

Making Tourism Count

for the Local Economy in the Caribbean

Guidelines for Good Practice

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Brief 7

Building neighbourhood partnerships

The Issue Partnerships with residents and neighbours can cover a variety of issues: waste management, water use, energy supplies, development of local craft markets, local guiding services, improvement of local enterprises and services, seafront development, creation of pedestrian streets and local restaurants and cafes, management of attractions and development of new ones, management of begging, traffic control, control of sex tourism and policing of crime, as well as festivals for local people and tourists to enjoy together.

There are many opportunities to enrich the destination. A successful tourism destination requires that the host community is welcoming to guests. Part of the business case for ensuring that there are significant local benefits from tourism for local communities is the 'license to operate' (see Brief 1). Local communities are reduced to hawking and begging when they are denied access to sell to tourists and when the community sees tourists as unwelcome and 'fair game'. In order to avoid this, the tourism industry needs to work individually and collectively at developing positive relationships with neighbouring communities.

Consider the opportunities

Building local partnerships can help the destination become a better place for tourists to visit and a better place for people to live. Local partnerships can do the following:

- **Enrich destinations:** the local area within walking distance or a short bus or taxi ride can become part of the destination used by tourists staying in the hotels and resorts.
- **Boost local communities:** local people not only gain opportunities to sell goods and services to tourists, but also benefit from enhancement of public spaces, parks, gardens, promenades and pedestrian streets. They may be developed for tourists but enjoyed by locals to play chess, talk with friends or sit in the shade of a tree. This in turn adds to the authenticity of a place and creates an ambience that tourists enjoy.
- **Reduce hassle and feelings of risk to health or safety:** effective local partnerships between government, hoteliers and local people can reduce hassle of tourists and

thus greatly improve tourist enjoyment.

- **Reduce the negative impacts** of tourism, such as litter, waste, or sex tourism.

Although one hotel or tour operator, with vision and commitment, can achieve real change, so much more can be achieved if stakeholders, and even competitors within a destination, work together:

- **Economies of scale** can be gained by businesses working together: If hotels and tour operators collaborate, they can provide a substantial market to local business that enables them to invest in expanding production, or they can provide inputs (such as health and safety training) that may be too expensive for one operator. Local entrepreneurs can collectively improve their transport or marketing in ways that cannot be afforded individually.
- If a **new initiative** is supported by different parts of the tourism supply chain, success is more likely. For example,

a new craft centre will flourish if: tour operators are consulted on their client needs and then include it in their tour; international tour operators audit it to ensure its inclusion is allowed; hotels purchase its soft furnishings and provide information about it on notice boards; and agreements are made with local taxis and guides so that tourists are taken to it.

The tourism sector has much expertise to offer local entrepreneurs, but other sector inputs are essential: such as micro-business development, technical aspects of agriculture or light manufacture, and business finance. Local government also needs to be involved.

Understand the challenges

In some destinations in the Caribbean, and elsewhere, it is a considerable challenge to provide experiences for holiday-makers that meet the quality and health and safety expectations of consumers and the requirements of the Package Travel Directive. For tour operators and hoteliers to encourage their clients to venture out of the hotel or away from organised excursions, health, safety and security issues have to be managed so that the necessary minimum standards are assured by the community, local government or the police.

Collaboration requires competitors to work with each other, and different sectors to come together.

Existing interests, taxi drivers, guides and street vendors are often well organised and adept at defending their interests. Taxi drivers who have borrowed to finance their taxi and

buy a license will jealously guard their interests; they may make it very difficult to introduce a bus service from the hotel or resort to town. Freelance licensed guides and unofficial guides touting for business may intimidate tourists and discourage them from venturing out alone. Vendors selling cheaper imported crafts and paying for their pitches may crowd out local craft workers who could provide a more authentic local experience – including demonstrations of weaving, leather work or carving. These issues are not easily addressed and generally require a transparent partnership approach engaging all the stakeholders with the support of government. All those involved need to share a common vision about how the relationships are to be changed and to support the changes knowing clearly what they will gain and lose.

What can you do?

Good practice approaches

A neighbourhood partnership will require many stakeholders to think about where they live and work in a whole new light:

- ✔ Gathering views is a great place to start. Collect reliable information about what tourists think about the destination and the quality of its offerings. Find out what each of the stakeholders thinks about the goods and services provided by others. Identify the main problems and thus shared solutions. Partnerships cannot be developed without a shared understanding of the problem and a shared vision about how to change it.
- ✔ It is not just about talking, and not just environmental improvements or social programmes: to achieve sustainable change local people need to have tangible economic benefits.
- ✔ Local approaches to tourism management can be instituted by establishing action groups, such as Tourism Action Committees (TAC), to act as lobbyists and to promote local area linkages, identify needs and opportunities. The TACs should liaise with/report to

the National Tourism Organisations. TACs were established in Trinidad and Tobago.

- ✔ Provide craft workers and other local trades people with a physical space from which to trade and avoid hawking; create markets which are close to tourists. Instead of pushing or wishing them away, bring them in.
- ✔ Have frank and open discussions about commission systems and fees. Explore how everyone can benefit from a 'bigger cake' rather than fighting for shares. Agree new rules and shares. Encourage each stakeholder group to develop and regulate its own code of conduct.

Whole manuals and treatises have been written about how to do community development. While this is not the place for more, some tips from other local tourism initiatives include:

- ✔ Finding the right people to work with is key. Understand local social structures and include those leaders, poor groups, and social entrepreneurs who get

things done locally. Bring in a local facilitator to help if necessary.

- ✔ Find out what goals local people have: they may be different to what tourism operators expect. In several pro-poor tourism projects, local income has been welcome, but poor people also have non-financial priorities such as training, dignity, access to natural resources, access to infrastructure and ability to participate in decisions.
- ✔ Partnerships can fall apart when expectations are very high and delivery is very slow. Do not promise more than you can deliver and manage expectations. Focus on some short-term practical steps as well as more ambitious long term plans.
- ✔ Communicate! Lack of communication can breed suspicion. Just as communities may not understand tourists' needs, so business people may not understand community needs. Style and pace of negotiation may be different. Finding joint ways forward depends on creating adequate communication channels, both formal and informal.
- ✔ Find appropriate ways to share risks and benefits across all partners. Make sure the poor understand their risks and are not over-exposed.

A partnership approach working with other stakeholders is essential. Work out how each can benefit more from collaboration, and to make it happen.

- ✔ Partnerships need to include the international and domestic private sectors, local government, local businesses and the community.
- ✔ Seek to involve a range of tourism companies – across a destination and up and down the value chain – in building local linkages.
- ✔ Test ideas and their market potential with tour operators along the value chain early on.
- ✔ Tourism ministries and tourism officers cannot deliver alone; they will need to secure the support of other parts of government, for example, street cleaning, road maintenance, the police and planning.
- ✔ Focus on what more can be achieved by working together, compared to what any individual company or entrepreneur can achieve alone. Give participants a tangible reason to engage.

Neighbourhood partnerships: working examples¹

Using public spaces for community and tourism

At Rodney Bay in the heart of St Lucia, the public square features local culinary specialities, as well as local music including picong and other art forms. Rodney Bay Committee handles decisions regarding the area and contributes to such activities as the St Lucia Jazz Festival. Many other Caribbean islands could benefit from the development of local open spaces that can both serve the community and double to feature events that will enhance the tourism product.

- ✔ Form a local group to plan better use of public spaces

Co-ordinating development with the community

In St Lucia, the Laborie Development Foundation and Laborie community undertook a three-year strategic planning process from 1999–2002 to reduce ad hoc, unplanned development. The focus was on the overall development of the community, including the development of tourism. One project linked cultural festivals to the accommodation sector in Laborie. The approach has been very successful and requests for assistance from other communities has resulted in the Foundation documenting the approach in various media, including a video.

- ✔ Work with local community initiatives to integrate tourism into local plans

Neighbourhood partnerships: *more examples*

Developing the tourism infrastructure and training

In St Lucia, significant strides have been made in the area of heritage and community tourism with the development of 14 heritage sites and 24 ancillary attractions. For example, a grant from the Community Tourism Foundation enabled the Forestierre Tour Guides Association to construct a lookout point at the summit of Piton Flore Trail. Other activities also include the re-training of the tour guides, trail reconstruction and signage. The project engaged the Forestry Division and the Ministry of Social Transformation as key partners.

Training health and hygiene

At Boca Chica near Santo Domingo in Dominican Republic, 145 women who sell fried fish on the seafront took a course in food handling. They were then offered a micro-entrepreneurs course, and at the end of the course, introduced to a loan scheme run by government. Such a move helps the destination as well as the local economy.

✔ **Make it real: provide training and finance to local participants**

About the Briefs . . .

The eight Briefs in this series provide practical tips on how to develop different types of local linkages, drawing on experience in several different countries in the Caribbean ▶

For other Briefs in the series and further information see www.propoortourism.org.uk/caribbean

Brief 1: *Overview: tourism and the local economy – building linkages*

Brief 2: *Bringing local producers into the supply chain*

Brief 3: *Building links with local farmers*

Brief 4: *Employing local staff*

Brief 5: *Involving local people and products in tours, packages and excursions*

Brief 6: *Encouraging tourists to spend in the local economy*

Brief 7: *Building neighbourhood partnerships*

Brief 8: *Managing internal change for developing local linkages.*

The Appendix provides more details, further examples, sources, and a useful list of contacts.

The Briefs outline some of the benefits and challenges of local linkages, and then focus on what to do. They provide tips on good practice mainly for hoteliers, but also for other private, governmental and non-governmental operators in tourism.

Footnotes

1. The most detailed report on implementing a neighbourhood partnership in a resort comes from outside the Caribbean: The Gambia experience (Bah and Goodwin 2003): www.propoortourism.org.uk/15_Gambia.pdf
2. For more information on Laborie Development Foundation, see www.laboriecommunity.net/projects.htm