

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT FOR HOTELS

THE INDUSTRY GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE OPERATION

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This manual was published in 2014 when Sustainable Hospitality Alliance was known as International Tourism Partnership (ITP), part of Business in the Community (BITC).



Starwood's efforts through its **Check out for Children** programme have raised USD13 million for UNICEF's immunisation programmes

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WIDER RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to giving environmental considerations a high priority in the day-to-day operation of your hotel, there are other factors to take into account if you wish to make your operation more sustainable in the long term. These include adopting a more 'community-based' approach and doing business fairly and in an ethical way, without exploiting people, or threatening their livelihoods, communities, culture, wildlife and the environment.



10.1 BACKGROUND

Adopted by the United Nations in 1999, The **World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism** provided a foundation on which those involved in tourism could build a more environmentally sustainable, economically and socially responsible tourism industry. The Code drew on past industry codes and international declarations (such as the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**) with the aim of helping to minimise negative impacts of tourism on the environment and on cultural heritage, whilst maximising the benefits for residents of tourism destinations.

The code's nine articles provide guidelines for destinations, governments, tour operators, developers, travel agents, workers and travellers in matters relating to tourism. The tenth article concerns the redress of grievances. Although it is not a legally binding document, stakeholders may refer matters concerning the code's application and interpretation through the **World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE)**.

Members of the tourism industry who apply the principles of the code within their business, and who incorporate other international voluntary agreements such as the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** ([SEE APPENDIX 1](#)) into their philosophy and practice, will be on course to operate in a more responsible way.

To summarise the UNWTO Code, ethical tourism should:

- contribute to **mutual understanding and respect** between peoples and societies
- be a vehicle for **individual and collective fulfilment**
- enable **sustainable development**
- contribute to the enhancement of our **cultural heritage**
- benefit host **countries and communities**.

It should also take account of:

- the **obligations of stakeholders** in tourism development
- the **right and accessibility to tourism** for all the world's inhabitants
- the **liberty** of tourist movements
- the **rights of workers and entrepreneurs** within the industry.

The following pages outline ways in which you can bring a more ethical dimension to the operation of your business. The best way to start is to develop a policy which expresses your commitment to doing business in an honest, open and fair way and your concern for environmental, socio-economic, human rights, cultural and wildlife conservation issues.



10.2 PURCHASING AND SUPPLIERS

- a Manage your supply chain and buy from **responsible suppliers** who treat employees fairly and have a regard for the environment. [SEE SECTION 7](#)
- b Give priority to products that are **ethically-sourced, fair-trade, biodegradable or recyclable** and that have **minimal packaging**.
- c Create **opportunities for local enterprises** to share in the tourism opportunities at your location, for example by encouraging local craftspeople to sell their products to guests in the hotel grounds or by informing guests about locally-owned and run restaurants and where they can buy souvenirs that have been made by local entrepreneurs.

10.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

- a Be aware of the **laws and regulations** where you operate, and always obtain any necessary permits. Operate to the **highest international standards**, or higher.
- b **Involve the communities** surrounding your establishment, especially when it comes to matters such as the expansion of the hotel or resort. Give them the **opportunity to input** into the planning and decision-making process and **to share in the success** of the enterprise.
- c Wherever possible, **employ local staff** and **contract local businesses** for supplies and services.
- d **Encourage your guests** to buy locally-made handicrafts and products and **practise sustainable supply chain management (SSCM)**. [SEE SECTION 7](#)
- e Provide the necessary **training** if local community members need to acquire new skills in order to work for you.
- f Develop **long-term partnerships** with local operators, businesses and suppliers such as taxi drivers and tour guides. A local connection is more likely to result in a more authentic tourism experience.
- g Build **pro-poor partnerships** and linkages and provide training and support to small independent enterprises.
- h Pay a **fair or above average wage**.
- i Set up **profit-sharing schemes**.
- j **Ensure that you will be welcome** before organising trips into the local community. Find ways to **benefit the local people** rather than detract from their lives and livelihoods. Arrange trips well in advance and keep groups to an appropriate size. If a visit to a village has to be cancelled for any reason, be prepared to compensate the community for any revenue they may have lost.
- k **Do not disturb or distract community members** when they are working, unless you have arranged this specifically in advance.



10.4 CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HISTORIC SITES

- a **Respect the culture and customs** of the people in the communities you visit, and ask your guests to do so as well.
- b Give your visitors a **cultural briefing** before entering local communities. This should be preferably carried out by a **local guide**. Include information on local customs and traditions and on appropriate behaviour – for example requesting guests to ask permission before taking photographs or video footage.
- c Ask your guests and visitors to **respect sites with religious, archeological or cultural significance**. Arrange visits in advance and ensure no one removes any artifacts or disturbs those at work or at prayer.

10.5 WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

- a Link with **local and international conservation organisations**, particularly those with programmes relevant to your business or destination. These may relate to local **wildlife** and **marine conservation** programmes, **protecting the landscape** or supporting schemes to preserve **traditional hunting or fishing techniques** for example. Contribute **financially** and/or by **volunteering** staff time and **create opportunities for guests** to become involved.
- b **Obtain permission** before organising visits to wildlife reserves or other sensitive areas and ensure that you and your guests comply with the rules.
- c **Brief your visitors on local wildlife**, and make sure that they view it from an appropriate distance and stay on established trails.
- d Be familiar with the terms of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** and the laws and regulations that apply to the **import and export of products made from wildlife**. Make sure that items for sale in the hotel shop do not contravene any such regulations and ensure that your guests clearly understand never to buy products made from protected species.
- e Give your clients the opportunity to provide **feedback in writing** as to whether or not they felt their stay and/or their tour demonstrated consideration of the natural and cultural environment.



10.6 STAFF AWARENESS

- a Ensure that your **staff are familiar with your policies** and programmes and that they understand the importance of **business ethics**. Train them to be **safe, and to be ethically, environmentally and culturally aware**.
- b **Evaluate their performance** at least once a year and give them **constructive feedback** which will help their personal development
- c Hire lecturers and conservation-oriented **naturalists** who are **knowledgeable** about wildlife, conservation and environmental protection, local history, geology and culture and who are **responsible** when it comes to safety and local conservation requirements.

10.7 GUEST AWARENESS

- a **Organise lectures** and provide **printed information** for guests about the place they are visiting, its environment, climate, wildlife species and habitats, conservation efforts, local customs, religions and cultures.
- b Inform them about **appropriate dress and behaviour codes** so that your visitors do not unwittingly cause offence.
- c Encourage guests to **buy products made by local people**, so long as these are not made from endangered species and their sale does not contravene any local or national regulations or codes.
- d Encourage them not to give money to beggars or children and to **support official educational or pro-poor projects** run by legitimate organisations instead.

10.8 SAFETY

- a Designate at least one staff member responsible for co-coordinating **safety**.
- b Ensure that all staff are **aware** of relevant **Health and Safety legislation**, for example with regard to fire safety. You can be prosecuted and fined for breaches such as failing to complete a fire risk assessment, failure to maintain fire safety measures or to provide adequate fire safety training for employees. Check that you have made proper provision for example for communicating with the deaf and/or hard of hearing in the event of a fire.
- c Provide local authorities with **tour itineraries** and ensure you comply with local regulations.
- d Brief all guests and staff on the **dangers of any likely wildlife encounters** and what to do in the event of problem.
- e Ensure that all staff and tour guides have basic **first-aid training** and that they know how to contact the **emergency services**.



10.9 MORE INFORMATION

10.9.1 Contacts

1. **Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET)**
www.asset-gambia.com
2. **Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA)**
www.fairtourismsa.org.za
3. **Health and Safety Executive**
www.hse.gov.uk
4. **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**
www.ilo.org
5. **International Tourism Partnership**
www.tourismpartnership.org
6. **United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**
www.unwto.org
7. **Overseas Development Institute**
www.odi.org/search/site?f%255B0%255D=sm_field_theme%3Anode%3A17388&id=27&title=tourism&f0=sm_field_theme%3Anode%3A17388
8. **Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership**
www.propoortourism.info
9. **Responsible Tourism Partnership**
www.responsibletourismpartnership.org
10. **The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)**
www.ecotourism.org
11. **The Travel Foundation**
www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
12. **Tourism Concern**
www.tourismconcern.org.uk
13. **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**
www.unep.org
14. **World Health Organisation**
www.who.int
15. **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)**
www.panda.org
16. **Youth Career Initiative (YCI)**
www.youthcareerinitiative.org

10.9.2 Resources

1. **The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**
www.cites.org
2. **Local economic linkages in the Caribbean**
www.eldis.org/go/home&id=22864&type=Document
3. **Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide For Policy Makers**
www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=DTI/0592/PA
4. **Millennium Development Goals**
www.un.org/millenniumgoals
5. **Pro-Poor Tourism Annual Register**
www.propoortourism.info/Library.html
6. **Tourism and Biodiversity: Mapping Tourism's Global Footprint**
www.unep.org/PDF/Tourism_and_biodiversity_report.pdf
7. **UNWTO Ethics in Tourism**
<http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/global-code-ethics-tourism>
8. **World Travel Market (WTM) World Responsible Tourism Day**
www.wtmwrtd.com



APPENDIX 1

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

WHAT ARE THE MDGs?

The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are eight global targets which range from halving extreme poverty to combating major diseases throughout the world by 2015. They have been agreed to by all the world's countries and leading development institutions and have galvanized global action to meet the needs of the poorest people on the planet. By 2015 the MDGs aim to:

1. **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
2. **Achieve universal primary education**
3. **Promote gender equality and empower women**
4. **Reduce child mortality**
5. **Improve maternal health**
6. **Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
7. **Ensure environmental sustainability**
8. **Develop a global partnership for development.**

BACKGROUND

In January 1999 at the **World Economic Forum** in Davos, Switzerland, the **United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Kofi Annan** challenged world business leaders to 'embrace and enact' universal environmental and social principles in the **UN Global Compact**,^[1] both in their own corporate practice and by supporting appropriate public policies. The Global Compact is the world's largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative and its participants include UN bodies, companies, business associations, NGOs and trade unions. It comprises ten principles (all based on international inter-governmental agreements) focused on the implementation of responsible business practice in the areas of human rights, labour standards, anti-corruption and the environment.

The Global Compact is not a regulatory instrument and relies on public accountability, transparency and the enlightened self-interest and action of companies, labour and civil society. Participants are encouraged to engage in cross-sector partnerships in order to develop practical solutions for meeting the broader development objectives of the MDGs which extend beyond a

company's immediate workplace, marketplace and supply chain.

In September 2000, two months after the Global Compact became operational, 189 heads of state ratified the **Millennium Declaration**^[2] at the **UN Millennium Summit** in New York, USA. This global commitment was one of the most significant UN documents of recent time, offering a common and integrated vision on how to tackle some of the major challenges confronting the world. Its result was the eight MDGs. Specific targets and indicators have been set for each of the goals (**SEE FIGURE 10.1**), to be achieved by 2015. Some have direct implications for business, whilst others relate more broadly to the enabling framework and policy environment in which companies have to operate.

KEY ISSUES

Poverty, hunger, and sustainable development are among the issues at the very top of the agenda of world leaders. Allied to the fight against poverty are imperatives such as the prevention, treatment and eradication of serious diseases caused by lack of sanitation, awareness or economic wherewithal, and the need to equip people with the necessary education, employment and life-skills to enable them to control their own destinies.

Education and employment issues underlie many of the global problems highlighted by the MDGs. The latest annual global employment figures from the **International Labour Organization**^[3] show that 1.3 billion of the world's workers (or 43.5 per cent) currently exist on less than the two US dollars a day poverty line, while 487 million workers (16.4 per cent) do not earn enough even to lift themselves and their families above the one dollar per person per day poverty line.

Two key factors are needed in order to lift people out of poverty:

- access to **economic opportunity** through employment, business linkages and other income generating opportunities; access to credit, technology and training
- access to **affordable necessities** such as water, energy, nutrition, healthcare, housing and education.

These factors, combined with stable governments, the rule of law, human rights,

[1] See www.un.org/depts/ptd/global.htm

[2] See www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf

[3] See Global Employment Trends, January 2008
www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/index.htm

APPENDIX 1

.../continued

freedom from conflict and corruption and the implementation of international norms and standards, help to create an enabling framework for the MDGs to be fulfilled. There is also a need for generous and effective development assistance from donor governments, for debt relief, and fairer access to global markets for exports from developing countries.

The last, but equally vital, aspect of the MDGs is the need to ensure the environmental sustainability of the planet. Despite greater knowledge and the introduction of systems to address environmental problems such as global warming and climate change, there remains much to be done, particularly at local level.

Land exploitation, deforestation, pollution and the introduction of invasive species all pose serious threats to the biodiversity systems on which we all depend. According to **Conservation International**, the world's biodiversity 'hotspots' (regions with a great diversity of endemic species that have been significantly impacted by human activity) have cumulatively lost nearly 90 per cent of their original natural vegetation.^[4] These areas are home to more than one billion people, many of them living below the poverty level. High-priority areas for biodiversity are also key regions for tourism development, largely because of the unique species and ecosystems they contain.

WHY ARE THE MDGs IMPORTANT FOR HOTELS, TRAVEL AND TOURISM?

The travel and tourism industry depends upon economic, social and environmental sustainability – and issues such as poverty alleviation, employment quality and social equity are closely linked with this. There is a strong business case for engaging with these issues.^[5] In addition, tourism's economic viability (and therefore its ability to generate income for communities) depends upon the quality of the local environment and cultural assets being preserved.

Many tourism initiatives can help towards meeting more than just one of the MDGs. For example, measures to address poverty can also help make it financially possible for communities to improve their overall quality of life through access to basic necessities such as clean, fresh water and better nutrition.

[4] See Tourism and Biodiversity: Mapping Tourism's Global Footprint
www.unep.org/PDF/Tourism-and-biodiversity.pdf

[5] See the IBLF's Tourism Partnership's publication on Tourism and Local Economic Development (2004)
www.haroldgoodwin.info/resources/Flyer_Final.pdf

WHAT CAN THE INDUSTRY DO?

In September 2005, government, industry, UN agencies and civil society leaders met in New York at the invitation of the **UN World Tourism Organization (UN WTO)** on the eve of the Special UN General Assembly and adopted the declaration '**Harnessing Tourism for the Millennium Development Goals**'.^[6] This recognises the role that tourism plays in most of the developing, least developed and small island states 'as the main, and sometimes the only, means of economic and social development on a sustainable basis, with meaningful linkages to other productive sectors such as agriculture and handicrafts'.

There are many examples where the travel and tourism industry can and is contributing towards MDG fulfillment. Broadly they fall into three areas:

- **Compliance** with **international voluntary agreements** and initiatives that address global issues.
- **Developing partnerships** and **industry-specific** initiatives.
- **Individual action at local level** variously involving **tourism businesses**, their **staff** and **clients**.

[6] See <http://step.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/declaration.pdf>



| Goal | Target between 1990 and 2015 | How travel and tourism can engage |
|---|--|---|
| 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day 2. Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger | Recruit and train local people. Practise sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) e.g. local sourcing of produce and services, build pro-poor partnerships and linkages and provide training and support to small independent enterprises. Help generate opportunities for local enterprise and ownership. Pay a fair or above average wage. Set up profit-sharing schemes |
| 2 Achieve universal primary education | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling | Never use child labour and ensure your suppliers are not using child labour. Support/develop local education programmes |
| 3 Promote gender equality and empower women | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels no later than 2015 | Employ more women and help build their potential for promotion through training. Develop strong policies and take action against sexual harassment. Buy from women's co-operatives and support women's issues directly or through NGOs |
| 4 Reduce child mortality | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate in children under five | Support foundations which enable the provision of improved nutrition, health, access to water and sanitation such as The World Health Organization, UNICEF etc. |
| 5 Improve maternal health | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality rate | Support women's NGOs and community health services. Combat stigmatisation in countries where cultural and religious factors hinder open discussion and action on reproductive health issues. Raise staff awareness of contraception, sexually transmitted disease and nutritional issues |
| 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS 8. Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases | Raise staff and general awareness of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases where these are key health issues in your country. Raise funds for, support or develop health and immunisation programmes |
| 7 Ensure environmental sustainability | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse loss of environmental resources 10. Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water 11. Achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 | <p>Practice resource-efficiency by using less energy, water and creating less waste. Ensure that your operations do not impact negatively upon the environment and biodiversity.</p> <p>Support climate change initiatives such as carbon offsetting and initiate local 'clean-ups'. Enable community access to resort drinking supplies. Support initiatives such as 'Just a Drop'. Donate items such as bathroom amenities, old linens, uneaten food items to groups working with the disadvantaged</p> |
| 8 Develop a global partnership for development | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Develop an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system 13. Address the least developed countries' special needs. Includes tariff and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction 14. Address the special needs of landlocked and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) 15. Deal with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term 16. In co-operation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth 17. In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries 18. In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies — especially information and communications technologies | <p>Be transparent in your business operations, report publicly on your environmental and socio-economic initiatives. Apply the principles of the Global Compact.</p> <p>Promote business investment in least developed countries.</p> <p>Argue for improved market access for least developed countries through NGOs and the UN.</p> <p>Promote youth employment and entrepreneurship. Consult the UN's Youth Employment Network, hire young people, run apprenticeship programmes and build linkages with enterprises run by young people.</p> <p>Support NGO or community-led projects by donating resources, expertise and technology.</p> <p>Increase the flow of communication with the local community. Educate tourists about how they can contribute through purchasing locally</p> |

FIGURE 10.1

MDGs and the travel and tourism industry