REGENERATIVE TOURISM

of the
North-east Tobago UNESCO
Man and the Biosphere Reserve
Management Plan

SUMMARY SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The state of the tourism industry in the North-east Tobago Biosphere Reserve is far from reaching its actual potential.
This is mainly the result of a decades-long failure to anticipate and response to relevant tourism trends, establish a distinctive brand, keeping any brand promise, capitalise on unique selling propositions, as well as develop, market, and sell competitive products. Additionally, the pandemic, pollution and destruction of ecosystems, as well as sargassum influx are having very negative effects. Pre-pandemia, tourism and fishing were the two main, yet very small, private economic sectors in NE Tobago. While Tobago as a whole is data deficient regarding tourism, there are no disaggregated tourism data for NE Tobago at all. Research clearly indicates that the concept of regenerative tourism is a top recovery tool for NE Tobago's suffering tourism sector and there are several positive signs such as increased bookings and new sustainable tourism products. Major, yet underdeveloped, attractions are based on nature, cultural, history, and culinary arts. However, the one, most distinctive feature, providing NE Tobago with a significant cutting edge over its competitors is the designation as an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The "tourism-villages" are Castara, with a renowned community tourism product, Charlotteville which is the national trail blazer for educational tourism, and Speyside which is a world-famous dive spot. Most accommodations are small and there is definitely a lack of higher-end, eco, boutique resorts. Most visitors are day trippers; the majority of overnight guest are from North America and the UK.

HIGH LEVEL GOAL

Regenerative tourism significantly supports ecosystem health and services, sustainable green/blue/purple economic development, positive cultural heritage, well-being, fair income, and career opportunities for residents.

PRIORITY NEEDS

- Application of regenerative tourism principles as the prime tool for tourism recovery.
- A strong appealing brand.
- New / upgraded tourism products and services.
- Tourism operators using regenerative tourism principles and the UNESCO designation as a marketing and sales tool.
- Responsible tourism certification schemes.
- Strong collaboration between the TOBIMA, TTAL and DTCT.
- Tourism data.

STRATEGIES

- Develop and implement a regenerative tourism plan masterplan;
- operationalise innovative and regenerative tourism products;
- conduct locally applicable, tourism-related research in collaboration with local and international academic institutions;
- adhere to SLM, LDN and green building (LEED) principles;
- develop a strong and consistent tourism outreach programme;
- establish a multisectoral, standing tourism development committee;
- include regenerative tourism in vocational programmes; and
- establish and enforce of a regulatory framework for shared economies.

KEY PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Facilitate:

- Development and implementation of a regenerative tourism awareness programmes;
- application of local and international certification schemes;
- hire expert teams to develop a regenerative tourism master plan, develop products, and train tourism operators;
- establish research agreement with academic institutions;
- Support stakeholders to incorporate sustainability and regeneration into their business models;
- operate a virtual and face to face NETMABR tourism information facility, and
- establish co-operations with international regenerative tour operators.

Five Principles for More Regenerative Tourism Practices through Nature-based Solutions



The Regenerative Tourism Framework as influenced by The IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions. (Chloe King, 2022)