factors for affectation. to human rights. This includes, first of all, its workers, who must have the possibility not only of finding means to satisfy their needs through a fair salary, but also of having opportunities for personal, family and social development.

Vital issues such as the promotion of mental health, the comprehensive well-being of families and the development of skills for managing conflicts within them - to cite a few examples - can contribute to the formation of healthier and more democratic communities, which results in greater labor productivity. These actions, promoted also by low-cost companies, can promote compliance with human rights due diligence standards, while contributing to neutralizing potential factors of violence, which is essential to prevent and address sexual exploitation and other abuses in the workplace.

One of the obvious challenges in this process is that many tourism companies, especially in countries like Colombia, tend to be small and medium-sized, and do not have sufficient resources and infrastructure to carry out these initiatives effectively. This highlights the need to create more and better opportunities for economic growth through promotion and incentive policies from the government, but also support and cooperation exercises between companies at different levels. Alliance or association initiatives around promoting and respecting human rights in the business environment can contribute to strengthening economic development and positioning tourism companies as interested parties in the well-being of communities and the prevention of sexual exploitation.

Today, sustainable tourism has become a global trend, and many tourism companies and destinations are adopting more responsible and ethical practices. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that tourism is a vehicle for sustainable development and the promotion of human rights in all its forms. The prevention of CSEC and the achievement of SDG 16.1 are crucial goals in this process.

To move in this direction, tourism companies, governments, non-governmental organizations and society as a whole must collaborate in an active and coordinated manner. Here, international cooperation plays a fundamental role, since tourism-related problems know no borders and require global solutions.

One of the key steps towards improving sustainable tourism and preventing CSEC is education and awareness. Tourism companies can train their staff not only in identifying possible risks of sexual exploitation and in taking measures to prevent them. In addition, they can promote awareness campaigns among tourists and their workers so that they refrain from committing any abuse and become agents of prevention by promoting attitudinal and practical changes to discourage the demand or request for sexual and sexual “services.” participation in the intermediation chains of sexual exploitation.

Tourist destinations - local government bodies that regulate tourism activities - play a crucial role in this process. They must implement policies and programs that promote ethical and sustainable tourism, including specific measures to prevent sexual exploitation. This involves establishing effective reporting and sanction mechanisms and guaranteeing supervision and compliance with established regulations.

Furthermore, it is important to promote economic diversification in tourist territories to reduce exclusive dependence on tourism as a source of income. This will help create a stronger economic foundation and prevent local communities from being pressured to tolerate abusive practices in the name of economic development.

In this context, the strengthening of small and medium-sized tourism businesses is essential. This can be achieved through training, access to finance and the promotion of good business practices. Improving the

ability of these companies to operate sustainably and ethically contributes to the prevention of CSEC and the achievement of SDG 16.1.

The role of civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is fundamental in this process. NGOs can play a monitoring and reporting role, as well as providing support to victims of sexual exploitation. They can also collaborate with tourism businesses to implement corporate social responsibility programs that promote the well-being of local communities, such as codes of conduct and due diligence standards.

Ultimately, sustainable and ethical tourism is a shared responsibility. All actors involved, from tourism businesses to governments, international organizations, and society at large, must work together to ensure that tourism is a positive force that contributes to the economic development and well-being of communities, while preventing human trafficking, CSE and promoting SDG 16.1.

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Editors

Alba Sud, Spain

Brot für die Welt – Tourism Watch, Germany

Fresh Eyes – People to People Travel, UK

Kabani – The Other Direction, India

Naturefriends International, Austria

Contributing authors
Markus Buderath (Brot für die Welt – Tourism Watch); Ernest Cañada (Alba Sud); Erick García (UNAM & Alba Sud); Carla Izcara (Alba Sud); Christina Kamp; Cornelia Kühhas (respect_NFI, Naturefriends International); Maria Youngsin Lim (Imagine Peace); Ben Lynam (Travel Foundation); Sumesh Mangalassery (Kabani); Paul Peeters (BUas); Nelson Rivera (Fundación Renacer - ECPAT Colombia); Sergio Rivera (Fundación Renacer - ECPAT Colombia); Andy Rutherford (Fresh Eyes).

Editorial note

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V. i. S. d. P.
Carla Izcara
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