



PRINCIPLE 01

Climate Action



Climate change is affecting every country on every continent and disrupting economies and lives. Weather patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, and weather events are becoming more extreme.

As the United Nations Sustainability Goals (SDGs) provide a blueprint for progress for governments and businesses alike, SDG 13 targets urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and works towards resilience building for business and societies. It is crucial for tourism businesses to embrace change as well as prepare for a changed climate.

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Importance and impact to business in the short and long term

Making a difference for the climate through lowering your emissions

It is predicted that by 2030, transport-related CO2 emissions from tourism will increase by 25% from 2016 levels (UNTWO/ITF). By reducing your business' climate footprint you can reduce your costs and attract customers, all while contributing to the global cause of fighting climate change.

Taking action for the climate can seem like a daunting task but even small changes can prove to be efficient and have economic impact. Reducing emissions of carbon dioxide is the main challenge to tackle. However, other and more potent gasses to reduce include refrigerant gasses from air conditioning units and refrigerators, as well as methane from livestock and organic waste which contribute to global warming.

Adaptation to a changing climate

Climate change is already affecting Sri Lanka, and all tourism businesses need to be prepared for more extreme weather. A climate risk assessment for your business will allow you to take the right steps to make the necessary changes. Setting your own standards on how to prevent and adapt to climate-related hazards and natural disasters while coordinating with local and international organizations can be beneficial.



Your contribution has an impact



Benefits for everyone

By running a climate sound operation you will see benefits that support the whole community. Access to clean water, reduction of waste, unpolluted air, less smog and noise will keep both guests and local communities happier and healthier. Although actions of all sizes will come at a cost, these investments will be more cost-efficient than if you were to do nothing.

Climate change is inevitable and will impact the Tourism industry both directly by interfering with tourists' destination choices and affecting the quality of experiences and indirectly due to changing weather patterns such as intense flooding, heatwaves and droughts. Adapting will pave the way for long-term operational success and help sustain both the environment and the community



Climate capacity building for the tourism industry

Both central and rural Sri Lanka have areas that are already at risk of floods, heavy rain, landslides, storms, drought and forest fires. Having internal and collective plans and procedures to refer to when extreme hazards threaten your business and local community will prove to reduce the damages and bounce-back ability.



What can we do as an SME?

01 Minimize your footprint

Establish a plan and procedures to mitigate your climate footprint, meaning the negative effect your activity leaves on the climate. This can include:

- Choosing less environmentally impactful materials for construction building
- Reducing the use of fossil fuels
- Energy use
- Buying locally sourced products
- Minimizing waste, especially from white goods and electronics.
- Evaluate use of pesticides and hazardous materials such as detergents and chloride
- Proper disposal of cooling units such as air-conditioners and refrigerators to avoid refrigerant gasses leaking into the atmosphere
- Avoid contributing to methane production by composting food waste. This could also be used as fertilizer for your garden.

02 Building a resilient business & adapting to a changed climate

A resilient business has the capacity to withstand stress from climate change. Investigate what types of risks your business is exposed to, be it extreme weather, rising sea levels, degradation of land, floodings and food and water scarcity. There are many worst case scenarios and your resilient business can prepare to prevent substantial damage from happening and making recovery faster. Adapting is key to overcoming both gradual and immediate changes.

03 Long term adaptation

We all need to keep an eye out for the shifting climate and ecosystems around us. Your business plan and what you offer guests in terms of activities may need to be updated according to the welfare of the climate. Listed are a few actions that builds resilience for your business:



Installing solar panels and local storage units

Solar panels or other sources of renewable energy with storage options will enable you to have a more sustainable power supply in cases of climate related risk, as well as limiting continued emissions.



Rainwater collection

A changed climate will mean more flash rain events. Make good use of this water which can be used in your operations or on your premises, or can be saved for use during draughts



Rainwater preparation

For stormwater and flood events you should also be prepared for more rain than in past events, and investigate the need for more drainage pipes or increased stormwater absorption through greeneries.



Dry spells or extended drought

Investigate if you can use climate adaptation plants on your premises that are more resilient in cases of longer heat periods. Also make sure to understand your exposure to possible drought related risks like forest fires or water shortages. Make appropriate plans to adapt to or limit risk.



Emergency adaptation

Environmental disasters happen without much prior warning. Being prepared and having an emergency plan for staff members and guests with evacuation details and emergency contact information is important.

What can we do as an industry?

Building a resilient community

Resilience is only possible through communal efforts of the entire community. It doesn't matter if you have planted greenery to handle stormwater runoff if no one else in your community does the same. By informing neighbors and other businesses in your area and discussing common solutions you will build a more resilient community. This can be solutions such as looking at possibilities for flood vents, securing drinking water and proper disposal of sewage, or having procedures for what to do during droughts and forest fires etc. When you have a common understanding of your risks with your fellow businesses and neighbors, get in touch with your local or regional government and encourage collaboration for resilience.

Potential in collaboration

Climate action is a task that requires all sorts of businesses to gather under one banner. Ask yourself these questions

- What can you do alone?
- What do you already do that is good for others to know about?
- What do you need to do with your neighbors?
- What do you need to do with your region or municipality?

A more in depth strategy of how this can be done under *Principle 6 "Industry Collaboration"*.



How can you influence others?

01 Inform and educate

Educate staff and your key stakeholders of the climate related challenges Sri Lanka faces, what needs to be done and what you do under your sphere of influence. Communicating your strategy is an effective way of gathering support and recognition from visitors and from the community. Maybe this can also be subtly communicated to your guests. For example by setting up signs or communicating via social media or your website about your journey towards sustainable, as well as climate resilient operations. You can include pictures of some of your undertakings and write short texts describing your ambitions, your achievements, but also challenges and struggles you and your key stakeholders need to work on together.

02 Use your purchasing power

You can also use your own purchasing power demand from suppliers and producers to make more environmentally friendly products and services are made available for your industry. Use your collective action abilities and go together with other business sectors, the civil society and tourists and travelers to demand change from your supply chain – only if demands change the economies will change.

03 Expand your handprint

Having a climate handprint means you do things outside your own direct operations to have a positive impact on the climate. For example this could be that you influence the choices the travelers make on their way to, during, and after their vacation so that they too can contribute to the well-being of your locality and even their homestead.

Climate action

- Encourage guests to take climate learnings home, and to spread awareness on climate action.
- The tourism industry's main emission source stems from travelling. Consider co-operating with climate conscious suppliers, and compensate for air travel where possible. Encourage climate conscious choices when moving to and from your premises, like using public transports or sharing a ride.
- Respect, retain and protect green spaces, and investigate how you can harvest energy or store carbon on your premises through greenery or renewable energy sources.
- Offer climate friendly food and beverage options, and cut back on meat and dairy.

Start the Sustainability Journey Now

Starting a new sustainable business takes time. Let people know that your company is traveling along the road of sustainability. Most companies in Sri Lanka are not on that road yet, hence you will likely appear to be a frontrunner just by showing progress.

Local Best Practices Case Study

Mangrove reforestation project

In Kalpitiya businesses have collaborated to plant and restore the mangrove forest which once was an integral part of the Sri Lankan coastline. Among those businesses were the Kitesurfing camp KiteSurfing Lanka (KSL) who have included the mangrove planting project into their list of activities visitors can enjoy while staying there. The mangrove trees have not only helped restore the ecological balance in the area but also act as a buffer zone for the rising sea levels and floods, making KSL and the community in the area more resilient and adaptive to climate change. This has been a successful operation which has included many stakeholders and the local community and resulted in increased awareness of climate change and a supportive network and ways in which visitors can contribute.

Read more here: <https://www.kitesurfinglanka.com/sustainability-at-ksl-mangrove-planting-initiative/>



Organizations and institutions that can help you on your journey

IUCN Sri Lanka

The International Union of Conservation Network in Sri Lanka is working with biodiversity and ecosystems, coastal and marine resources, business and biodiversity, economics of conservation, water and climate change. Within the climate change area their projects include resilient communities and adaptation strategies.

LEF

The Lanka Environment Fund has several projects that can be relevant for tourism businesses wanting to work with **ecosystem restoration** that will have resilient capabilities for Sri Lanka.

UN

The United Nations have clear recommendations on how different stakeholders can get involved with mitigative and adaptive climate action in their industries:
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change/>

UNWTO

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation has well developed guidelines on climate action tailored to the tourism industry: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

Climate Action Network

(CAN) is a global network of more than 1,500 civil society organisations in over 130 countries driving collective and sustainable action to fight the climate crisis and to achieve social and racial justice. CAN is also active in Sri Lanka and has many campaigns also open to the private sector for immediate climate action.

SLYCAN Trust

is a non-profit think tank working on climate change, sustainable development, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation. Their work includes regional policy analysis and evidence-based research to on-the-ground implementation, with several articles relevant for climate action in the Sri Lankan tourism industry.

Key words and definitions

Climate change

Climate is the average weather in a place over many years. Climate change is a shift in those average conditions including precipitation, temperature and wind patterns. The rapid climate change we are now seeing is caused by humans using oil, gas and coal for their homes, factories and transport. When these fossil fuels burn, they release greenhouse gases – mostly carbon dioxide (CO₂). These gases trap the Sun's heat and cause the planet's temperature to rise.

Climate footprint

Similar to how a carbon footprint of an individual, business or operation illustrates carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄) emissions generated from an activity or range of activities over a defined time frame, Climate Footprint provides a more detailed picture as it accounts for all greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).

Global Warming

The rise in global temperatures due mainly to the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Climate risk assessment

Assessments that identify the likelihood of future climate hazards and their potential impacts for cities, communities and business.

Climate adaptation

The processes of adjusting to the current and future effects of climate change.

Climate mitigation

Reducing the severity of the impacts of climate change by preventing or reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere.



Sustainability
Principles

**For more information about the
Alliance and our projects**

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