



# Analysis of the Current Pacific Marine Ecotourism Industry and Key Supply Side Constraints for the Pacific

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## Overview of the Ecotourism Industry

As noted in Deliverable 1, a formal 'ecotourism industry' does not exist in the Pacific region. There are no commonly-accepted definitions or standards covering ecotourism or Sustainable Tourism and the self-defined participants in this sector are not large enough to be economically or politically meaningful.

Nonetheless, there is great potential to develop an important, vibrant, and robust ecotourism subset of the tourism industry. In addition, tremendous potential exists to make the tourism industry significantly more sustainable, based on well-developed and well-documented success at many levels in the Pacific and beyond.

## Ecotourism in Context

What do we mean when we say 'ecotourism'? For starters, we need to look at the definition of 'Sustainable Tourism' which, for some, e.g., Twining-Ward, et. al. (2002)<sup>1</sup> and UNEP/WTO (2005),<sup>2</sup> is process-focused; for others, outcomes such as reduced environmental impact and increased social equity and economic opportunity are emphasised. The tourism industry uses and prefers the term 'responsible tourism'.<sup>3</sup>

***In all cases, definitions of Sustainable Tourism cover inclusive, context-sensitive processes that lead to reduced negative social and environmental impacts and positive economic impacts.***

It is generally accepted that ecotourism is a subset of Sustainable Tourism and while all forms of tourism can become more sustainable, not all forms of tourism can be ecotourism.<sup>4</sup> The official definition, adopted by the IUCN in 1996, is based on a modified definition of the term coined by Mexican architect Hector Ceballos-Lascurain in 1983.<sup>5</sup>

*'Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features— both past and present), that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socioeconomic involvement of local populations'.<sup>6</sup>*

Because ecotourism development has had such emphasis on process and context, it is not surprising that it has had difficulty moving beyond the First-Party self-definition/self-certification state. As noted in the definition, ecotourist destinations and supporting infrastructure tend to be somewhat remote ('relatively undisturbed natural areas'), which limits the resources they have available for meeting standards. The pressure is even greater in some highly seasonal destinations, such as Tonga, where remote ecotourist facilities cannot provide desired amenities year-round due to the expense.

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<sup>1</sup> Indicator Handbook, A Guide to the Development and Use Of Samoa's Sustainable Tourism Indicators, Twining-Ward, et. al. 2002 at 3. 'Sustainable Tourism is: Place Specific...Stakeholder Driven...Adaptive...Comprehensive...'

<sup>2</sup> 'Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities'. <http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5>

<sup>3</sup> <http://responsibletourismpartnership.org/cape-town-declaration-on-responsible-tourism/>

<sup>4</sup> This is consistent with Cameron-Cole's approach to its assessment for SPREP that addresses two distinct aspects of Sustainable Tourism:

1. The overall reduction of the negative environmental and social footprint of conventional mass tourism, while promoting its positive economic and social elements;
2. The development and promotion of an ecotourism subsector of the tourism industry.

<sup>5</sup> <http://ecoclub.com/news/085/interview.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sustainabletourism.net/sustainable-tourism/definitions/>



To the extent that Second-Party types of organisations exist, e.g., Tonga’s ‘Eua Ecotourism Association, they tend to be quite small and comprised of self-defining ecotourism entities. As a result, these organisations have few resources available to develop and administer standards and/or labels for their members. Moreover, given the relatively small size and number of ecotourism venues in each country, they currently—with the exception of Vanuatu—do not get the attention or focus from national tourism organisations needed to organise and promote the sector.

## **Status of Implementing Ecotourism in the Pacific**

To the extent that ecotourism is a common idea in the Pacific, we found that the term is principally used to describe outdoor, adventure-style activities—often involving marine resources—in remote areas and the hospitality services that support those activities.

The opportunity for expansion of Sustainable Tourism and ecotourism is nearly limitless. Going forward, all new tourism infrastructure and programs, in theory, could be made more sustainable. For this to happen, a ‘development’ paradigm needs to supplant a ‘growth’ paradigm in the industry.

PICTs<sup>7</sup> will need to decide whether they are trying to ‘grow’, or ‘develop’, with regards to tourism generally and ecotourism specifically. While growth can be a component of development, they are different concepts that lead to different outcomes. *Cameron-Cole is defining growth as focused on increasing the quantity of the growth objective, while development focuses on increasing its quality.* Although growth and development are not mutually exclusive, as shown in both examples below, it is possible to have growth *hinder* development of a country.

In the context of ‘increasing’ ecotourism in the Pacific, is the goal to grow total visitor numbers? For example, Palau has had significant growth in visitation over the last few years, but Cameron-Cole heard reports that the total amount of spending in the country had actually decreased from before the period of rapid visitor growth. Obviously, this is less likely to happen in an ecotourism context, but as described in our country-level reports in Deliverable 5, we have observed very unecological activity happening at ostensibly ecotourist/protected areas.

On the other hand, is the goal to increase tourism revenues? Even in a situation of increasing tourism revenues, the amount of national/local benefit would largely depend on the fraction of domestic ownership of tourism infrastructure vs. international ownership. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to have national-fronted businesses that are in fact foreign-owned where the majority of profits wind up being exported.

With a development focus, tourist numbers and revenues can indeed grow. But this growth must occur in a context where the upper limits of visitation are known and the ability to distribute visitors in an equitable and non-detrimental way exists.

In Deliverables 3–5 we will describe a development-oriented strategy for Sustainable Tourism and ecotourism at the regional and national level.

## **Tourism ‘Crisis’**

One could define potential growth in visitation as a looming ‘crisis’ for the PICTs. The Chinese spelling for the word ‘crisis’ is comprised of two characters, the first stands for ‘danger’, while the second stands for ‘opportunity’. From this formulation, a crisis is only potentially negative

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<sup>7</sup> Pacific Island Countries and Territories.



and, with the right approach, forecasted tourism growth can be turned into opportunity, while avoiding danger.

## **Key Barriers and Opportunities to Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism**

The principal barriers to Sustainable Tourism are the sheer number of visitors to these relatively small, fragile landmasses and the belief that growth in visitation should be the primary driver and indicator of success of the tourism industry. This does not mean that all aspects of the industry must stop growing, but a development approach would look carefully at what grows, what shrinks and what stays the same. Indeed, with a carefully managed development process it may be possible to further grow visitation to many, if not all, of the target islands so long as the very real physical barriers to this growth can be mitigated.

### ***Principal Barriers and Associated Opportunities: Resource Limitations***

While access issues can be mitigated by proper design and execution of tourism development programmes, the real barriers to significant growth of the tourism industry are the physical limitations of access to key resources: fragile ecosystems, food, water and energy. In all of these cases, an integrated development approach will allow for an increase of service for a larger number of people, especially PICTs residents.

### ***Resource Barriers: Fragile Ecosystem Visitation Levels and Invasive Species***

The PICTs are so attractive because of their uniquely beautiful marine and land environments. Coastal and offshore reefs teeming with wildlife, shorelines that range from rugged limestone to pristine sand, and lush jungles loaded with endemic species all combine to lure visitors thousands of miles for adventures of a lifetime.

Unfortunately, the unique and fragile nature of PICTs also holds the seeds of their potential demise. The exceptional qualities of certain sites within these countries make them very desirable to visit and there is a tendency to overexploit these sites because of the very revenue from visitation that they generate. As the quality of sites deteriorates, so does visitation.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the pressures of growing visitation, invasive land and marine species can also disrupt the natural environment.<sup>9</sup> Invasive vines choke out native flora, which can impact vulnerable endemic species. Rats are particularly damaging to bird populations, in addition to spreading disease in urban communities. Crown-of-thorns starfish can devastate coral reefs already under stress from cyclone damage or bleaching.

### ***Opportunities: Protect and Restore Fragile Ecosystems by Restricting Usage and Promoting Volunteer Tourism***

To the extent that existing or proposed Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and land protected areas can be considered 'scarce resources', there are several different ways to allocate such scarce resources that allow balance between access and protection. Many of these allocation methods fit very nicely with the market transformation protocol outlined in Deliverable 3.

- Lottery access to permits, for example, can be introduced with early participation in the lottery given to qualified vendors that are either individuals, or companies that have achieved the proper certification or accreditation per established standards. A certain

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.mvariety.com/regional-news/86949-palau-tourism-arrivals-continue-to-decline>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.islandconservation.org/acteon-gambier-french-polynesia/>;



portion of the lottery can be allocated to local/indigenous companies and the remainder to internationally-owned firms.

- License fees are another way of ensuring proper professionalisation of guides and companies accessing protected areas. As with the lottery, license fees can vary depending on whether an individual or company has been ecotourism-certified or Sustainable Tourism-certified or accredited as discussed in detail in Deliverables 3–5.

As noted throughout our report, the challenge of enforcing norms and standards within protected areas is a significant issue. Although enforcement is principally a government function, important pieces of the enforcement infrastructure, such as reporting and monitoring can be handled by private sector players that also provide access to the sites. As described below, individuals, who are tour guides or boat drivers, could also be trained and deputised by the enforcing agency to monitor others' behavior in the protected area/site.

The level of access to sensitive sites ideally would be governed by a professional and qualified assessment of the environmental carrying capacity of the site, as well as a qualitative assessment of the user experience. An overcrowded visitor experience can be almost as harmful to the tourist experience as a relatively uncrowded visit to a degraded site. Based on these assessments, countries could develop a tiered system of sites that would limit access according to value and vulnerability.

License and lottery fees can be used to support these assessments as well as be used to support the deputies overseeing adherence to the rules. Depending upon the findings of the assessment the relevant government bureau can recommend periodic moratoriums on visitation to the site. If such restrictions were extended to one or two days per week, Cameron-Cole believes that the sites would maintain a thriving ecosystem. Since overall sustainability includes social and economic aspects, if key protected and sensitive sites do end up being restricted, then it will be important to develop alternative sites to expand the overall tourist experience in the country.

- 'Voluntourism' is a growing trend, principally in the Caribbean and Central America where people include one or more days of service into their itineraries.<sup>10</sup> With regards to restoring degraded environments and eradicating invasive species, there may be an excellent opportunity to engage visitors to help. A volunteer tourism organisation, Project Abroad, already has longer-term volunteer placement opportunities in Fiji connected with that country's shark protection activities.<sup>11</sup> SPREP could coordinate between national governments and voluntourism entities to package short- or longer-term volunteering opportunities for visitors. Arrangements could be made with airlines and cruise lines—some of which already support volunteer activities—to offer a limited number of discounted seats or berths for volunteers that come through an organised programme. Similarly, hotels and restaurants might support these activities by offering discounted rooms and meals for registered volunteers. Voluntourism might be a good way to supplement visitation during the off-season in many countries. Additional 'perks' for volunteers might include access to environmentally restricted areas or reservation preference for limited access to some of the more popular marine areas. Projects that might be supported through volunteer tourism include coral or giant clam planting, reef monitoring, marine life census, removing invasive crown-of-thorns starfish, removing

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<sup>10</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/Travel/giving-back-volunteer-vacation-trends/story?id=42398847>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.projects-abroad.org/volunteer-projects/conservation-and-environment/shark-conservation/volunteer-fiji/>



invasive vines, planting or seeding eroded areas, eradicating rats from bird sanctuaries or any other kinds of volunteer activities desired by the host country.

### **Resource Barrier: Food Security**

The challenges and opportunities regarding food security in the Pacific could be the subject of an entirely separate research project. Cameron-Cole will only provide the briefest of overviews for both the barrier and the opportunity in this area.

Where tourism is the dominant activity, between 50% and 90% of food and beverages are imported,<sup>12</sup> the vast majority of which goes to feed visitors. Imported food is significantly more expensive than domestically grown food and has led to skyrocketing obesity in many countries.<sup>13</sup> In addition, because farming has traditionally been carried out on a slash-and-burn subsistence basis, the transition to higher-volume more commercial forms of farming has been difficult.

Traditional foods are not seen as 'flashy' as imported foods, which, truth be told, is fairly accurate given the limited ability of the island soils to sustain a highly varied set of intensively-grown crops. Moreover, it is increasingly difficult to entice younger islanders into the hard, low-wage and low-status farming sector. Several people with whom we spoke noted that not only was it challenging to entice youth into the sector, but that they would not want their children to be farmers because of the difficult work, low pay and low status.

By itself, increased visitation would only worsen the food security of the PICTs. But, as described below, a focus on Sustainable Tourism may also provide an opportunity to strengthen the cultivation of traditional foodstuffs, as well as open up new business opportunities.

### **Opportunities: Food Security**

Although PICTs will never be food self-sufficient with current levels of visitation, Sustainable Tourism and ecotourism provide significant opportunities for improving food security. There are numerous ways that expanding traditional crops and the local agricultural base can be incentivised while at the same time growing business opportunities for foodstuffs that are traditionally imported.

- Agro-ecotourism combines farm tourism with support for traditional agricultural and land conservation techniques for rural smallholder farms and allows them to earn a livelihood instead of resorting to monoculture cash crops.<sup>14</sup> As part of their stay on the island, tourist participants in agro-ecotourism also learn about traditional farming techniques and provide labour and additional revenue for farming families. This makes it easier to fulfil land and biodiversity conservation goals, which can conflict with the needs of rural families. This type of tourism could also be combined with more intensive types of agriculture as described below.
- Partnerships with cruise lines and resorts can be established to begin introducing and substituting domestic crops such as taro or tapioca for potatoes in a variety of recipes. In addition, produce that is typically imported can be grown in a 'Microfarm' kit and certain types of ocean produce can be sourced from 3-D ocean farming set-ups. These

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<sup>12</sup> *Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States*, Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2012) p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/7/10-010710/en/b>

<sup>14</sup> Addinsall, et. al., *Agroecological tourism: bridging conservation, food security and tourism goals to enhance smallholders' livelihoods on South Pentecost, Vanuatu*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, November, 2016  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1254221>



intensive production options could also be partially or fully capitalised by the cruise lines and resorts. The return on their investment would be paid back through lower food costs and perhaps a portion of other revenues generated by sales outside the partnership.

- Restaurant and agricultural co-ops, at a smaller scale than cruise and resort partnerships, can be convened to provide regular local food sources for restaurants and steady customers for farmers. For example, the Elilai Grill and Bar in Koror, Palau, partners with local farmers to purchase native produce and features it in their dishes. Such co-ops could partner on Microfarm kits or 3-D ocean farming ventures as well.
- Intensive hydroponic or aeroponic agriculture (Microfarm) kits fit inside shipping containers and can produce organic vegetables within 17 days from seed to harvest and generate several times the amount of vegetable matter per square metre of conventional farming.<sup>15</sup> These kits are particularly well suited for producing expensive leafy vegetables that are typically imported for tourists. Although somewhat energy intensive, the energy for grow-lights can be produced with the photovoltaic panels and batteries that are integrated with the kit. Because they are self-contained, they require a small fraction (<10%) of the water of traditional agriculture and virtually eliminate the need for pesticides and herbicides. In addition, because these kits have a relatively small footprint, they can be placed on degraded land or in urban areas and even can be stacked vertically to generate even more produce per unit of horizontal land. These kits are somewhat capital intensive, but can pay back in produce sales within 1–2 years. It would be an ideal type of technology to support through a revolving loan fund established with national investment funds or multilateral development facilities.
- Intensive vertical or 3-D ocean farming<sup>16</sup> provides many of the same benefits of intensive farm kits and can be used to provide additional nutrition and revenue to local families. The concept can be adapted to the ocean life that thrives in local waters of each PICT. The produce can be sold to specific partner restaurants, resorts and cruise lines.

### **Resource Barrier: Water Security**

Next to food, water security is probably the most pressing problem facing Pacific nations. Although rainfall can be plentiful and La Niña events can lead to flooding, El Niño events can lead to droughts.<sup>17</sup> Regardless, the water infrastructure necessary to support high levels of visitation through these cycles is expensive to build and maintain. As a result, many centralised water supply and distribution systems lose tremendous amounts of water to leakage, between 20% and 50% in some cases.

National and international development agencies will generally support the construction of water supply and wastewater treatment facilities, but there are few funds available for

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, <http://www.microfarmsinc.com/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://greenwave.org/about-us/> ; <http://www.tonga-broadcasting.net/?p=4591>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/palau-water-shortage-island-paradise-of-18000-about-to-run-out-of-water/news-story/dd9c92cc9fa06517726bedb5f60ece74>



operations and upkeep, which can lead to failure or inadequately-treated discharge into sensitive coastal waters, which is a long-standing problem.<sup>18</sup>

### **Opportunities: Water Security**

- Water-efficiency standards for plumbing fixtures and onsite rainwater storage requirements should be adopted for new and existing developments. This would help further reduce both water supply and treatment problems. These standards are described more fully in Deliverable 3.
- Reclaimed grey water and rainwater should be used for landscape irrigation and non-potable uses, such as toilet flushing. Smaller-scale, end-of-pipe treatment (e.g., micro-filtration, UV lamps, ozonation) is increasingly safe and cost-effective.
- New in-place pipe lining technology should line existing cleaned out water and sewer infrastructures. This can cost a fraction of replacing aging piping and connections and does not require disruptive excavation.<sup>19</sup>
- Smaller-scale ‘Living Machine’ types of sewage treatment facilities should be explored and utilised at the neighborhood and resort levels where there is enough development density to support centralised treatment.<sup>20</sup>

### **Resource Barrier: Energy Security**

Although blessed with ample sun and wind resources, most PICTs continue to get most of their electricity from burning imported fossil fuels and are 100% dependent on imports for gasoline and fuel oil. This dependence will grow increasingly expensive as energy prices eventually and inevitably rise in the future.

As outlined in the Opportunities section and described in more detail in Deliverable 3 and the country-level reports in Deliverable 5, it would be possible through increased adoption of energy efficiency and renewable energy over the next 20 years to largely eliminate the need for fossil fuels to supply purely domestic activities. However, it would be more of a challenge to fully service high intensity transportation modes, such as airplanes and cruise ships with an all-renewable approach.

### **Opportunities: Energy Security**

- Minimum efficiency standards should be implemented for purchased equipment (air conditioners, refrigeration, water heat, etc.).
- The purchase and installation of renewable energy technology for electricity and hot water should be established via incentives. There are many successful business models for small-scale rural solar and wind technologies that could be adapted for use in the PICTs.<sup>21</sup>
- Minimum fuel economy standards for imported vehicles should be established based on the current or next most recent standards in key countries, such as China, Japan or

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[http://www.pacificwater.org/\\_resources/article/files/Sewage%20Pollution%20in%20the%20Pacific%20and%20how%20to%20prevent%20it.pdf](http://www.pacificwater.org/_resources/article/files/Sewage%20Pollution%20in%20the%20Pacific%20and%20how%20to%20prevent%20it.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, <http://belcopipe.com/project-merrick.html>

<sup>20</sup> <http://livingmachines.com/Portfolio/Municipal-Government/San-Francisco-Public-Utilities-Commission,-San-Fra.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> This example is from India: [https://energypedia.info/wiki/Business\\_Models\\_for\\_Solar-Based\\_Rural\\_Electrification](https://energypedia.info/wiki/Business_Models_for_Solar-Based_Rural_Electrification)



South Korea.<sup>22</sup> Pacific nations should not be dumping grounds for inefficient vehicles from Asia.

- Extra-efficient and electric vehicles should be encouraged and incentivised, especially for taxis or other public transport. Incentives might include giving preference to the most highly-travelled routes to alternatively-fuelled or ultra-efficient vehicles.
- Carbon taxes on fossil fuel imports can be imposed and these taxes be used to fund the incentives for renewable and energy-efficient equipment. These taxes can be made revenue neutral by reducing other forms of taxation. The basic concept is to reduce taxation of 'goods' (e.g., income) while increasing taxation of 'bads' (e.g., carbon emissions). The tax structure can be designed to protect low-income families and small businesses against short-run negative impacts from these changes.

### ***Environmental Barrier: Solid Waste***

Nearly 100% of the solid waste pollution in SPREP nations is imported, through packaged goods and products for use and consumption.

Many surveys show that solid waste management is at or near the top of many island nations' list of environmental priorities.<sup>23</sup> In addition, ocean and beach pollution is listed as one of the most negative elements of marine tourist experiences in the Pacific. While a significant amount—most likely on the order of 25%–30%—of ocean and beach pollution originates outside the islands themselves, the most comes from within.

There are four principal ways to address solid waste: 1) Reduce it; 2) Recycle it; 3) Burn it; 4) Bury it. Unfortunately, given the relatively small landmass of most Pacific Island nations, coupled with the fact that the overall volume of material is quite small, alternative approaches such as recycling, are not easy to implement cost-effectively.

In addition, concerns about transporting pests, such as fruit flies, make consolidating and exporting most recyclables (perhaps except auto fluff) very difficult in the region. This is also a barrier to any islands accepting materials for recycling or composting from cruise ships.

### ***Opportunities: Solid Waste***

Simple (but not necessarily easy!) measures can be taken to reduce solid waste pollution generated on the islands together with measures to minimise solid waste pollution originating from cruise ships.

The table below summarises actions that can be implemented in the tourism industry and at the national level.

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<sup>22</sup> International fuel economy comparisons can be found here: <http://www.theicct.org/blogs/staff/improving-conversions-between-passenger-vehicle-efficiency-standards>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.gdrc.org/oceans/sin-problems.html>;  
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2004/nov/15/internationalnews.waste>



Pollutant	Actions
Plastic Bottles	Import tax on bottles; rebate possible for documented export to recycling facility.  'Bottle bill' for plastic containers that places a fee on each container refunded when the container is returned.
Plastic Straws and Stirrers	Should be banned. Domestic industries around bamboo straws and stirrers could be developed. Paper straws are also an option.
Food Waste	Should be gathered and stored separately and used as animal fodder.
Metal Waste	Should be combined with automotive waste and exported.
Automotive Waste	Should be compacted and exported. Enact 'Producer Responsibility' legislation to require imported durable goods to be collected and recycled by the manufacturer. Second-hand goods are the collection responsibility of the importer.
Appliances and Large Equipment	Enact 'Producer Responsibility' legislation to require imported durable goods to be collected and recycled by the manufacturer. Second-hand goods are the collection responsibility of the importer.
Disposable Lunch Items	Environmental import taxes should be imposed on one-time use items. Certified Ecotourist firms cannot use these items to provision their guests.

Table 1: Solid Wastes Disposal Opportunities.

## Secondary Barriers and Associated Opportunities: Legal and Economic Challenges, and Access, Surrounding Environment and Social Issues

While the physical barriers are the principal constraints to growth, the secondary barriers mainly hinder development. The market transformation approach described in Deliverable 3 can help overcome or address many of these secondary barriers, which will allow both development and even some growth to occur, in spite of the physical barriers.

While the primary or physical barriers represent hard limits, the secondary barriers can mostly be overcome, and indeed turned into opportunities, through balance: not too much, not too little, but enough to satisfy everyone. Achieving this balance is as much the result of adopting the right process as it is choosing the right policy or practise.

### **Legal Barrier: Inadequate Enforcement of Existing Regulations**



It is all well and good to establish a legislative framework and develop a series of regulations to support the goals of these laws, but if the regulations are not enforced or enforced poorly, very little will have been accomplished.<sup>24</sup>

### **Opportunity: Deputising Private Industry to Enforce MPA Regulations**

One tactic that is being adopted is to ‘deputise’ members of the tourism industry to monitor and, in some cases, enforce visitation and behaviour restrictions in nationally protected areas. Engaging and empowering the industry to both monitor and oversee itself, but also to have police powers conveyed by the government, could be an excellent strategy in the interim to create a virtuous cycle of improved experience and decreased impact, rather than a race to the bottom. In addition, extensive consultation with and involvement of affected local populations should be required during development of national or state-level enforcement regimes to ensure that traditional and culturally important activities are not improperly regulated.

With existing Community Conservation Areas (CCA) or Community Marine Protected Areas (CMPA), oversight of rules and regulations properly begins with the community and responsible members of the local area should be prioritised to fulfil the Deputy role. This will ensure that social/cultural sustainability is being integrated into the enforcement regime, as well as ensure broader community involvement in the protection of vulnerable resources.

This oversight/reporting function would be similar to the role that airline or ships’ crews play when illegal or disruptive behavior happens on a boat or a plane. The principal role of the crew is to inform and monitor and report. Similarly, the role of deputised individuals would be to observe and report violations of policy and convey that information back to enforcement officials. Clearly, there would need to be safeguards in place to avoid false reporting. We would recommend that penalties for false or nuisance reporting be treated as severely as violations.

Depending upon the nature of the violation there should be one or at most two warnings before revocation of the license and access to the site. *If a violator attempts to bribe or otherwise coerce an observer from discharging his duties, that would be equivalent to a second violation.*

We also recommend that access to protected area sites that require motorised or guided access be in the presence of a deputised agent. During the phase-in period, ‘Super Deputies’ can be appointed to oversee multiple tours if necessary.

Furthermore, if guidelines were to exist that limited the number of visitors to a particular site, it would be easier to regulate the activities of the permitted visitors.

New Caledonia has a new program called Ambassadeurs du Lagon<sup>25</sup> (Ambassadors of the Lagoon) where professionals in the marine tourism industry are invited to become Deputies to the Rangers. These Deputies are trained annually and principally act as ‘eyes and ears’ for law enforcement, reporting violations to the Rangers. Ambassadors also provide education and information to people who are violating the marine regulations governing the Lagoon. The Ambassadors also have an enforcement role in certain circumstances when they see forbidden activities taking place.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.pacificislandtimes.com/single-post/2016/11/14/Pacific-Note-Editorial-Where-the-Palau-Marine-Sanctuary-is-going>

<sup>25</sup> New Caledonia Southern Province’s “Ambassadors of the Lagoon” program is discussed in greater detail in Deliverables 3 & 5 as a potential model for the region.



### ***Economic Barrier: Inadequate Funding***

Lack of adequate funding is one of the biggest reasons that enforcement of Marine Protected Area requirements over very large tracts of onshore and open water area is so difficult.<sup>26</sup> At present, relative to the amount of visitation, there is little to no enforcement of standards or guidelines that already exist, let alone potential future standards. In general, Rangers or other official representatives are too few in number and the area of coverage they are responsible for is too great to be supervised meaningfully. For example, Tonga only has one Ranger for its entire protected area network and Palau has only one patrol boat for 500,000 square kilometres of open ocean waters.

### ***Opportunities: Funding Environmental Development and Protection Projects***

There are two principal levels at which to collect use or protection fees: the centralised method or the decentralised method. While most fees in fact have elements of both—for example, a national tax may be centrally imposed but it must be collected in a decentralised way, a national environmental tax collected upon entry or departure from the country must then be distributed to the protected or sensitive areas.

In several of the countries we visited, fees are collected at the state or local level. This practise appears to have its origin in the communal group/grouping or social-based or kin-based group roots of many of these countries and makes a great deal of sense from this and other perspectives. Surveys of tourists, however, indicate that most do not like the idea of constantly paying for small individual environmental protection fees. Most visitors express a desire to pay one fee that takes care of most or all of their access to ecotourism activities in the country.

From a national development perspective, however, a national environmental tax does have a problem in that it tends to perpetuate and reward more developed existing protected and/or sensitive areas, which can ultimately lead to excessive pressure and possible degradation of these areas. Having resources available to identify, assess and develop alternative sites has multiple benefits not only in pressure relief for overutilised areas but also 'spreading the wealth' of visitation to other parts of the country.

It is understandable that states or provinces might have bad experiences in the past with promises from the central government to allocate or share resources that may not have come to fruition. Systems of checks and balances need to be implemented so that resources and development can be developed that optimise economic, environmental, and social benefits and costs across the country.

- An 'all access fee' model might be explored at the demonstration project level in a state and/or island that allows access to sites on a first-come, first-served basis, not unlike a theme or all-inclusive resort. Initiating all-access programs, creates a pool of money that can then be utilised to develop alternative sites thereby relieving pressure on the close-in sites and creating additional opportunity outside of the main population centres.

Multiple options for collecting development and protection fees can be tested and explored. The key challenge here is to ensure that the fees collected make it back to the areas visited.

- Embarkation fees could be charged upon arrival at the airport or hotel.
- Usage fees similarly could be purchased at centralised locations or through outlets such as tourist centres, information booths, hotels, etc.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://time.com/2910469/natural-park-of-the-coral-sea-new-caledonia/>



- Separate fees for general infrastructure development and specific site access or maintenance fees may make sense.

Of course, these fees would need to be collected together, but they could be differentiated depending upon the level of access the tourist wanted. For example, the infrastructure fee would be the same for everybody, whereas the access fee would be granted according to different levels of access desired. Identifying features such as differently-coloured wristbands could be used both as a souvenir as well as something that allowed access to environmental, cultural or other activities.

Fees can be utilised to subsidise a number of activities including site assessment, site protection and enforcement, site restoration, new activity or site development and the improvement of social and tourism sector infrastructure (transportation networks, pedestrian infrastructure, tour guide training, signage, etc.).

Infrastructure fees could also be collected through taxes on things such as airline arrivals, hotel rooms, restaurant meals, tour programmes, souvenir purchases in certain types of stores, etc. These taxes could be itemised on bills to show what portion goes into general protection and infrastructure and what portion goes into supporting site maintenance and development.

### ***Economic Barrier: Low-Cost Package Tours***

One of the biggest challenges facing PICTs is controlling how much money stays in-country compared with how much is paid offshore or stays offshore. Specifically, package tours, while popular with visitors, result in very little money left behind in-country.

These vertically integrated package tours bring charter airfare,<sup>27</sup> accommodation, and meals—often all owned by the overseas tour operator—together into one package. As a result, all or most of the money goes to the foreign owners of this vertically integrated service, rather than to locally-owned businesses. In Palau for example, package vacation travellers spend locally only 1/8 what a FIT<sup>28</sup> does.

### ***Opportunity: National ‘Travel Agency’ and Country-Specific Sustainable Tourism App***

PICTs should consider developing national level tourism clearinghouses that act as the financial intermediary between visitors and local hospitality and activities.

Any booking, whether it is for an individual, a tour operator, or a travel aggregation website or service, would need to go through the national agency. Having this gateway to the country would help small local businesses, which would not need to register individually with many different travel sites—the National Travel Agency (NTA) could provide that service for them. Based on anticipated bookings and traffic, a NTA website could develop deals and other incentives to visit other parts of the country to distribute visitation and activities more widely.

SPREP could work with National Travel Agencies to create country-specific Sustainable Tourism apps. Each app could be developed by local IT professionals possibly using an Application Programming Interface (API) developed by or provided by SPREP. These apps could have a specific ecotourism section and give different levels of information and access to preferred bookings depending on the level of package procured through the NTA. (See also below: Opportunities: Language.)

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<sup>27</sup> Cameron-Cole strongly urges countries to resist the growth in charter plane access, unless operated by a licensed, scheduled carrier.

<sup>28</sup> Free Independent Traveller. Personal communication, Palau Chamber of Commerce.



### ***Economic Barrier: Expensive, Low-Service/Low-Amenity Hospitality Infrastructure***

Tourists that have travelled widely often notice the relatively rundown condition of the infrastructure, as well as the relatively low level of service supplied by many of the employees in the hospitality industry. While there are hospitality training centres in several of the countries we visited, they tended to be chronically underfunded and/or understaffed. Because of the relative lack of high-end facilities in the region, the regional hospitality industry is seen as somewhat of a dead-end for Pacific Islanders that want to make a career in the industry. If talented, ambitious Pacific Island hospitality students go to overseas training centres, they seldom return.

### ***Opportunity: Regional Hospitality Industry Training Centres***

The region should support a network of regional and national hospitality training centres. These centres could develop faculty exchange programs with other training centres around the world. This would bring world-class trainers to the region that could train existing professionals in existing facilities, as well as secondary and university-level students seeking employment in the sector. Local faculty could bring their experience to other international hospitality training programmes, both to learn about the latest techniques and to promote the region as a career and tourism destination. Governments should consider partnering with international chains, which often have the highest quality and most comprehensive training programmes, to open up their training programmes to local professionals as part of their local franchise agreements.

National governments should also conduct national awareness-building campaigns and promotion of tourism careers, which are often seen as low-status and low-opportunity jobs.

### ***Access Barrier: Easily-Reached Destinations—A Double-Edged Sword***

What is ‘Access’? Based on our experience and conversations with fellow travellers, Cameron-Cole believes that access can be defined on three levels, each with different thresholds of acceptability that apply to the majority (>95%) of travellers, but perhaps to a lesser extent with adventure travellers:

- Country<sup>29</sup> access: A range of 4–24 hours from trip origin.
- Destination<sup>30</sup> access: A range of 1–4 hours from main country point of entry.
- Activity<sup>31</sup> access: Generally one hour or less from destination.

Let’s begin with ‘country access’. As noted in Deliverable 1, annual visitation to the Pacific region is growing by more than 5% per year, but it is not evenly distributed. Countries such as Palau and New Caledonia recorded double-digit growth between 2011 and 2015, while Samoa and Tonga show decreasing visitation over the same period.

#### Country Access by Air

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Country’ in this context means the main point of embarkation from the previous destination. Some distinction is needed for the main voyage point of origin and intermediate destinations. For example, a traveller will be willing to spend up to 24 hours travelling to get from Europe or the U.S. to a country in the South Pacific, but not between countries of the South Pacific.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Destination’ here means where the traveller is staying and the point from which ‘Activities’ are launched. In the context of a cruise ship, the Destination is the port of call. The same time constraint regarding access to Activities applies.

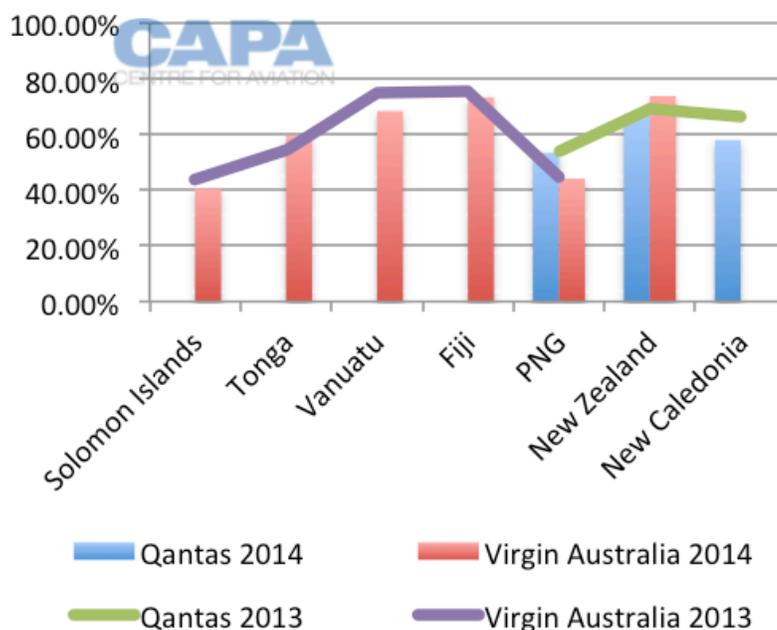
<sup>31</sup> ‘Activities’ is defined as marine or land-based environmental, cultural or entertainment activity that generally takes place within the same day initiated.



Asian origins are the main source of visitors (over 90%) in the North Pacific.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, the vast majority of South Pacific visitors—with the exception of French Polynesia—come from Australia and New Zealand.<sup>33</sup> Regional load factors of top national airlines average between 60% for Australian carriers (Figure 1) and 80% for New Zealand carriers (Figures 2 and 3).

Country	Principal Visitor Origins (5-year average) <sup>34</sup>
Vanuatu	Australia (59%); NZ (14%)
Tonga	Australia (22%); NZ (41%)
Palau	Japan (31%); China + ROC (40%)
New Caledonia	Australia + NZ (66%) <sup>35</sup>
Guam	Japan (67%); Korea (19%)
French Polynesia	USA (31%); France (21%); Australia & NZ (9%)

Table 2: Visitor Origins for Key PICTs.



<sup>32</sup> 2008–2014 Annual tourism data from Palau Visitors Association and 2010–2015 Guam Visitor Data.

<sup>33</sup> Based on Country visitor data and Cameron-Cole calculations.

<sup>34</sup> Averages are based on the most recent 5 years of data available for each country.

<sup>35</sup> For New Caledonia, we estimated 80%+ of cruise ship passengers coming from Australia/New Zealand, based on our conversation with New Caledonia Chamber of Commerce officials.



Figure 1: Australian Airline Load Factors to South Pacific Destinations.<sup>36</sup>

If we assume that South Pacific tourism originates roughly 50-50 from each country, the average airline load factor is approximately 70%. Based on 2015 visitation levels, this indicates that an additional 400,000-plus visitors annually could be delivered by air to Pacific Island destinations from the main regional tourist origins using existing scheduling. Our experience is that flights between the PICTs and Australian and New Zealand air hubs are scheduled approximately every other day, so theoretically, the potential for air arrivals could more than double.

In addition, the pressure of visitation on domestic food, which results in excessive importation of food, is unsustainable on several levels. Environmentally it's unsustainable because of the infrastructure necessary to bring and keep fresh food that's imported—significant transportation and refrigeration energy is required. It is unsustainable culturally because it substitutes local food sources with imported food sources and does not give visitors an opportunity to experience important parts of the culture of the country. We encountered several instances where certain restaurants were making an effort to include local produce and dishes in their offerings. In addition, we learned of similar initiatives taking place on cruise ships where cruise ship kitchens were buying local produce as part of their in-port restocking.

TASMAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDS	JUNE 2015	JUNE 2014	JUNE 2013	JUNE 2012	JUNE 2011
Passengers carried ('000s)	3,388	3,277	3,181	3,073	2,965
Available Seat Kilometres (ASK, millions)	10,888	10,622	10,277	9,694	9,345
Revenue Passenger Kilometres (RPK, millions)	9,184	8,858	8,580	8,164	7,799
Load Factor	84.4%	83.4%	83.5%	84.2%	83.5%

Figure 2: Air New Zealand Load Factor to South Pacific Destinations.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> <http://centreforaviation.com/analysis/qantas-and-virgin-australia-assessing-international-strategy-by-numbers-on-the-eye-of-results-184153>

<sup>37</sup> Air New Zealand Databook 2015 at 7. Statistics do not account for potential overlap with codeshare partners, such as Virgin Australia.



Figure 3: Air New Zealand South Pacific Destinations.<sup>38</sup>

### Country Access by Sea

North Pacific Islands have minimal to nonexistent cruise traffic, largely due to the distances from principal port hubs. In the South Pacific, however, sea visitation is growing rapidly due to the relative proximity of mainland cruise ports to island destinations. Our conversations with cruise operators indicate that cruise ships are at close to 100% occupancy when sailing, so growth in cruise visitation would occur through the arrival of additional ships. For example, we heard plans for doubling the amount of cruise visitors to New Caledonia, which would likely echo across the region.

### The ‘Danger’ of Access

Harkening back to the notion that the word ‘crisis’ can be split into somewhat opposing concepts of ‘danger’ and ‘opportunity’, the principal problem with visitor access is that it is not balanced and it is not managed. The danger in simply growing visitation numbers is that they continue to be funnelled to the already overcrowded sensitive marine and land destinations near the principal airports or seaports.

While there certainly is extra capacity that can be utilised near these principal ports of call—especially during the off-season—the general sense of country officials with whom we spoke, and our own observations, is that many of these close-in sites are already overutilised and that further traffic will degrade them to a point of no return.

The problem of access applies to exceptional marine and land sites, as well as the infrastructure needed to support visitation: food, lodging, services, energy, water, transportation, etc. It is either too time-consuming or too expensive, or the sites are not sufficiently serviced to generate a viable ecotourism business.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Air New Zealand had suspended flights to Vanuatu in 2016 due to runway concerns, causing Qantas to follow suit. Virgin Australia resumed flights in May. As of October 2016, it appears that regular ANZ flights will resume in 2017 and Qantas will likely follow suit. <http://www.pireport.org/articles/2016/10/04/air-new-zealand-declares-vanuatu-airport-suitable-flights>



Furthermore, lack of access to alternatives is one of the principal causes of overuse of top eco-destinations—one could call it ‘main island syndrome’: most of the overused sensitive marine and land sites are that way because they are relatively accessible to the main air and sea arrival points.

***If people were to have better access to alternatives, it would be easier to distribute and manage the pressure of visitation to close-in sites.***

### **Opportunities: Developing Alternatives to Existing Sites**

The PICTs could help prepare themselves for sustainable growth in the future by simultaneously beginning to develop alternative sites outside of the principal urban areas and taking steps to increase access to alternative sites.

If current visitation levels are sustainable, then restricting access to sensitive sites could have a negative backlash if not handled properly. By restricting access to the most desirable sites and increasing fees associated with those sites, countries can maintain revenues, while reducing pressure on vulnerable areas.

However, alternative sites and activities, especially of the ecotourist variety should be developed simultaneously in order to satisfy existing demand. Some of the revenues from increased access fees can be directed to alternative sites with first rights of access given to companies that might have lost actual revenue (not projected revenue) from restrictions on sites that they already frequent.

As a necessary element of a strategy of limiting access to fragile environments, alternative activities—and the necessary supporting infrastructure—will need to be developed. Alternatives can fall into two basic types: 1) New sites for the same type of activity (e.g., developing a new dive site), or 2) New types of activity.

#### Developing New Sites and Activities

In all island groups there are marine and land sites that are as magnificent as the current ‘greatest hits’, but are not nearly as accessible, which means that environmental degradation and economic opportunity remain concentrated around the main island(s). If it were easier to access these sites in a managed way, pressure would be lifted from the main ports of entry and nearby marine activity sites.

Adequate quality in infrastructure is also very important. In terms of promoting social and economic sustainability, having accommodations that are culturally sensitive and environmentally sensitive can constitute an important component to an overall sustainable or ecotourism framework. Wasteful, low-quality hotels degrade the tourism experience as much as a dirty or overutilised marine environment might.

- **New Activity: ‘Bucket List’ Tours.** PICTs have many unique features that can be combined into so-called ‘Bucket List’ tours. These tours could be organised by National Travel Agencies with support from South Pacific Tourist Organisation (SPTO). There would be many itineraries that could be developed, ranging from multiactivity tours (one day, marine-based; one day, land-based; one day, cultural, etc.) or consistently themed (Bucket List marine activities, Bucket List birding activities, etc.).
- **Bird Watching.** Based on our experience and observations, Sustainable Tourism around bird watching could be an important growth area for SPREP member nations. There are a number of endemic birds that would attract birders from around the world. In



addition, there are several migratory flyways—for example in Palau—that could form a significant source of tourism dollars that would not increase the pressure on marine resources. Because flyways tend to be away from the main islands, the ability to access these remote sites would be especially important.

- **Endemic Species.** In addition to unique avian species, unique plants, animals and reptiles all exist in PICTs. High-end land-based adventure or volunteer tours could be arranged around visiting restricted sites with endemic species.

### **Access Barrier: Difficult Intracountry Access**

Regarding ‘destination access’, extensive layovers, inconvenient transfers, uncooperative weather and long travel times from the main point of entry tend to discourage visitation to islands outside the main island. Seasonal typhoon patterns make access to smaller, remote islands particularly problematic, given that access to these islands, as well as the activities connected with them, can be eliminated by poor weather conditions.

For example, in Tonga, access to outside islands compared with Tongatapu is challenging—planes are expensive and boats are slow—which makes it difficult to build significant tourism outside of whale watching on outer islands, such as Vava’u. For example, Ika Lahi, an ‘eco-chic’ resort in the Vava’u island group that opened in 2013 was shuttered in 2015 because its remoteness made it too expensive and time-consuming to reach and too expensive to provision year-round.

Similarly, in New Caledonia, it can take hours to get from La Tontouta International Airport to the domestic Nouméa Magenta Airport, rather than being able to fly directly to points outside Nouméa from the international airport. This results in a very high concentration of visitors in the Southern Province and much greater difficulty building a tourism industry in the Northern Province.

### **Opportunity: Develop Better Intracountry Access**

Generally, solving access to new sites and activities begins with transportation. Planes will always be the fastest option and because they are the most expensive, will remain limited. While boat travel is significantly less expensive, much of the existing ferry services are too slow. A catamaran-style cargo boat, such as the fleet Aremiti runs between Pape’ete and Mo’orea, can cover distances in half the time than less streamlined vessels. In Tonga, Vava’u can be reached from Tongatapu in 7–9 hours by catamaran ferry, compared with 24 hours required by the conventional vessel. If a catamaran ferry were available in Tonga, ‘Eua island—the ecotourism-focus of the Tongan islands—could be reached for day trips by ferry passengers.<sup>39</sup> As a sustainable alternative, it should be noted that the Okeanos solar/wind/coconut oil-powered vaka-style vessels can travel at roughly the same speed as traditional ferry ships, though they are not built for transporting cars and massive cargo.<sup>40</sup>

### **Access Barrier: Outer Island Businesses**

Difficult access also hinders development of indigenous business. Another disheartening trend we observed was the flood of imported ‘local’ crafts that had been imported from overseas for sales to unsuspecting tourists. Native crafts from outlying islands can’t get to market at a reasonable price and leads to the absurd situation that fake ‘crafts’ imported from China and elsewhere—often falsely labeled as being produced in-country—cost less than real native art.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.tonga-broadcasting.net/?p=2269>; <http://www.tonga-broadcasting.net/?p=2387>

<sup>40</sup> <http://okeanos-foundation.org/sustainable-sea-transport/>



### ***Opportunities: Introduce Local Products on Cruise Ships***

If native artisans had better access to the central tourism locations for their wares, the economic benefits of ‘visitor exports’ could be better distributed. Often, however, the expense of transporting goods from outlying islands puts the crafts out of the reach of most tourists. Vanuatu is experimenting with some interesting solutions. In one case, they are partnering with local companies and artisans to put commonly-purchased products aboard cruise ships whose passengers may have been engaging in outdoor activities that did not permit them time to shop. Another interesting emerging venture is the Okeanos Sustainable Sea Transport Ltd., which is developing a fleet of ‘Vaka Motu’ that has been especially designed for interisland journeys. Styled after a traditional Polynesian canoe it is entirely green, purely operated by the wind, the sun or, if needed, by coconut oil.<sup>41</sup> These vessels, which have been piloted in voyages throughout the South Pacific, will introduce traditional navigation techniques to visitors and local youth, while providing interisland transportation for both passengers and goods, including locally produced products and crafts.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Surrounding Environment Barrier: Aesthetic and Cultural Factors***

As with access, a balance must be struck in conditions of the surrounding environment. To support the growth and development of ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism, the surrounding environment should be developed, but not too developed. In most of the main cities we visited, the condition of the surrounding environment clearly had a negative impact on the ability to grow and develop Sustainable Tourism. Some of the issues were aesthetic and related to infrastructure, others appeared to be more the result of national or cultural attitudes toward tourism.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Opportunities: Adopt Proven Urban-Friendly and Tourist-Friendly Approaches***

In Koror and Port Vila for example, pedestrian amenities are few and the constant and chaotic traffic makes exploring these cities difficult and unpleasant. As described in more detail in the individual country reports, the urban environment could be greatly improved by adopting a ‘Complete Streets’ or ‘POP (Pedestrian-oriented, Pleasant) Streets’ approach where small amenities, such as sidewalks, shade trees and benches are complemented by a regular, renewably-powered public van-based mass transit system that runs along the main roadway.

In Nouméa and Tongatapu, a conscious effort should be made to accommodate the needs of cruise ship passengers that arrive in the ports. Actions could include ensuring that adequate numbers of qualified, English-speaking<sup>44</sup> guides are available and that visitors are able to buy food and drink, as well as verified native-produced handcrafts.

### ***Social/Legal Barrier: Conflicts With Ownership Rights***

Conserving biodiversity and ecological integrity is one of the most difficult environmental and economic issues facing any island nation. Often it poses choices between environmental protection and economic development and conflict between landowner rights and the government’s growing role in its stewardship responsibilities.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://okeanos-foundation.org/okeanos-vanuatu/>

<sup>42</sup> <http://okeanos-foundation.org/sustainable-sea-transport/>; <http://okeanos-foundation.org/whale-watching-ecotourism-with-tonga-vaka/>

<sup>43</sup> Cameron-Cole recognises that resource constraints can make improvements to infrastructure difficult and that all nations are free to choose how they develop and what policies they choose to enact. The purpose of pointing out these issues is not to criticise the choices, rather to report on their impact on making tourism more sustainable.

<sup>44</sup> A necessary accommodation, given that over 90% of the cruise ship visitors only speak English.



This barrier is exacerbated by unclear, incomplete and inconsistent land tenure records where competing claims may exist. In addition, rivalries between tribes, clans or other social/kin groups that control different resources (e.g., land, water, reef area) necessary for a functioning ecotourism site can result in problems if all parties are not satisfied that they are being treated equitably.

In certain instances, antiquated land-use requirements exist, such as in the Kingdom of Tonga where shoreline uses are restricted to commercial or maritime activities and need exemption for marine tourism uses, such as hotels and resorts.

### ***Opportunities: Develop Alternative Sites and Engage Local Communities***

Lands that are controlled by Community Conservation Areas and Community Marine Protected Area organisations can be developed as alternative sites with marine-based or alternative activities, such as agroecological tourism,<sup>45</sup> with support and incentives from the state or national government.

For community-based activities to be successful, governments will need to develop and engage qualified personnel to undertake the necessary socioculturally-grounded preparation of projects that enhance the empowerment of communities to participate in tourism.

Crash programs to quickly start ecotourism ventures in new places probably would not be compatible with community-based enterprises and would likely result in the early demise of the project. Larger towns/villages that already have some infrastructure and invested development may be better suited for 'quick wins' in the Sustainable Tourism arena.

### ***Social Barrier: Seasonal Labour [NOTE TO TRANSLATORS: THE GREEN HIGHLIGHTED MATERIAL IS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM DELIVERABLE 1]***

Compared with other developing country demographics, the Pacific Islands are definitely 'top-heavy' with a population distribution skewing toward older age groups. Indeed, through interviews in all five countries visited, we frequently heard of the nations' youth moving off-island because of a perceived or actual lack of opportunity within the existing economy.

We see this reflected in the number of islanders attracted by the job opportunities afforded by seasonal fruit picking in Australia and New Zealand. We heard from Tonga and Vanuatu, especially, that many young men leave their families for months at a time to work as fruit pickers. Although there is some complementarity with fruit picking seasons and seasonal whale migrations—the principal tourism driver in Tonga—the availability of picking work can be used as an excuse not to get into year-round work in the tourism industry. Not only does migratory labour cause social disruption due to extended periods of absence, but it also reduces the pool of local labour for growing or even maintaining a workforce for the tourism industry.

Earning money is the principal driver for migration of these islanders to the orchards of Australia and New Zealand. Ironically, once the round trip travel and higher cost of living is factored in, people could actually make more money staying at home and working in the tourism industry. Thus, people with local outdoor and cultural knowledge must be substituted for by foreign workers, often from the Philippines.

### ***Opportunities: Develop Seasonal Labour Alternatives***

PICTs should work through SPREP to develop tourism-oriented seasonal labour alternatives

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<sup>45</sup> See Addinsall, et. al. op. cit., note 13, above.



that allow the development of business and tourism industry skills during the off-season.

### **Social Barrier: Language**

Another of the greatest cultural challenges with current and potential future development of the tourism industry—especially a ‘Sustainable Tourism’ industry—revolves around language. The overwhelming majority of tourists to the region speak English. Some parties are concerned that the requirement for a second spoken language might dilute Pacific cultures, many of which have a significant language component.<sup>46</sup> Others argue that the relatively limited number of people requiring proficiency in a second language does not represent a significant disruption to cultural or linguistic integrity.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, the lack of English language in French-speaking territories is a barrier to growth and development of both sustainable mass tourism and ecotourism. For example, in New Caledonia, cruise ships with predominantly English-speaking passengers often have difficulty booking activities, whether water-focused or culturally-focused, due to the lack of English-speaking guides.

This also can be true for local tour guides and other professionals that interface regularly with visitors. Ironically, if Sustainable Tourism were to expand around community-based hospitality as suggested in the Blue Days event, one potential impact might be the erosion of linguistic and cultural integrity as more and more remote regions interact with English-speaking tourists.

### **Opportunities: Implement a Sustainable Tourism App**

The Sustainable Tourism app described above could also include simple words/phrases to allow visitors to learn some of the local language if they so choose. In addition, more complex phrases could also be written out and pictures included in the app that would allow visitors to point to when needing assistance. This would allow local people to communicate more in their own language. For more ambitious visitors, the language section in the national ecotourist app could include exercises that would allow people to practise pronunciation of words and phrases. (See also: Opportunity: National ‘Travel Agency’ and Country-Specific Sustainable Tourism App, above.)

### **Social Barrier: Conflicts Between Sociocentric Society and Egocentric Society**

Although it is not clear that SPREP, or anyone else, can do anything about it, there will be growing cultural impacts from exposure of Pacific Island sociocentric societies to the egocentric societies that largely make up the tourist population. This exposure is happening through the Internet, regardless of any tourist interaction, so the availability of meaningful actions is limited.

Many models of governance and adjudication being imported into the Pacific have their roots in egocentric society, where personal rights and claims often are allowed precedence over general social well-being. This could be especially problematic in the Pacific and lead to ‘tragedy of the commons’ results where an individual’s/company’s ‘right’ to access limited and fragile tourism resources, particularly marine sites, results in an overall diminution of the experience of other visitors, as well as a degradation of the resource itself.

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csqa/article/oceania-islands-land-people>

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication, Lisa Humphrey, Ph.D. Anthropology, Pacific Island Cultures.



### ***Opportunities: Reconcile Sociocentric and Egocentric Society***

- PICTs can help facilitate the creation of online communities that mirror and foster existing social structures.
- Children in school should be taught the differences in societal approaches so that they are aware of how visitors' culture varies from their own.
- Educational materials regarding island societies should be developed for visitors and disseminated through airline and cruise ship arrival videos, with printed versions distributed through the hospitality industry.