

1st International Symposium on Tourism and Livelihoods

Meeting challenges. Changing lives.

Hotel Mascot, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala 31 May to 2 June 2011

Organised and hosted by Kerala Tourism and Kerala Institute of Travel and Tourism Studies (KITTS) in association with International Centre for Responsible Tourism and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Kerala Chapter.

Kerala is a state with a unique history and a tranquil beauty which has brought large numbers of domestic and international visitors. They come to a state with a tourism sector dominated by local small enterprises. Kerala's tourism is large but it is on a small scale, the visitors experiencing daily life in one, according to National Geographic Traveller, of the world's ten paradises.

There was lively debate throughout the two days of the Kerala symposium, the first of a series being organised in Africa, Asia and South America in the year leading up to the Rio+20 Conference in Brazil in 2012 when the twin themes of environment and development will be discussed. The symposiums are being organised locally and co-ordinated internationally by Harold Goodwin of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism at Leeds Metropolitan University to ensure that the views presented at Rio reflect the diversity of experience of tourism and livelihoods around the world. Each symposium will focus on what is locally important in generating employment and enterprise opportunities for local people.

The Symposium was co-chaired by Dr Venu V Secretary, Kerala Tourism and Dr Harold Goodwin, ICRT, Leeds Metropolitan University, and attended by 75 people from industry, government, panchayats, NGOs, education, local communities and academics.

The purpose of the symposium was to look at various case studies from Kerala on how tourism has contributed to livelihood of the local community and socio-economic development of the region and also to review the experiences of Responsible Tourism development in four "laboratories" in Kerala (Kumarakom, Kovalam, Kumily and Wayanad) In opening the symposium Dr Venu set the objectives of the two day meeting: to identify good practices and to review them in an international context. He also pointed out that the experiments needed to be considered in their complexity. There was increasing concern that the trickle-down theory, the theory that the rising tide will raise all boats, was not predicting what was happening in Kerala. Interventions are required in order to ensure that the communities benefited and that negative impacts are minimised, large resort development can displace people and destroy livelihoods. Over 80% of tourism enterprises in Kerala are indigenously owned, there are only three hotels with 100+ rooms in Kerala. Most of the employees are also local, but there are increasing numbers of non Malayalees being employed in the industry at lower rates of pay.

Tourism brings additional consumers with money in their pockets to destinations. This creates opportunities for local people, employment and the sale of goods and services to tourism businesses and directly to tourists. The challenge is to realise the opportunity and to use tourism to make better places for people to live in. U V Jose, Director KITTS reports that in Kerala, the Responsible Tourism initiative "has succeeded to some extent in proving how tourism can act as a catalyst for the socio-economic development of the local community and creating sustainable destinations" through

creating “more livelihood opportunities for the local community through procurement of local products, promoting local enterprises and providing employment opportunities.”¹

No attempt is made here to report the debate in detail, or to report a consensus. The purpose of the symposium was not to reach agreement but rather to stimulate a wide ranging debate and to ensure that all stakeholders had the opportunity to air their views and to have them discussed. The discussions took place in Malayalam and English and participants in the symposium reflected on the successes and the problems which meant that more progress was made in some places than in others.

As is often the case in discussions about Responsible Tourism the roles of individuals in achieving change and the importance of strong local collective structures, in this case panchayats, was evident. There was also clear recognition of the importance of focus to achieving change, it is important to decide on a relatively small number of priorities and then to focus on achieving them.

The case studies²

A short video was presented on each of these properties followed by presentations and discussion

1. Neeleshwar Hermitage Resort, Kasargod:

A health retreat, constructed with local labour and supervised by local people, the 15-20% saved over what would have been charged by a construction company was invested in marketing to ensure an adequate flow of visitors. The resort was built by 60 local carpenters and thatch and grass were sourced locally, as this has to be redone twice per year, this is a major contribution to the local economy. The resort employs 53 permanent staff, 48 are from the local community and only two from outside of Kerala. The resort also employs between three and five trainees, all taxis used come from within 1km of the resort. Staff quarters are rented from local people and milk and vegetables are sourced locally. After three months' probation, the staff enjoys the benefits of a Provident Fund, Labour Welfare Fund and Health Insurance in addition to the Employees' State Insurance Scheme, women receive up to 3 months of maternity leave, there is a wedding allowance and all employees work a maximum of 9 hours per day. The staff library contains a copy of the “Law of Minimum Wages in Kerala.” The resort closes in the summer and the staff receives holiday pay, there are picnics for staff and their families, clothing and linen are auctioned to staff and firewood is given free to staff on a rotational basis. Tips are pooled and there is an open forum where suggestions for improvements in working conditions can be discussed.

2. Oyster Opera, Kasargod:

A backwater resort constructed on land rented from the panchayat. There are 14 permanent staff all from the local community. Ten are female and the two senior posts of accountant and chef are held by women. 10 local women are employed on a casual basis for gardening. The coconut timber, thatch and grass for the roofs, which need to be re-thatched twice a year, are all sourced locally. A local tour is organised and guests are encouraged to buy local souvenirs and

¹ Foreword in Dr. Vijayakumar B. & Saroop Roy B. R. (2011) **Tourism and Livelihood, Selected Experiences from Kerala** KITTs, Trivandrum, Kerala www.kittstour.org

² Based on Dr. Vijayakumar B & Saroop Roy B. R. (2011) **Tourism and Livelihood, Selected Experiences from Kerala** KITTs, Trivandrum, Kerala www.kittstour.org

crafts, some use the local barber shop and tailors. A few take away special dishes and curries. The laundry service is provided by the local community. It is anticipated that additional cottages will be constructed to meet demand,

3. Bamboo Village, Wayanad:

Created by a non-profit trust in 2006 to realise the vision of a sustainable village based on bamboo. There are six homestays in the villages, the families use tourism as an additional source of income. Visitors buy bamboo saplings and some of the 200 bamboo based products are produced locally. Cookery classes and festivals also attract tourists and bring revenue. During 2010-11, 150 foreigners visited. 25% of the income from tourism goes to village development and to conduct the events. The five local providers of transport earned Rs. 66,850 and the six homestays Rs. 288,650 in 2010-11.

4. Poomully Ayurveda Mana, Palakkad:

A heritage centre for Ayurveda, Kalari and Yoga. It is a joint venture run between a Trust and Paithrikam Hospitality Service. There are 12 therapists, 10 hospitality staff and 8 others, most are multi-skilled. All of the staff except one was recruited locally, the other has now moved to the area. 85% of the guests arrive through internet marketing having booked directly. Rs 225,000 is the monthly wage bill, going to the local economy. Rs 6,000 is spent on vegetables in the local economy every month, Rs 60,000 on milk and Rs 10,000 on firewood. A total of Rs 100,800 spent locally in the supply chain each month.

5. Olappamanna Mana, Palakkad:

A homestay with one double room, one family room and a suite. Most of the bookings taken over the internet. The business functions mainly as a pension for an elderly couple but four local people are employed on a casual basis earning a total of Rs 48,000 per year. The Mana organises a minimum of two Kalamezhuthu pattu each year. In total the Olappamanna Mana brings Rs 217,200 into the local economy.

6. Spice Village, Thekkady:

A 52 cottage resort owned by the CGH earth group. 40 families benefit from the annual thatching, sharing a total of Rs 11.5 lakhs per year (an average of Rs28,750 per year). The Spice Village has adopted 550 families in cultivating organic pepper at a premium of 30% on the market price it is sold to a German organic spice importer. The families make an average of Rs 10 lakhs. The bullock cart experience costs Rs. 750 per person produced expenditure of Rs 138,500 in the village. The resort employs 63 staff with a wage bill of Rs 316,000 per month. The total annual expenditure on livelihoods, bullock cart, the resort and thatching is Rs 5,080,500 plus Rs 1,000,000 generated from spice exporting through the hotel.

7. Alleppey Tourism Development Cooperative Society:

The first tourism co-operative in Kerala established in 1987, they also organised the first elephant rally, in 1995 they started a fleet of houseboats. In 2006 the Cooperative established the Marari Fisherman Village Beach Resort with 46 employees, 35 from the local area. The society employs 168 people, 90% are from the local area. The society's permanent staff earn between them Rs1,340,000 per month.

In **Kumarakom** the Responsible Tourism programme has included the development of three excursion programmes which enable visitors to experience village life and provide additional

livelihoods for local people. There are two groups of farmers who have organised to sell vegetables to the *Karshaka samithis* (450 farmers in 10 groups) and *Samrudhi* homestead farmers (510). A Price Fixing Committee agreed a consensus price for vegetables being sold to hotels and a Quality Committee sought to resolve issues around the quality of produce sold to the hotels. The *Geethabhai* employs 21 people selling vegetables to the hotels and since the Responsible Tourism initiative began they now have seven acres of rice. *Earamattom* is a new enterprise headed by a woman providing vegetables, catering, tailoring and performing cultural shows. Another entrepreneur is earning Rs20,000 per month selling an average of 20 models of traditional boats, a snake boat and traditional angling.

Following the review of the programme to date, based on the work of Dr. N. C. Narayanan, IIT, Mumbai, the process will be developed and the initiative will be rolled-out to a further 10 sites. The transparent process of reporting, the open forum for discussions about the programme to date and the willingness to have the programme externally reviewed has meant that the strengths and weaknesses of the initiatives have been assessed and the lessons learned, laying a strong basis for the extension of the approach across the state.

A Range of Approaches

This table presents the range of approaches which have been experimented with in the Kerala laboratory.

<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of local labour and supervision in construction phase. • Employment for local labour in operational phase. • Employment of local trainees • Staff welfare benefits • Maximum working hours • Maternity leave and wedding allowance • Staff picnics • Pooled tips 	<p>Supply Chain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sourcing of local materials for construction and maintenance • Use of local taxis • Local food produce • Renting local accommodation as staff quarters 	<p>Sales to Tourists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranging local tours and encouraging guests to buy local souvenirs and crafts • Encouraging guests to use local barbers and tailors and purchase readymade meals to take home • Creation of festivals • Development of local experiences and excursion programmes for sale to tourists
<p>Collective Community Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of turnover going to provide community benefits and fund festivals 	<p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meeting to determine how welfare funds and pooled tips should be spent • Creation of co-operatives 	<p>Stimulus to the local economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating direct sales of village produce to foreign importers

Government Engagement

Power transfers regularly between the two opposing parties, the LDF and UDF, and in a fiercely democratic state ministers talk directly with the local self-government organisations, the panchayat – and more importantly they listen. The democratic processes in Kerala are built on a culture of

questioning and debate and one in which transparency is valued. This cultural context in part explains the consistency of support for Responsible Tourism since the approach was adopted in February 2007 with the State level Consultative meeting *Better Together*. The new Minister for Tourism, A. P. Anil Kumar, inaugurating the International Symposium on Tourism and Livelihoods, said that “Responsible Tourism has great relevance for the State and we have to go forward with greater purpose.” He acknowledged that there “might have been failures but we have a successful model in Kumarakom”. The Minister said that Responsible Tourism should be insulated from the change of government.

Anil Kumar went on to say

“The RT Model we set up should not be a victim of political vagaries. RT should be made instability-proof. Only then can it be sustainable. I would also like more people to be brought into the experiment.”

There were two Ministers present for the inauguration of the symposium. The Minister for Panchayats Dr. M. K. Muneer also pledged his full support to the Responsible Tourism movement. Dr. V. Venu, the Secretary for Tourism, widely regarded as the driving force behind Responsible Tourism in Kerala praised local tourism entrepreneurs as the “unsung heroes of the Responsible Tourism movement.”

The engagement of the panchayats in decision making about tourism has been significant and has placed the emphasis on livelihood opportunities for local people. In Kerala there has been a significant effort to devolve decision making to a local level. However, there are particular challenges about enforcement at the local level and a requirement for technical assistance to create capacity for enforcement.

Attitudes to Employment in Tourism

- There are estimated to be 100,000 rooms in Kerala, 5,000 managers, 15,000 Heads of Departments, 100,000 support staff. There are 8,000 training places and nearly 2,000 degree course places but there is a shortage of applicants.
- Retention is a major issue, candidates trained for managerial positions in the hospitality industry were reported to be leaving the industry for other occupations with a higher status in IT and financial services. Hotel management students were reported to be graduating and moving abroad or into other sectors, others just drop out of training and move into the informal sector.
- Training places remain unfilled in hospitality and food courses in Kerala despite youth unemployment.
- Malayalis are being replaced by non-Malayalis in the hospitality sector
- Some of the industry people present felt that the issue was about ensuring that staff were managed in a way which enabled them enjoy dignity in their work. Others saw wages and salaries as the issue.

Taking Stock of Responsible Tourism

The President of the Confederation of the Kerala Tourism Industry, E. M. Najeeb said “we have already reached a situation where tourists refuse to visit places where there are no responsible tourism practices.”

There was a debate about how to spread the influence of the Responsible Tourism approach in Kerala, some calling for the development for guidelines which could be implemented through the panchayats “the local self-governments are better placed to decide on what is good for the local community.” Others called for stronger regulation to prevent destinations being plundered by tourism.

Dr Narayanan a professor of development at the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay was employed to review the initiatives. He reported that the small scale and local ownership of most tourism accommodation is an advantage for Responsible Tourism in Kerala. He pointed to the importance of individuals in implementing the Responsible Tourism livelihoods approach and suggested that the particular success of the Responsible Tourism initiatives in Kumarakom is due to the strength of the local government, the panchayat, there. But even in Kumarakom, with a strong panchayat, there are no regulations under which the panchayat can exercise any control over the discharge of sewage by the house boats.

The panchayat leaders were very positive about the Responsible Tourism initiatives. Responsible Tourism is seen by them as having contributed to ensuring that local communities get the benefit of tourism. For example, G. C. Damodaran, ex-President, Kumarakam panchayat until 2010 said that Responsible Tourism, “Put money into the hands of poor women”. But there is more to be done to enable communities to capture the value of tourism in the local community and to retain it to use for development.

Further Research and Capacity Building Needs

The case studies are rich in detail, many different approaches have been used and there has been a consistent effort to collect some impact measurements. There is an opportunity to build on this work and develop a range of indicators which would inform decision making about the necessary conditions for successful interventions and to monitor the impacts in order to identify which interventions secure the largest benefits for local communities. This would develop more informed decision making based on the return on investment which can be secured for the benefit of local communities from different forms of intervention in specific conditions.

There is a need to develop benchmarks against which to measure performance and a need to build destination management capacity in the panchayat, without which the panchayat can exercise only limited control less than would be the case if they had training and support. One suggestion was for a tourism literacy campaign. Participatory planning and resource mapping were suggested as important techniques for the panchayats to use, but it can only work if they have the capacity to implement and to regulate where necessary.

Dr Harold Goodwin and Dr Venu 2011