



PRINCIPLE 02

Conservation of Biodiversity



Sri Lankan wildlife, nature, and living life on land and in the ocean is world famous, and the very reason visitors love the island. This unique nature is not only precious, but also under increasing stress.

Human activity has altered almost 75 percent of the earth's surface, limiting wildlife and nature on the planet (UN, 2022). Therefore, biodiversity conservation is key for all sectors of the tourism industry and every stakeholder will have to do their part to preserve the ecosystems. Engaging in activities that restore and protect biodiversity is essential as both wildlife and lush greenery are positive factors for both the ecosystems and the destination.

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Our industry is changing

Ecotourism is tourism directed towards exotic, often threatened, natural environments, intended to support conservation efforts and observe wildlife in ways that do not inflict or disturb nature. This is gaining popularity within the industry, and visitors will increasingly seek to experience the true nature of sustainable management of lands and resources.



14 Life below water



15 Life on land

Importance and impact to business in the short and long term

Preserving habitats rich with life is important for any business wanting to uphold a sustainable operation and an attractive destination for tourists to experience. The unique wildlife, flora and fauna is what attracts a lot of tourists to choose Sri Lanka as their preferred vacation destination.



What can we do as an SME?

01 Self Reflection

How do your operations impact biodiversity? If your hotel or guesthouse is located close to waters or other sensitive ecosystems, or if you coordinate wildlife tours, take a good look at the impact it has:

- Does your business disrupt any, and especially threatened habitats?
- How can you reduce or leave a lower impact as possible?
- Have you caused any damage or disrupted life on land or in water?
- Are there aspects of your business where you have a unique opportunity to conserve or protect biodiversity?

02 Plan and prepare

If you find areas of concern for biodiversity or areas of opportunity for action, both aspects will require a plan. Having a practical plan for the conservation of biodiversity will not only help with maintaining bustling wildlife, but can also increase business opportunities in the long run. Taking measures now may develop into a new demand for authentic and unexploited nature experiences. In the planning and preparation, make sure to reach out to local experts, NGOs, conservationists or organisations for advice..

03 Restoration and management

In your preparation phase, you might find that there are currently activities where you are negatively impacting biodiversity. Firstly, a good management response to this is to stop the activity, and find other solutions with less of an impact on nature. This could include only supporting tourism operators that threaten wildlife on land or in the ocean with respect and care.

If you run an operation where causing stress on habitats is difficult to avoid and you have taken proper measures to minimise the effect you inflict, other commitments may be available.

These can be activities such as wetland rehabilitation, reforestation, or investing in specialist services through NGOs who work with restoration and conservation of animal species and plants.

04 First do less harm Take care with decisions and beware of hazardous materials

When you fully understand your possible physical impact on the environment and biodiversity, you might find that there are several areas you can improve on. Any new developments should be reviewed in terms of biodiversity impact from your business.

While the use of detergents and pesticides are efficient ways of keeping unwanted vermin, bacteria and fungus away, turning to these materials might actually cause more harm. Start by swapping out toxic insecticides and chloride-based detergents to more natural options and here are a few examples:

- Cotton balls and rags soaked in peppermint or clove oils to prevent rodents.
- Cedar chips and lavender are good moth-repellents, and citronella hinders mosquitoes.
- Flush with hot water with soap to keep drains and pipes clear from unwanted bacteria.
- Oils or liquids made from cinnamon, peppermint, lemon and white vinegar can prevent ants.
- Heat or freeze treatment rooms, bags and garments that have been attacked with bed bugs, rather than using toxic materials
- Substitute a portion of chlorine with ozone and bromine to keep your pool clean.

Treat the root cause instead of the symptoms. It might be a good idea to inform guests that insects and small animals are not unusual in Sri Lanka and what they can do to avoid having unwanted company in their rooms, such as keeping food in air tight containers or in a fridge.

05

Then start the doing-good Create biodiversity!

The beauty of operating on a lush island like Sri Lanka is that you can create and expand biodiversity yourself. Plant a garden or a green space for indigenous species to thrive where travelers and community members can both enjoy.

Activities like planting mangrove sanctuaries, or coral reef restoration is also something you can invite guests to join in on. These green and blue areas will increase biodiversity by attracting pollinating bugs, and create more flowers and healthier greenery in your community. They can also build resilience for climate change. For example by helping stormwater runoff, noise dampening and air cleaning, and mangrove forests are known to be our best defence against rising sea levels.

These activities will also be seen by guests as more meaningful, as this enables tourists to not only “observe” wildlife, but to conserve it. There are increasing projects also available on land, such as turtle sanctuaries and wildlife habitat restoration. Divers can be activated in projects such as coral reef restoration and mangrove sanctuary establishments. Contact and donate to local conservation organisations to enable your visitors to take part in their activities.

You should however consider what you are doing in relation to what others in your area are doing. It is important to develop a concept that you feel you can excel in and to show any traveller what you do differently from others to keep delivering a unique experience.

What do we have to do as an industry?

Support local organisations and other businesses in your industry

Support efforts of conserving wildlife and nature. Many local NGOs strive to protect habitats through various measures. Support their work by donating money, equipment and gear, or manpower to help their cause. You can even engage visitors by having them help out with conservation activities. Some tourism activities have even been able to make these efforts commercial activities and giving profits to the NGO.

Potential in collaboration and raised voices

You might come across issues that need attention from more than your local community. For some of the biodiversity related problems in Sri Lanka, the travel industry needs to come together and reach policy makers and decision makers on a national level to enable the right policies for a continued biodiverse island. Join forces throughout the industry, either by making a common campaign or joining common initiatives by membership organisations.



How can you influence others?

01 Harness, follow and embrace local and indigenous knowledge

Restricting activities that negatively impact habitats doesn't mean losing revenue. Make your local knowledge known and become a beacon of inspiration and admiration. Show travelers and other community stakeholders that you know your way around the local flora and fauna, and create inspiration for conservation. Done right you will help create conscious tourists who are less prone to disrupt the ecosystem as well as create a lifelong bond to Sri Lanka and to the service you helped provide.

There is a huge opportunity for diversifying the industry by embracing knowledge and interplay from the indigenous population. The mantra here is co-designing, co-development, and co-management with indigenous and local people. There is a vast and well tested knowledge of harnessing and preserving the natural world that could open up simple but effective modes of engaging in conservation through your offer. Connect with local organisations, universities or NGOs to address the topics relevant in your area.

02 Information material at your premises

Offer maps and pamphlets of protected and sensitive areas which can give the visitors an overview and guidelines, tips and other important information about these areas. "What are the national and regional recommendations and regulations?" and "How do we convey this in a sensible manner to visitors?" should be questions to ask yourself while creating this material. This should contain "species-specific" examples relative to your location, as well as clear explanations of potential threats and suggestions to what one can do as a visitor / tourist, but also what is needed from the global community to keep preserving biodiversity.

03 Visitor participation and visitor warning

It is great to let visitors partake in conservation and restoration activities, but make sure they are the right ones, with scientific and empirical proven effect. Coordinate with experts and NGOs to secure as well as broaden your engagements in various activities which benefit habitats and wildlife.

Do not be afraid to clearly point visitors in the right direction for guided tours and activities that you know will not damage or disrupt the integrity of greeneries or habitats. By including travelers in your vision towards a diverse Sri Lanka, you can have an effect on how they think about their own impacts during their vacations.



Local Best Practices Case Study

Earth square meter

The concept of an Earth square meter was developed by Lerum municipality in Sweden where the main objective was to encourage individuals, schools and businesses to take a stand for the preservation of biodiversity. This has been done by establishing a so-called Earth square meter, a concentration of biodiverse flora in an area of at least one square meter, erected in a place otherwise missing or completely lacking biological diversity. This has been done in parking lots, outside office buildings, at schools, on walls, roofs and more to not only preserve biodiversity, but also help natural pollination. This is relevant for the industry but also in urban areas, where a biodiversity square meter can create awareness for biodiversity also in city environments, and influence better decisions.

A big part of Earth square meter is the educational aspect. By including youth in the process, they learn about the most integral parts of the ecosystem and why they are worth preserving. Maybe your business can expand on this and also include guest-participation in the construction of these micro-gardens? So far this concept has been a successful tool for businesses to contribute to conservation efforts as well as market their engagement in creating a sustainable industry in favour of the local community and ecosystem.

Read more here: <https://vaxtrumilerum.se/det-har-ar-vaxtrum-earth-square-meter/>



The case of Pangandaran, Indonesia

Due to the impacts of the 2006 tsunami as well as unsound tourism management, the coastal area of Pangandaran and its coral reefs and forests were threatened. The UN World Tourism Organization together with the Indonesian Ministry for Culture and Tourism (MoCT) began planning for a long-term re-development of the tourist infrastructure of Pangandaran, harmonizing tourism development with the conservation of biodiversity and its ecosystem services. This resulted in a participatory development of a Tourism Management Plan in cooperation with the Local Working Group (LWG) for Pangandaran, which is now adopted by the local businesses through 16 biodiversity and culture-related tourism products. The Committee for the future Destination Management Organisation (DMO) supported the process as well as strengthened the local stakeholders to obtain support from other institutions such as UNDP.

Read more here:

<https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/indonesia-tourism-development-supporting-biodiversity-conservation-pangandaran>

“Plant a coral” – Sri Lanka

Maalu Maalu Resort & Spa together with the Wildlife Research and Conservation Trust (WRCT) has organised a Coral Replanting Program on Passekudah Beach. The ‘Plant a Coral Project’ creates awareness on conserving coral reefs, while also actively working to increase biodiversity of the sea and uplift the livelihood of coastal communities.

Read more here: <https://www.themesorts.com/maalumaalu/csr/plant-a-coral-coral-reef-restoration-project.html>



Organizations and institutions that can help you on your journey

The Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society

SLWCS is committed to the protection of Sri Lanka's endangered wildlife through conservation research and community engagement. The society works actively enable tourism businesses and communities to balance ecosystem protection and economic development by pioneering a model for sustainable conservation.

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>

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.

The Pearl Protectors

is a volunteer-based organization that advocates and takes action towards protecting the marine environment of Sri Lanka. Their vision is to create awareness of the imminent threat posed to the marine life, sea areas and the beaches of Sri Lanka, and the organization gathers individuals and businesses in safeguarding the marine while promoting sustainable, eco-friendly behaviors and initiatives to reduce the human impact on the marine habitat.

<https://parrotfishcollective.org/parrotfish->

<https://www.goodmarket.global/>

Key words and definitions

Biodiversity

Biodiversity describes the huge variety of life on Earth, made up of the millions of species of plants and animals, from large mammals, down to microscopic creatures like bacteria and fungi.

Ecosystem

living elements which interact with each other and their non-living environments – provide benefits, or services, to the world (*FAO, 2022*).

Ecosystem services

make human life possible by, for example, providing nutritious food and clean water, regulating disease and climate, supporting the pollination of crops and soil formation, and providing recreational, cultural and spiritual benefits (*FAO, 2022*).



Sustainability
Principles

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

please visit : <https://www.srilankatourismalliance.com>
email us at : welcome@srilankatourismalliance.com