



Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



CASE STUDY #9

Roxborough Estate Visitor Services Cooperative, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICES

- *Institutional support*
- *Use of common property resources*
- *Capacity building*
- *Community leadership*
- *Tourism impact management*

BACKGROUND

The triple-tiered Argyle Falls are on the Argyle River, just west of Roxborough in the east of the small island of Tobago. At 117 feet (54 metres) the waterfall is the highest on the island and cascades down on different levels, creating pools of spring water that have long been used for recreational bathing and picnics.

In the past, there was an informal network of young men from the neighbouring Roxborough and Argyle communities who would guide visitors to the falls. The Division of Tourism encouraged the communities to formalise visitor management at the falls and the Roxborough Estate Visitor Services Cooperative was founded around 1990.

DESCRIPTION OF TOURISM ACTIVITY

International visitors pay a US\$5 entrance fee, which includes a guiding fee, at the reception area. Souvenirs such as t-shirts, postcards and refreshments are retailed in the Cooperative shop/office complex. Uniformed guides are available at the entrance but tourists are not obliged to take a guide. When the falls are busy about 6 guides are on duty. It is a 20-minute walk along gently undulating trails through the rainforest to reach the waterfall.



IMPACTS

Income is generated from entrance fees and souvenir sales. In high season the Cooperative's revenue is approximately US\$8,000 a month. Income has been used to upgrade the trail to the waterfall and profits are shared between 16 members, half of whom are female. Guiding provides valuable supplementary local employment. The formation of the Cooperative created stronger social organisation at the community level and garbage management has been introduced to reduce negative environmental impacts.

CRITICAL FACTORS AND INSTRUMENTS

Market Access

The upgrading of the trails by the Cooperative has improved accessibility to the falls.

Commercial Viability

Argyle Falls is a well-known and popular attraction in Tobago and receives domestic, stay-over and cruise tourists. Guest management at the falls is highly organised and diversification of activities should create new income generating opportunities. There are plans to open 4 self-contained tourism accommodation units in a wooden guesthouse in 2007, construct a vending complex, and develop additional products such as hikes further up the river, camping facilities and picnic sites, and rehabilitate a cocoa estate.

Policy Framework

A community-based tourism policy is being developed by the Department of Tourism in Tobago. The Department facilitated the Roxborough and Argyle communities to develop a local institution for tourism and supported the use, development and management of the waterfall and environs for community benefit. The Cooperative is responsible for managing tourism and developing tourism activities and infrastructure. It has a 25-year lease for 15 acres of land from the Tobago House of Assembly and the Department of Tourism provided a grant for the construction of the guesthouse, which will open in 2007.

Implementation

The community-based organisation ensures guides are trained and manages tourism impacts. A Board of Directors governs the Cooperative and interested persons can apply to become a member. Guides are salaried employees and have to be trained by the Tobago Campus of the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute in conjunction with the Department of Tourism. The trails are well maintained and the provision of garbage collection keeps the falls and environs clean.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT

1. *Government can play a central role in facilitating CBT initiatives.*
2. *Sensitisation of the wider community can reduce reservations about new approaches/ organisations to manage natural common property resources.*
3. *Squatters on land can pose a challenge to tourism development.*
4. *The use, development and management of common property resources for community benefit can create new income-generating activities and improve environmental management when there is effective organisational capacity at the community level.*

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INFORMATION SOURCES

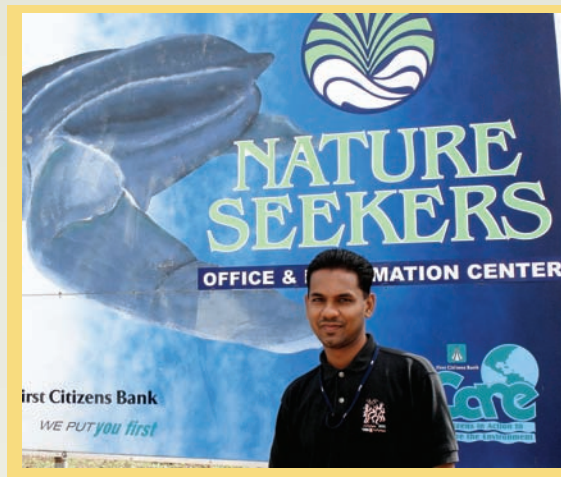
Roxborough Estate Visitor Services Cooperative.

Department of Tourism, Tobago House of Assembly.

Ministry of Tourism, Trinidad.

CASE STUDY #10

Nature Seekers (NS), Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICES

- Funding mechanism
- Support of NGOs
- Institutional support
- Use of common property resources
- Capacity building and skills development
- Community leadership
- Local economic linkages
- Tourism impact management

BACKGROUND

Matura Beach on the East Coast of Trinidad is a globally important nesting site for the endangered Leatherback Sea Turtle. Due to high rates of slaughter of egg-bearing females for turtle meat, the poaching of eggs and sand mining during the 1970s and 1980s, the nesting beach was designated as a Prohibited Area during March to August every year in 1990 and as Matura National Park in 2004.

To ensure implementation of this conservation measure an integrated project was developed through collaboration between the Wildlife Section of the Forestry Division and the Matura community. A tour-guide training course was held and led to the formation of Nature Seekers (NS) in 1990. This community group was commissioned to perform nightly beach patrols and provide a guide service to visitors who purchase permits to visit the beach. The objectives of Nature Seekers are to:

1. *Reduce the negative impacts of humans on turtles with attention to prevention of slaughtering, egg poaching and reducing species harassment by supervising the visitor viewing process.*
2. *Develop the community through training and education to realize economic potential.*
3. *Develop and promote community tourism as a tool for conservation, job creation and linkages to local services.*

"A shining example for replication - this effort encouraged the development of two other strong turtle conservation community-based programmes in Trinidad and Tobago and another in Sri Lanka."

UNDP GEF 2002



DESCRIPTION OF TOURISM ACTIVITY

On arrival at the Matura Beach Visitor Centre, tourists pay tour fees after presenting their permits obtained from the Forestry Division. Tour groups receive a briefing that prepares them for turtle watching, which includes appropriate conduct i.e. the 'do's' and 'don'ts'. The Tour focuses on the extraordinary wonders of turtle nesting rituals and behaviour, turtle biology and conservation. Nature Seekers also offers a Turtle Tagging Tour that presents an exciting opportunity of participating in efforts to protect the endangered turtles by helping tag and record information under the supervision of trained staff. The tours are conducted in the late evening for a period of 2.5 – 5 hours.

Nature Seekers launched new tourism activities in 2006 that include a Howler Monkey Tour, Matura and Rio Seco Waterfall tours in which tour guides accompany visitors and interpret the flora and fauna.

IMPACTS

Nature Seekers has had the most significant impact on Matura village in terms of alternative income generation activity. Visitors over the last 15 years have provided new livelihood opportunities in cottage tourism enterprises such as a bed and breakfast, food and beverage, handicrafts and nature tours.

Seasonal job creation has also been important. Members patrol and guide on the beach for about US\$18 per night. There are 14 guides of which 3 are women (the number of female guides is low due to evening childcare commitments). Income generated from turtle-viewing averages approximately US\$30,000 per season. In 2005, approximately US\$7,000 was injected into the local economy through the provision of stipends to guides. For most, guiding is a seasonal supplementary income.

Positive social impacts include stronger social organisation, improved confidence of members and cultural exchange between hosts and guest. The benefits to environmental conservation have been significant. The prevention of slaughtering, harassment and disturbance of turtles has been achieved - slaughter rates were reduced from 30 percent in 1990 to 0 percent by the mid-1990s.

CRITICAL FACTORS AND INSTRUMENTS

Market Access

Nature Seekers draws visitors to see the nesting of rare turtles even though it is not located near to main tourism centres and routes. The access road to Matura Beach is in poor condition but for many visitors this adds to the sense of adventure and remoteness.

Commercial Viability

There are over 9,000 visitors to Matura Beach annually and approximately 10 percent are international visitors. A visitor survey showed that over two-thirds heard of the award-winning attraction through word of mouth. In 2006, 4 community-based organisations involved in tourism and turtle conservation in Trinidad and Tobago came together to develop a business plan to leverage resources for research, attract more tourists and improve livelihoods from tourism. The 'Turtle Village' project includes Nature Seekers, Grande Riviere, Save Our Sea Turtles (SOS) Tobago and the Fish Pond Conservation Group. The project is supported by the Forestry Division and BHP Billiton Trinidad and Tobago. Turtle Village is planning to approach commercial tourism companies for support.

International NGO support has helped to fund Nature Seekers activities and to make tourism a commercially viable option. Nature Seekers collects important scientific data for many research projects. The organisation has partnerships with the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAS) and the Earthwatch Institute. Earthwatch is an international non-profit organisation that engages volunteers in scientific field research and education to promote the understanding and action necessary for sustainable development. In 2006, Nature Seekers received 9 small groups of Earthwatch volunteers who stayed for 10 days. Volunteers, researchers and tourists stay in a family owned guesthouse next door to the Nature Seekers office.

Nature Seekers offers a quality tour and monitors standards of service. In recent years the organisation has made good progress in achieving financial self-sustainability. In 2006, over 50 percent of the annual operational budget came from the Earthwatch Institute. This includes the purchase of equipment for scientific research. The remaining budget comes from guided tours (25%), the Forestry Department (20%) and grant support (5%). Nature Seekers is not in a position to increase the Turtle Tour price, which is relatively low for international tourists (US\$10), as it is set in partnership with the Wildlife Section of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Policy Framework

Institutional support that enables community participation in tourism on the protected Matura Beach to improve conservation and livelihoods has been a critical instrument of success. Activities are undertaken through a collaborative, co-management agreement in which the duties and responsibilities of the Forestry Division and Nature Seekers are clearly understood. This enables the community to realise livelihood benefits from natural resource management.

The Ministry of Tourism is in the process of developing a sub-policy on community based-tourism for Trinidad. Research for this policy was undertaken in CBT workshops. The Tourism Development Company will assist in the implementation of this policy in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Implementation

Capacity building, strong community leadership and mobilisation, and the development of cottage industries have made tourism and conservation happen. Training was initially provided by the Forestry Division in tour guiding and conservation. Skills in scientific research methods have been further developed with assistance from statutory agencies, partner organisations and researchers.

When the project began, the members of Nature Seekers worked on a voluntary basis and walked 3.25 miles every night to patrol and guide on the beach. In 1994, enough funds were raised to purchase a vehicle to get to and from the village and the beach. Most guides have day jobs so patrolling the beach in the evening is challenging. Turtles mainly nest at night when visibility and temperature are reduced and the beach is 5.5 miles long. The spirit of volunteerism has been maintained as new recruits undergo 30 days of voluntary training to demonstrate commitment before they can become apprentice guides. Nature Seekers registered under the Companies Act in 2001 and has a gender-balanced Board.

The development of additional income-generating activities in accommodation, food and beverages and tours has increased local commitment to tourism and conservation.

Nature Seekers has excelled in voluntary self-regulation and the monitoring and management of tourism impacts. Carrying capacity is regularly reviewed. It was initially set at a maximum of 200 turtle watchers per night but this was reduced to 150. The limit may be increased or decreased in the future pending study results on the impact of sand compaction by visitors on nests. Each guide supervises a maximum of 30 visitors. Codes of conduct have been developed for tourists, Earthwatch volunteers and the staff of Nature Seekers.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT

1. *Government can play a central role in facilitating CBT initiatives.*
2. *Community participation and sustained livelihood benefits are necessary for effective conservation.*
3. *Commitment of members and voluntary contribution can be essential.*
4. *It takes time to realise livelihood benefits from conservation and tourism.*
5. *The support of an international NGO can be crucial for resource mobilisation, capacity building and promotion of a CBT project.*
6. *Seasonality and under-employment of guides is a challenge but can be addressed through diversifying activities.*
7. *Partnership building makes resource mobilisation easier.*
8. *Participatory decision-making ensures organisational unity.*
9. *Linkages need to be developed with commercial tourism companies.*
10. *Domestic tourists can be an important market for CBT.*
11. *Legal requirements of NGOs and/or non-profit companies should be clearly spelt out and disseminated.*

CONTACT DETAILS

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INFORMATION SOURCES

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VII. Concluding Remarks

CBT in the Caribbean is growing and there are case studies of good practice in the region. These provide a range of organisational models and high quality goods and services. Natural and cultural excursions, regular and special events, accommodation, food and craft products are provided by a turtle conservation and tourism organisation, waterfall cooperative, river tour guide association, villagers supported by an eco tourism lodge, a village event committee, women's flower and craft groups, a family cassava business and a community-based international food company.

The ten case studies illustrate imagination and commitment and demonstrate how communities, with appropriate support from stakeholders, can develop viable businesses that result in community-based attractions and local producers and service providers being successfully integrated into the tourism industry. They demonstrate how distinct enterprise models, product development innovations, funding mechanisms, marketing and branding approaches, policy and institutional reforms and programmes, participatory planning processes, community leadership, capacity building and skills development, and tourism impact management are required at both micro and macro levels.

Many critical factors faced by CBT entrepreneurs in the Caribbean are similar to those experienced in Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region. Foremost is achieving commercial viability, which requires close attention to demand, product quality, investment in business skills, inclusion of the private sector, promotion and finance.

The case studies presented in the manual may not always be replicable and do not contain a blueprint but draw attention to critical factors and instruments that could guide good practice. Moreover, they demonstrate that **CBT is a unique, participatory model of tourism, which offers the potential to create tangible and lasting net socio-economic and environmental benefits for a wide range of stakeholders, inside and outside the community.** Stakeholders in the Caribbean have an opportunity to learn from documented international and regional good practices in CBT and refine and maximise the effectiveness of their approach.

CBT can only achieve its role in delivering sustainable development, however, if due consideration is given to policy reform and action to create an enabling national policy environment. This requires integrated sectoral policies, participatory approaches and instruments for planning and management, and suitable and supportive institutional arrangements. Priority attention must be given to the development and promotion of high quality, commercially viable, community-based products; linkages between the tourism industry and other economic sectors; community/private partnerships; funding mechanisms and fiscal incentives; and the use, management and development of common property resources for community benefit.