GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Pacific **Better Practice** Tourism Guide

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The Nature Conservancy

AGAPE IN ACTION — Life. Opportunity. Hope.

SPREP — Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

KŌRERO O TE 'ŌRAU

VATUVARA PRIVATE ISLANDS

VATUVARA FOUNDATION FIJI

Contents

Acronyms

ACTIV	Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu
CAUTHE	Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
KO	Kōrero O Te `Ōrau
MES	Mamanuca Environment Society
NOW	Niue and Ocean Wide
OCC	Ocean Conservation Commitment
PCRIC	Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company
SPREP	Secretariat of the Regional Environment Programme
SPTO	Pacific Tourism Organisation
TIS	Te Ipukarea Society

This Better Practice Guide forms part of a larger research project centred around a tourism Community of Practice.

The Community of Practice is composed of representatives from eight different organisations and the research team, working together on the common purpose of exploring transformative tourism pathways.

Following a time of foundation building, the community engaged in a multi-day process of fostering holistic understanding of tourism as it happens in Pacific Island countries and territories and as it could evolve in a desirable future. Drawing on several techniques and research methods, participants explored aspirational futures and discussed existing trends that might lead us there. Shining examples of change already occurring were shared, some of which are explored in this guide.

1. Introduction

This Better Practice Guide aims to inspire tourism stakeholders in Pacific Island countries and territories to be innovative and brave, and to use tourism in ways that contribute positively to the long-term future of the Pacific.

Drawing on a new model for transformative tourism and illustrating how aspects of 'better tourism' are already emerging, this guide presents a range of existing case studies that deliver useful insights, lessons learned, and opportunities to support future tourism in the region.

The guide targets policymakers from National Tourism Administrations and Visitor Bureaus, regional organisations, industry associations, businesses and investors, community initiatives, non-governmental organisations, and all other change makers.

Tourism is a crucial pillar of economic development for many Pacific Island countries and territories. The aspiration is for tourism to help grow the economy, provide decent work opportunities, reduce poverty, enhance social inclusion, and protect natural and cultural assets. Consistent with this vision, the United Nations World Tourism Organiwation (UN Tourism) actively promote tourism's ability to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More recently, countries have recognised that tourism can also be a powerful tool for environmental restoration, cultural revitalisation, and broader community benefits, such as improved infrastructure and connectivity.

Successful tourism models need to deliver for the people at the destination. It is therefore crucial to ask residents how they perceive tourism and what they hope it delivers. Research undertaken by the Community of Practice, led by Griffith University and funded by the Australian Research Council, has identified what tourism outcomes community members in Fiji and the Cook Islands aspire to. Using Q-methodology, three major discourses emerged:[1]

1) Economic benefit with cultural integrity

2) Equitable tourism in harmony with nature

3) Local livelihoods, health and resilience

Realising these positive outcomes requires thoughtful planning that prioritises minimising—or entirely avoiding—the negative impacts of tourism development. There is an inherent tension between what tourism can contribute to destination communities and what it can take away. If not well managed, tourism can hollow out communities, degrade local ecosystems, and create dependencies on volatile income streams. Understanding 'good practice' and being inspired by 'better practice' is crucial to achieving well-balanced outcomes for Pacific Island countries and territories in their tourism endeavours.

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[1] Loehr, J., Becken, S., Westoby, R. & Fleming, C. (2025). Community priorities for the future of tourism in the South Pacific. Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE), Brisbane, 11–13th February 2025.

This Better Practice Guide builds on a growing body of academic, practical, and policy-related work to foster more ethical and conscious forms of tourism. These approaches—whether termed sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, ecotourism, or regenerative tourism—share a central commitment: ensuring that the visitor economy does not come at the cost of environmental sustainability, social justice, or cultural integrity.

Transformative tourism models represent a fundamental shift from economic growth-driven tourism to a focus on well-being at place, achieved through regenerative livelihoods. Moving towards net-positive tourism and tourism supported by traditional knowledge requires not only recognising but also protecting and enacting traditional governance structures, value systems, and ways of knowing.

A new model emerges,[2] rooted in uniquely Pacific approaches to managing tourism within the broader global system. The model is built on a partnership-based approach founded on mutual respect, ensuring that tourism contributes to the flourishing of both local and external actors—including visitors themselves. The vision is for tourists to become active co-stewards—not just observers, but participants who learn from and support the values cherished by those who call Pacific Island countries and territories home.

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[2] Becken, S., Westoby, R., Fleming, C., Ariki, M., Loehr, J., Mafi-Stephens, M., Mate, F. & Tiraa, S. (2024). Towards a Regenerative Tourism Livelihood model in the Pacific using the Three Horizons approach. Journal of Destination Management and Marketing. Under review.

2. Framework and guiding principles

2.1 Perspectives

This section introduces the framework that informs the Better Practice Guide. It also outlines the principles used to select case studies.

Envisioning new tourism models benefits from drawing on diverse perspectives. This includes theoretical frameworks and input from those working in or with tourism.

The Pacific Islands region is characterised by diverse cultures which serve as guiding principles and influence all aspects of life. Drawing on existing Pacific well-being frameworks, Scheyvens et al. (2023)[3] developed the 'Frangipani Framework of Well-being for Tourism', which captures how tourism can contribute to the well-being of Pacific Island people. The framework highlights the significant role of culture and the close connection that Pacific Island people have with nature, evident in a strong sense of place and environmental stewardship.

Research undertaken in the Cook Islands, as part of this project, clearly highlights that residents have a desire to take control of tourism in ways that are community-driven, balanced across financial, physical, social, spiritual, and mental well-being, and in harmony with local carrying capacities.[4]

There are many different stakeholders in the Pacific Islands region and their goals differ. For example, those working with external agencies often connect their work with the SDGs,[5] as this can be important to secure funding for tourism initiatives. This can result in a preference for particular policy instruments and approaches.

Often tourism is framed as a means of generating livelihoods and income for local communities. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach[6] focuses on (local) capitals and strengths and opportunities for suitable partners (e.g., donor organisations) to support these. Tourism can integrate with other livelihood activities and resilience to shocks is emphasised.

For those concerned that externally oriented approaches to sustainable development or livelihoods do not consistently yield local-level benefits for both people and the environment, regenerative approaches have become more relevant (Figure 1).
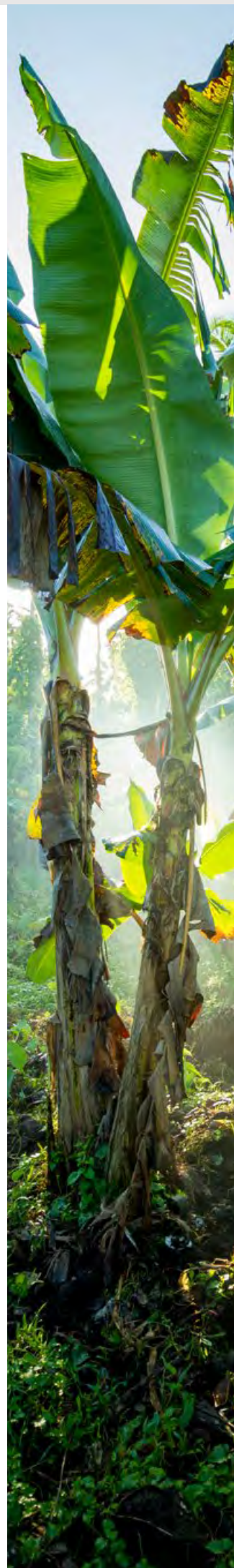
These also resonate with Indigenous perspectives, which view human activity as deeply embedded within nature rather than separate from it.

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[3] Scheyvens, R.A., Movono, A., & Auckram, S. (2023). Pacific peoples and the pandemic: exploring multiple well-beings of people in tourism-dependent communities. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 31(1), 111-130.

[4] Becken, S., Tiraa, S., & Vada, S. (2025). Negotiating Well-being and Tourism: A Reorientation Process in the Cook Islands. Sustainability, 17(3), 1123. Available here: https://doi.org/10.3390/su17031123

[5] For example, see UN Tourism (2024). Tourism 4 SDGs. Available here: https://www.unwto.org/tourism4sdgs

[6] See Serrat, O. (2017). The sustainable livelihoods approach. In Serrat, O. (2017). Knowledge Solutions: Tools, Methods, and Approaches to Drive Organizational Performance, Springer Nature and the Asian Development Bank. 21-26.
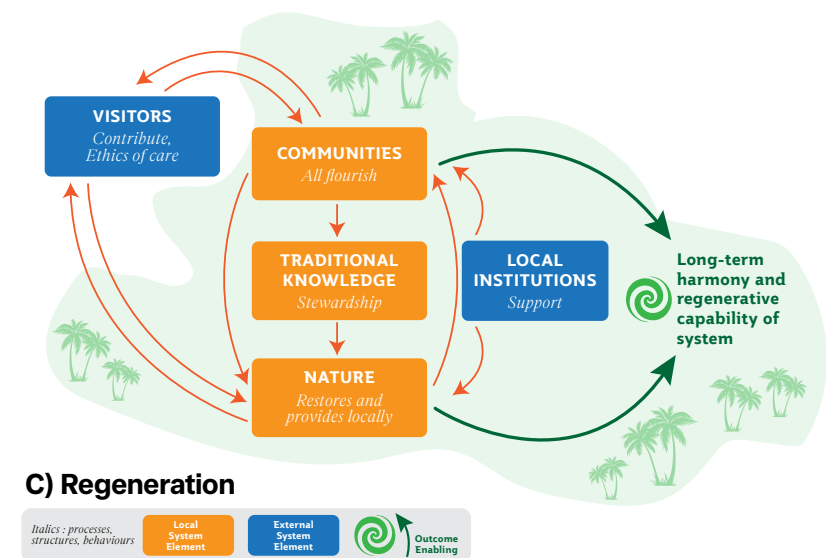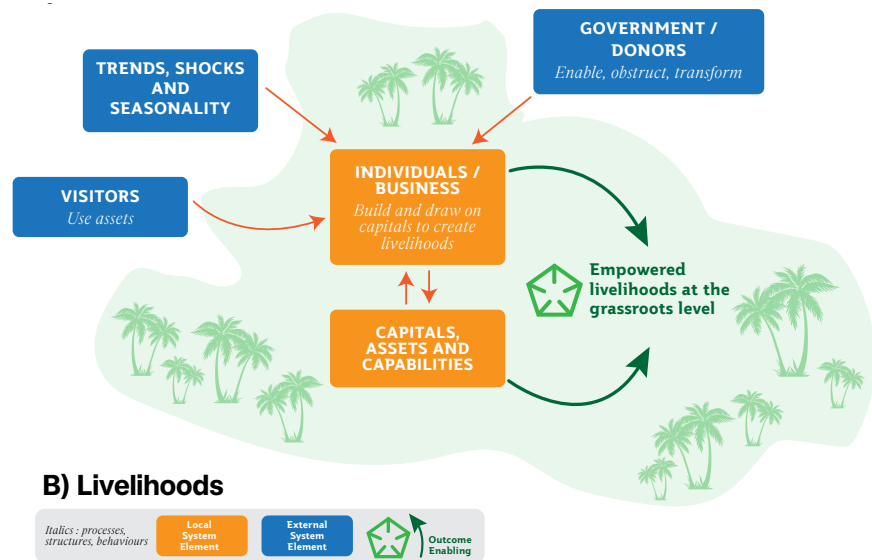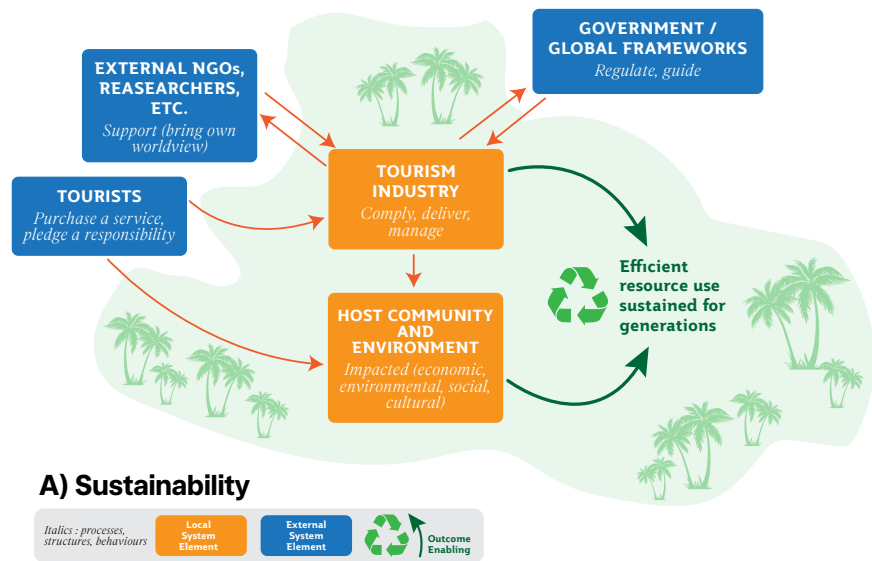
A) Sustainability

GOVERNMENT / GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS
Regulate, guide

EXTERNAL NGOs, REASEARCHERS, ETC.
Support (bring own worldview)

TOURISTS
Purchase a service, pledge a responsibility

TOURISM INDUSTRY
Comply, deliver, manage

HOST COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT
Impacted (economic, environmental, social, cultural)

Efficient resource use sustained for generations

Italics : processes, structures, behaviours | Local System Element | External System Element | Outcome Enabling

B) Livelihoods

GOVERNMENT / DONORS
Enable, obstruct, transform

TRENDS, SHOCKS AND SEASONALITY

VISITORS
Use assets

INDIVIDUALS / BUSINESS
Build and draw on capitals to create livelihoods

CAPITALS, ASSETS AND CAPABILITIES

Empowered livelihoods at the grassroots level

Italics : processes, structures, behaviours | Local System Element | External System Element | Outcome Enabling

C) Regeneration

VISITORS
Contribute, Ethics of care

COMMUNITIES
All flourish

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE
Stewardship

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS
Support

NATURE
Restores and provides locally

Long-term harmony and regenerative capability of system

Italics : processes, structures, behaviours | Local System Element | External System Element | Outcome Enabling

Figure 1: Overview of frameworks underpinning this guide.

2.2 Principles of a new tourism model

Drawing on the frameworks shown in Figure 1 and working with the Community of Practice and their collective experiences spanning policy and practice, six principles were derived that are at the core of a transformative Pacific Island tourism model.

1. Beyond Tourism

A holistic approach that integrates local capitals and knowledge while acknowledging global responsibilities and planetary boundaries. It even considers scenarios where less (or no) tourism is ideal. Tourism is embedded within the wider place and works together with other sectors, such as agriculture or health.

2. Net Positive

Tourism is designed to generate a net positive impact. Fostering tourism that regenerates culture and nature while balancing environmental, cultural, and social well-being. Existing tools from sustainable development (e.g., measurement, certification) can support these goals, but a regenerative shift in mindset is critical.

3. Indigenous Knowledge

At the heart of a new model is Indigenous and traditional knowledge, which becomes central in shaping public decision-making about natural resources, cultural integrity and tourism development. The notion of stewardship sits at the core of a transformative model.

4. Empowerment

Locally driven decision-making is key. Empowering communities, local businesses, and institutions enables them to shape tourism strategies and marketing in ways that reflect grassroot needs. Local empowerment and inclusion of all voices ensures that benefits from tourism are distributed fairly.

5. Localisation

Visitor experiences, product development, and financial flows need to be designed to reflect local aspirations. Localisation recognises that businesses and communities are deeply interconnected, reinforcing traditional institutions and building resilience against external pressures.

6. Networks

Effective collaboration enriches all system actors. Whether it is welcoming visitors as respectful guests or integrating donor agencies, research partners, and global frameworks, success is achieved through networks built on shared purpose and ethics. Networks span all levels, from local to global.

The six principles were used to help select the case study initiatives, businesses, and models promoted in this Better Practice Guide. There are many innovative approaches to tourism in the Pacific Islands region that already reflect the principles of a transformative tourism model. Some are policy approaches whilst others represent new business models.

To provide a systematic coverage of better practice, this guide is structured around six system entry points (Figure 2): 1) regional tourism; 2) national tourism; 3) destination; 4) tourism businesses; 5) community; and 6) civil society.

We also consider how the case study examples make a positive difference. To better understand what positive outcomes can be achieved, we conducted a review of Pacific tourism policies and plans and interviews were conducted with project partners, including representatives of two regional organisations, tourism businesses and NGOs within Fiji, the Cook Islands, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands to identify additional priority outcomes for tourism in the Pacific.

Ultimately, eight outcome-related themes were identified:[7]

Economic/livelihoods

Infrastructure

Community

Health and Safety

Social

Culture

Environment

Climate Change

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[7]   See Practitioner Notes for the Lau Group of Islands, Mamanuca Islands, Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Mitiaro. Available here: https://www.griffith.edu.au/ research/business/institute-tourism/our-research/pacific-islands

3. Better practices

In this section, 17 innovative case studies are presented, organised by entry point. Wherever possible, lessons-learned, challenges and opportunities are identified. Outcomes are classified by the eight themes identified above.

Figure 2 pinpoints the case studies by geographic context, showing diversity in entry points and countries where initiatives are implemented.
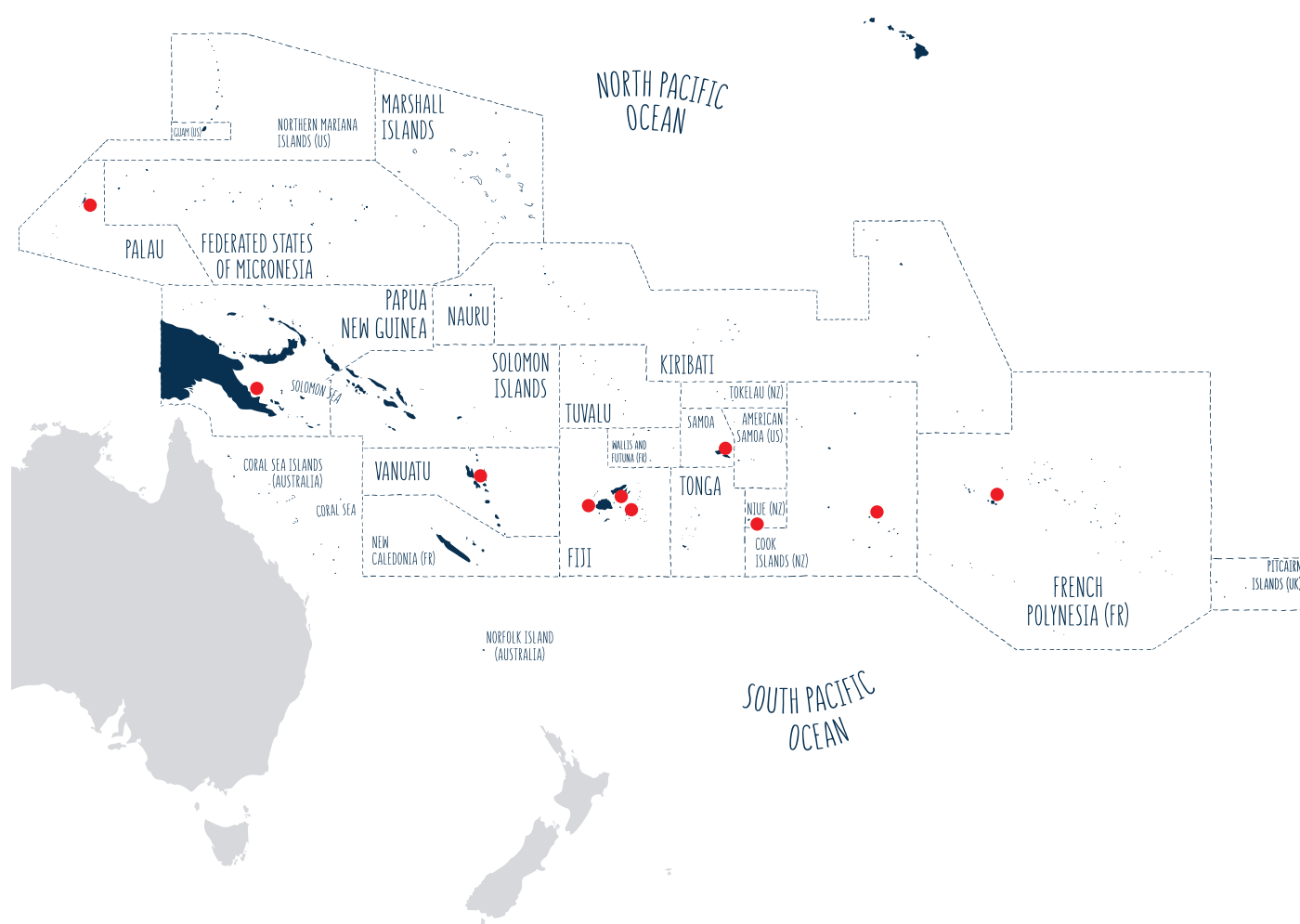

Figure 2: Map of the Pacific Islands showing all case studies presented in this guide.

3.1   Regional

Several significant regional initiatives support better approaches to tourism. Regional organisations, such as the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and the Secretariat of the Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), play a key role in facilitating these.

Case Study 1:
The Pacific Tourism Sustainable Indicators Framework

Outcomes:

Entry point:
Regional

Target
audience:
Pacific Island
countries and
territories

The award-winning Pacific Tourism Sustainable Indicator Framework[8] was published in 2023 to guide sustainable tourism practices across the region. It followed an extensive mapping exercise and relied on collaboration of actors across the public and private sector, civil society and regional and international partners. The Framework's goal is to enhance statistics for evidence-based decision-making to inform tourism management to deliver net positive benefits from tourism.

A dual regional-national approach to measurement

The overarching approach to the Pacific Tourism Sustainable Indicator Framework is regional, thus fostering alignment across Pacific Island countries and territories, allowing not only cross-country learning, data sharing, and benchmarking but also enabling resource pooling to address data gaps and develop initiatives to improve performance. However, the Framework also recognises unique national contexts and diverse ways of prioritising indicators and implementing data collection. These relate closely to the policy priorities and targets that each country or territory sets.

This diversity is reflected in time scales, the level of analysis (i.e. subnational or national), the scope (i.e. host community, government, visitors), and the relative importance

placed on different themes across the three sustainability dimensions of economy, environment, and society. The connection between data and policy is crucial and demonstrates the ambition that indicators will genuinely inform improved decision-making.

Beyond economic measures of success

The Framework measures tourism impact holistically in its contribution to community well-being. This is important, because how success is defined and measured affects outcomes. The indicators presented in this Framework include both objective and subjective measures, which can be mapped against the four Framework goals of: (1) prosperous economies; (2) thriving and inclusive communities; (3) visible and valued cultures and creative industries; and (4) healthy lands and oceans.

Indicators include visitor density (number of international visitors per hectare of habitable land) and intensity (number of international visitors per 100 residents), linking to the environmental and social carrying capacity of a destination. Countries need to identify their own thresholds and will be able to report on broad outcomes achieved across economic, environmental and social indicators while monitoring and enforcing carrying capacities and community sentiments.

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[8] SPTO (2023). Pacific Tourism Sustainable Indicators Framework. Available here: https://southpacificislands.travel/home/research/framework-2/

Key Principles:

Outcomes:

Entry point:
Regional

Target audience:
Accommodation Operators, National Tourism Administrations and Visitor Bureaus

Case Study 2:
SPREP Support for Tourism Accommodation

SPREP has initiated several innovative projects to promote environmental sustainability within the Pacific tourism sector, demonstrating extensive regional collaboration between tourism and environmental stakeholders. These initiatives have resulted in several practical guides, particularly focused on accommodations and hotels.

Environmental Auditing Guidelines for Tourism Accommodations[9]

Demonstrating a partnership and network approach, SPREP have collaborated with SPTO to develop user-friendly guidelines to assist accommodations in conducting environmental audits. These guidelines provide clear instructions and methodologies for identifying areas for improvement and implementing sustainable solutions, empowering stakeholders to become stewards of environmental sustainability.

The guidelines are an interesting illustration of how high-level policy objectives, as formulated in regional and national sustainable development, environmental and tourism plans, can be implemented at the business level. Environmental regulation exists in many Pacific Island countries and territories to ensure tourism development aligns with environmental and sustainability priorities.

These may involve development requirements, such as conducting environmental impact assessments, which are tied to business licences or operational practices.

A tool with many co-benefits

The Guidelines off an effective and context specific tool to address knowledge and capacity gaps, which may be particularly acute in small tourism businesses. In addition to ensuring compliance and managing an organisation's environmental impact, implementation of the Guidelines offers valuable co-benefits to the accommodation sector, including:

- awareness creation on sustainability practices,
- improved reporting mechanisms,
- improved resource efficiencies and thus cost savings,
- improved risk management, and
- improved stakeholder confidence.

Ongoing monitoring of compliance with environmental requirements once developments are operational could be useful. Certification programmes, international or national, can further support ongoing performance assessment.

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[9] SPREP (2024). Practical Guidelines for Environmental Audits of Tourist Accommodations in the Pacific. Available here: https://library.sprep.org/content/practical-guidelines-environmental-audits-tourist-accomodations-pacific

3.2   National

Governments play a key role in enabling tourism transformation. They do this directly through policy settings and indirectly through providing direction, incentivising change and supporting specific initiatives.

Key Principles:

Outcomes:

Entry point:
National

Target audience:
Policy makers in tourism and other parts of government

Case Study 3:
Fiji National Sustainable Tourism Framework

In June 2024, Fiji's Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation released the 'Fiji National Sustainable Tourism Framework 2024-2034 – Navigating towards Fiji's sustainable tourism future'.[10] The Framework is targeted at all tourism stakeholders and outlines the country's 10-year vision for the Fijian tourism industry. It is centred on the principles of sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity, and has four goals: (1) prosperous visitor economy; (2) thriving and inclusive communities, (3) visible and valued cultures and (4) healthy islands and oceans.

Leading in integrating climate change

In an analysis undertaken by members of the Griffith University research team, the Framework emerged as a best practice example of integrating climate change into tourism strategy.[11] Within the Framework, climate change is addressed across multiple dimensions, covering adaptation, as well as emissions. Climate change is also central to all levels of the Framework, including goals, priorities, outcomes, recommended actions and performance measures.

Several aspects support transformative approaches, specifically:

Alignment across policy domains: The framework is well aligned with existing policies. For example, the Framework specifically links to Fiji's National Climate Change Policy 2018-2030, Fiji's First National Determined Contribution and the Paris Agreement. This alignment reduces the risk of tourism developing competing or contradicting policy objectives to those developed by other parts of the Fijian Government. Aligning policies provides a foundation for successful collaboration between Ministries, Departments and other key stakeholders.

Opportunities for co-benefits: The Framework identifies opportunities to generate environmental and social co-benefits through climate change actions in tourism. These include, but are not limited to, the sustainable use of energy and water resources, improved waste management, and enhanced biodiversity conservation.

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[10] Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation (2024). Fiji National Sustainable Tourism Framework 2024-2034. Available here: https://mtca.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/National-Sustainable-Tourism-Framework-2024-2034.pdf

[11] Becken & Leohr (2025). Advancing climate change and tourism policymaking in the Pacific Islands, Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research. Available here: https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2025.2454238

Policy actions directly address climate change priorities: The Framework shows evidence of mainstreaming climate change goals into tourism policy, whereby climate change priorities are addressed through sectoral policy actions. Several of the Framework's actions specifically address Paris Agreement priorities, namely: Adaptation and Support, the latter aiming to support developing countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change risk. Actions to strengthen the enabling environment for the tourism sector to increase climate actions include the launch of Green and Blue Bonds and the Drua Incubator, focusing on innovative solutions to climate change financing, such as low-cost insurance and small-grant schemes. As climate change risk increases, UN Tourism identified that mainstreaming climate change into tourism policies is critical for the future of the sector.[12]

Looking forward

The Framework serves as an example of how to integrate climate change into tourism policy and plans. The next step will be to implement actions and deliver on outcomes documented in the Framework. To successfully implement policy initiatives, access to finance and industry buy-in are required.

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[12] UN Tourism. (2024). Policy guidance to support climate action by national tourism administrations. Madrid. Available here: https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/resources/policy- guidance-support-climate-action-national-tourism-administrations

Case Study 4:
Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy

The Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (2019-2030)[13] was developed following recognition that increased Government regulation was needed to ensure tourism development delivers real benefit for the country. The policy is innovative because it purposefully shifts focus towards Ni-Vanuatu development priorities and worldviews, such as community benefits from tourism, rather than blindly following Western tourism models.[14] As such, it directly addresses the principle of Indigenous Knowledge.

Prioritising local culture and communities

The policy places Ni-Vanuatu values at its heart. As such, it emphasises the benefits the traditional economy offers in building community resilience and the need to create equitable and holistic benefits through tourism.[15] The policy contains several tangible actions that promote localisation and promote Indigenous knowledge, specifically:

Architecture and culture: Safeguarding and encouraging the uptake of traditional architecture and use of local materials is a priority objective. The Policy contends that visitor experiences should be more accessible and embedded within Vanuatu's core-values and enriched by local culture.

The right tourists: The Policy aims to attract high-value tourists, based not only on their economic yield but also on their social, cultural and environmental characteristics. As such, Vanuatu targets visitors whose interests and consumption behaviours support delivering broader well-being outcomes to communities. Relevant initiatives to support this include agritourism, handicrafts and other experiences that focus on local foods and promote sustainable local food production practices (including agroforestry and Kastom tabu fish stock management).

[13] Vanuatu Department of Tourism (2019). Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy 2019-2030. https://tourism.gov.vu/images/DoT-Documents/Policies/SUSTAINABLE_TOURISM_POLICY_2019-2030_New.pdf

[14] Addinsall, C., Spooner, J., & Weiler, B. (2019). Inclusive and Sustainable growth through the Vanuatu Sustainable Tourism Policy (2018-2030). Presented at Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals Conference, Massey University, Auckland, 24–25 January 2019.

[15] Loehr, J., Addinsall, C., & Weiler, B. (2019). Understanding how context affects resilience and its consequences for sustainable tourism. In S. F. McCool & K. Bosak (Eds.), A Research Agenda for Sustainable Tourism (pp. 39-52). Cheltenham UK, Northampton, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Sustainable management plans and carrying capacities: To safeguard local environmental and cultural resources, operators operating in areas of high environmental or cultural significance, including community conservation areas, custom tabu areas and local marine management areas, are required to develop sustainable management plans that incorporate limits of acceptable change and a code of conduct. Importantly, the Policy identifies the need to determine sustainable social and environmental carrying capacity targets and the use of these to manage visitor arrivals, infrastructure and transport access.

The traditional economy: The Policy emphasises the need to safeguard the traditional economy. This involves encouraging Ni-Vanuatu entrepreneurship and supporting Ni-Vanuatu small-medium enterprises and communities through education and training programmes, capacity and awareness building, and improved finance mechanisms.

Future challenges and opportunities

The Policy presents an insightful example of incorporating local culture and traditional knowledge into national tourism planning. Together with the focus on sustainability principles, the Policy strengthens links between resource use, policy and planning and the goals to deliver benefits beyond tourism. While the Policy has seen remarkable success in some areas (e.g. on the implementation of agritourism), challenges include setbacks, cost and uncertainties due to natural disasters, challenges associated with enforcing regulations, and limited resources.

Case Study 5:
Palau Pledge

Palau has taken a strong stance on the protection of its maritime territory. Creating the world's sixth-largest marine sanctuary, 80% of the territory is now under protection. A growing number of tourists, almost 160,000 annually compared with a permanent population of about 20,000, however, became a challenge.[16] Clearly an innovative approach to ensuring local benefits and 'giving back' from tourism to Palau was required.

Empowering children

The original Palau Pledge[17] was launched in December 2017 as a commitment to the children of Palau and to preserve their island home. Local children played a key role in drafting the declaration, and the pledge forms part of school curricula.

A social contract

Palau is the first nation on Earth to change its immigration laws for the cause of environmental protection. Visitors receive information about the Pledge in an in-flight video before arriving in Palau. The Pledge is delivered in the form of a stamp in international visitors' passports, requiring a signature to demonstrate compliance. The Pledge represents a social contract with tourists to be conscious whilst travelling and acting in ways that are ecologically and culturally responsible.

Over 22,000 individuals have already pledged their support, and the online awareness campaign has reached over 1.6 billion people worldwide.

Extending to tourism businesses

The second phase of the project focuses on initiating an accreditation scheme for local businesses that aligns with the principles of the Pledge. The project also involves educational field trips to demonstrate the impact of human activity on Palau's ecosystems, inspiring teachers and children to emphasise the importance of conserving the natural environment. The Palau Business Pledge was created in 2022 in partnership with the Bureau of Tourism, and as part of an official certification program to reduce the impact of business operations on the environment.

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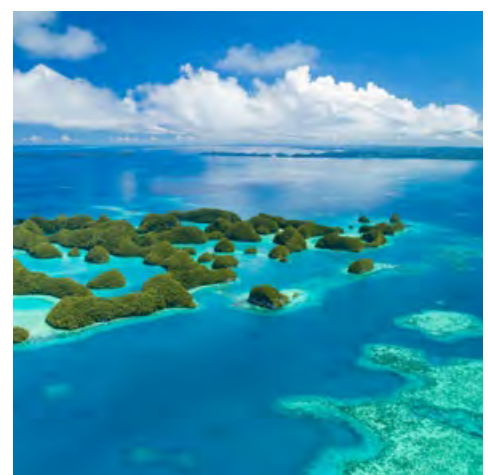
[16] Albrecht, J.N. & Raymond, E.M. (2022). National destination pledges as innovative visitor management tools – social marketing for behaviour change in tourism, Journal of Sustainable Tourism. Available here: DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2022.2037620

[17] See: https://palaupledge.com/

Key Principles:

Outcomes:

Entry point:
National

Target audience:
Donors, NGOs and Visitors

Case Study 6:
Niue Marine Reserve

Niue has established the Niue Nukutuluea Multiple-Use Marine Park, covering 100% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This initiative aims to balance marine conservation with sustainable tourism and fishing practices. The Marine Park includes zones with varying levels of protection, such as the Niue Moana Mahu Marine Protected Area, a no-take large-scale marine protected area covering 40% of Niue's EEZ, where activities like fishing and mining are prohibited. The Marine Park seeks to promote eco-tourism activities like whale watching and sustainable fishing. The Niue Nukutuluea Multiple-Use Marine Park was selected as a case example for this Better Practice Guide for its integrative approach.

A new governance model

To successfully manage the Marine Park, the Niue and Ocean Wide (NOW) Project was created. NOW enables Niue to shift from donor-dependent, project-based activities to country-driven, long-term focused and holistic project implementation. The NOW Trust fund and oversee several priority areas, including:

Enhanced enforcement and management capabilities: Funding compliance and enforcement capabilities and village level resource use and management plans.

Sustainability, climate resilience, and risk reduction: Providing support for sustainable blue economy-focused

Niue businesses, ecotourism, sustainable development projects that increase resilience and risk reduction measures (including insurance schemes).

Incremental capability for conservation and sustainable development: Funding operations and administrations of the NOW trust and advocacy.[18]

Innovative financing for conservation

The NOW Trust was created to provide ongoing funding. With the aim of raising NZ$32 million for an endowment fund, the Trust hopes to provide approximately NZ$1.5 million annually over the long-term. To assist in reaching this funding target, the Trust developed Ocean Conservation Commitments (OCCs).[19] Each OCC facilitates the co-funding for 1km² of the Marine Park and is valued at NZ$250 (the cost to maintain 1km² of the Moana Mahu for a 20-year period).

To date, OCCs have generated over NZ$4.5 million, making an important contribution to supporting and sustaining Niue's ecological, economic, and cultural prosperity for the benefit of both future generations and the global commons.

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[18] Niue Ocean Wide (2023). Funding Niue's Ocean Wide Conservation and Resilient, Sustainable Blue Economy. Available here: https://niueoceanwide.com/20230919_Niue_Brochure_vF.pdf

[19] See: https://niueoceanwide.com/
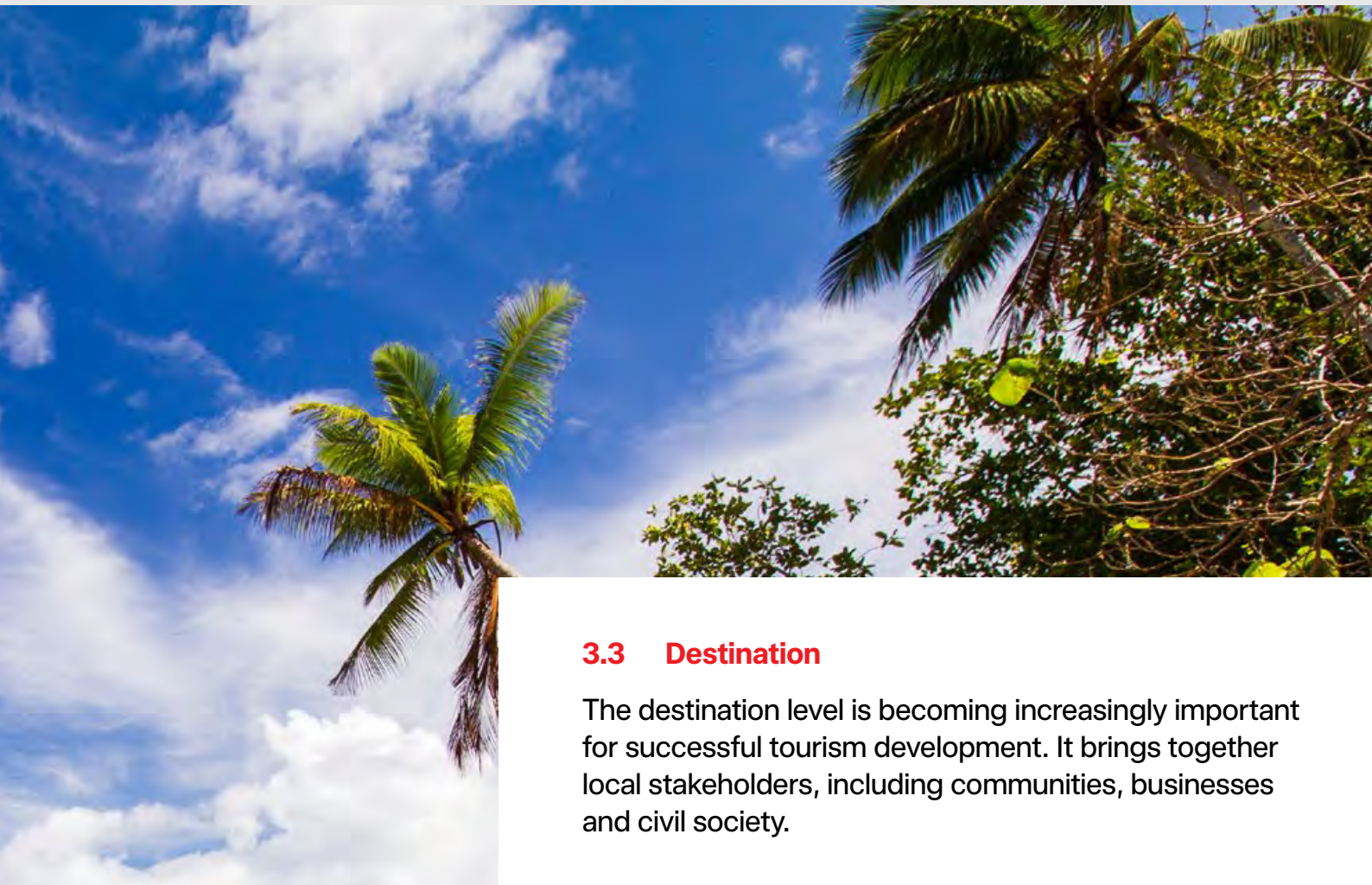
3.3   Destination

The destination level is becoming increasingly important for successful tourism development. It brings together local stakeholders, including communities, businesses and civil society.

Outcomes:

Entry point:
Destination

Target
audience:
Businesses,
NGOs, Donors

Case Study 7:
Mamanuca Environment Society

The Mamanuca Environment Society (MES) was established in 2001 by local tourism stakeholders to address environmental degradation in Fiji's Mamanuca Islands. MES's activities cover conservation, restoration, management, and monitoring of the marine and terrestrial environment. Key initiatives include enhancing waste management practices, monitoring water quality, advancing coral rehabilitation and conservation, mangrove restoration, coastal tree planting, and coastal cleanups.

A localised funding model for tourism to create positive impact

MES is a non-profit organisation registered with the Fijian Government, funded through a membership model that targets resorts and hotels, but also other commercial operators (e.g. the World Surf League) and donors such as UN agencies. The MES model establishes a direct connection between the tourism sector and local conservation work delivered in partnership with communities.

Individual resorts often lack the capacity and knowledge to establish their own impactful environmental initiatives. MES fills this void by implementing a wide range of conservation and environmental awareness programmes across the Mamanuca Islands on behalf of, and often with direct support of, the (mostly) local tourism sector.

MES has established a sustainable funding mechanism and long-lasting relationships with local, national and regional stakeholders, bringing together a powerful network committed to conserving natural resources. By pooling resources, MES can implement projects at a larger scope and scale beyond individual resort properties, maximising impact, which in turn attracts support from corporate actors.

Raising awareness and empowering locals

Informing stakeholders about environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices is a big focus of MES, who offer training workshops to partnering organisations, community groups and schools. Other initiatives, such as clean-up days, tree planting and environmental presentations, engage visitors at partnering resorts.

These initiatives aim to increase community participation, support sustainable practices, and restore local ecosystems. The partnership between MES and World Surf League PURE (a non-profit organization working to protect oceans in association with the World Surf League) has yielded impressive results, including increased recycling rates, reduced pollution, and the successful planting of coral fragments. Many of the projects specifically target local young people and women, providing education (e.g. on backyard gardening) as well as a space to connect, share stories and build stronger communities.

Overall, MES's work exemplifies the positive impact of dedicated local organisations on environmental conservation, promoting sustainable tourism, and preserving the natural beauty and ecological health of the Mamanuca Islands.

Case Study 8:
Vatuvara Foundation

Vatuvara Private Islands is a remote island resort located on Kaibu Island and its associated private islands of Vatuvara, Kanacea and Adavaci in the northern Lau Group of islands. The resort is the main (tourism) employer for the local community on the neighbouring Yacata Island. Vatuvara Private Islands together with the Vatuvara Foundation demonstrate a regenerative model for how conservation and tourism can work hand in hand to support scientific research, community development, and environmental protection. It takes a 'beyond tourism' approach and taps local and global networks to achieve net positive outcomes for the marine environment from tourism.

A partnership and network approach

The Vatuvara Foundation partners with Fijian Government departments, the Masi in Vanua of Lau (the forum of traditional chiefs) and leading organisations, including the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network, Conservation International, Pacific Blue Foundation, Coral Reef Alliance, World Conversation Society and others to determine priorities for informed conservation action and community well-being. A seascape coalition to improve natural resource governance in the Province of Lau and its surrounding waters focuses on terrestrial and marine resource management to achieve effective governance across all levels.[20]

Projects focus on enhancing marine conservation awareness and support food security and sustainable local livelihoods. Empowering communities as responsible stewards, using traditional knowledge and customs of their marine resources, is core to the projects.

Coral reef insurance

The Vatuvara Foundation entered a partnership with the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company (PCRIC)[21] amongst others, to introduce an inaugural coral reef insurance policy for Fiji's Lau Group. The landmark initiative sets a global precedent for coral reef conservation and climate adaptation.

"This partnership with PCRIC is an innovative approach to coral reef conservation and community resilience in the Pacific Islands. Through this parametric insurance policy, we ensure that post-disaster funding is rapidly accessible to support sites in the northern Lau Group following cyclones. The Vatuvara Foundation plays an active role in reef restoration and community support, with PCRIC funding enabling coral reef rehabilitation efforts and providing essential aid to those affected. We hope this nature-based insurance model will serve as a foundation for similar efforts to support post-cyclone recovery in other regions."
Katy Miller, *Director, Vatuvara Foundation*

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[20] Lau Seascape Strategy 2018 – 2030 Conservation International (2018). Lau Seascape Strategy: 2018–2030. Conservation International, Suva, Fiji. 58 pp

[21] Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company (2024). PCRIC Innovates with First Insurance for Private Foundation. Available here: https://pcric.org/2024/02/15/pcric-innovates-with-first-insurance-for-private-foundation-vatuvara-fiji/ – Vatuvara Fiji

Entry point:
Destination

**Target
audience:**
Governments
and Operators

Case Study 9:
Kokoda Trail

The Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea is a well-known product popular with the Australian market. Twenty-five percent of all Australians travelling to the country visit the trail. The Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia have partnered to create the Kokoda Initiative Partnership. Funded by the Australian Government, the Kokoda Track Authority was established to work with tourism stakeholders and ensure that the trail generates benefits to the local communities without negatively affecting the environment or their culture.[22] The Authority consults with landowners and works closely with relevant local, provincial, national and Australian Government officials. Annual stakeholder forums are held in Australia and Papua New Guinea to discuss issues.

International partnership for local benefits

Importantly, the trail generates funding for communities and creates livelihoods. Through trek permit receipts, communities receive tourism service payments, acknowledging local land ownership. Villagers are contracted for trail maintenance and receive allowances for participating in volunteer programmes focused on maintenance training and building local capacity. Employment is also created for local guides, porters, food services, equipment, transport and accommodation providers.

Development projects

The trail helped develop a wide range of projects relevant to enhance or maintain tourism, and to improve sustainability. For example, a Tour Operator Licensing System has been developed, supported by training and oversight of the conduct of tour operators ensuring the trails sustainability and respectful treatment of local culture. Programmes for visitor education on responsible trekking were also developed. One example is a partnership between the Kokoda Track Authority and the Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority in support of the Kokoda Sanitation Project. This initiative aims to improve sanitation along the trail, benefitting local communities, trekkers and the environment.

The Kokoda trail thus provides insights into the potential for localising funding streams – in this case from an international partner – to create sustainable income for local tourism development activities.

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[22] UN Tourism (2022). Sustainable Tourism Product Development Opportunities in the Pacific Islands. Available here: https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284419852

3.4   Business

Businesses play an important role in transforming tourism as they represent a key element of any destination, connecting tourists with local communities. We are at a point in time where the purpose of business needs to be redefined. Taking a purely monetary lens is fraying at the edges and has lost its legitimacy; more is now expected of businesses and their leaders.[23]

Outcomes:

Entry point:
Business

**Target
audience:**
Businesses,
Destinations

Case Study 10:
Duavata, the Sustainable Tourism Collective

The Duavata Sustainable Tourism Collective is a group of 15 small and medium-sized tourism enterprises who came together because they all share a common set of values about what the tourism industry should, and could, be. The like-minded tourism operators believe tourism should enhance cultural heritage and the environment. At the core is championing the interconnection between experiences within local communities, the environment & culture.[24] Participating businesses include accommodation operators and providers of cultural, adventure or ecotourism experiences.

Supporting the network principle of a transformative tourism model, the Collective provides peer support to each other to continuously improve sustainable practices. The desire for ongoing improvement is backed by investment into mentorship, leadership programmes (e.g. local Fijian conservation leaders) and other educational experiences. Specific training on better practices, such as waste management or sustainable sourcing, is provided. To affect change at scale, the group actively engages with policymaking, providing input into national policies and tourism management.

Purpose-driven tourism

Businesses can have a much broader purpose than making money. The businesses in the Duavata Collective see their role as delivering much broader outcomes for their people, land and waters. For example, their partnership with ygap, a global social enterprise accelerator for developing scalable solutions to social and environmental challenges, is a clear demonstration of how the Collective is making a difference. In collaboration with ygap and alongside Tourism Fiji's destination development team, the Collective is co-designing and delivering a Sustainable Tourism Accelerator specifically for emerging tourism businesses; a unique approach to business acceleration, a program specifically tailored to support tourism ventures in Fiji.[25]

Further, initially facilitated by Duavata member Talanoa Treks, two programs focused on women-led tourism ventures have now been piloted. Other members of the collective are getting involved, including Bula Coffee, Finding Islands Tours, Muanivatu Trails, and Nukubati to work with a cohort of 12 emerging entrepreneurs.

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[23] For further discussion on this point, see Barter, N. & Fleming, C. (2024). Future Normal: 8 Questions to Create Businesses Your Children Will be Proud Of, Routledge, New York.

[24] Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association (2023). Available here: https://fhta.com.fj/fhta-sustainable-tourism-top-to-bottom-sustainability-at-kaila-na-ua-2/

[25] Duavata Sustainable Tourism Collective (2025). Partnering for impact. Available here: https://www.duavatasustainabletourism.org/partnering-for-impact/

Case Study 11:
The Brando

The Brando resort on Teti'aroa was opened in 2014, realising the vision of Marlon Brando who had purchased the atoll in 1967. The early days of a small hotel and research station made way for a 35-bungalow luxury resort with the ambition to combine luxury travel with stewardship of the unique environment and Polynesian culture. Along with the resort, the non-profit Teti'aroa Society and a world-leading marine research station were created.

Near zero impact

The resort was designed to maximise use of renewable energy sources with solar panels lining the airstrip delivering over three-quarters of the resort's electricity requirements. One of the most notable innovations is Seawater Air Conditioning, a pioneering deep seawater cooling system that uses cold ocean water to cool buildings, cutting energy use by about 90% compared to traditional air conditioning. Other coastal cities around the world have since adopted the system.

The atoll's pristineness demands strict management of waste and wastewater. The Brando has an advanced water purification system that provides drinkable water and is used for irrigation in the resort's vegetable plantation. A 24-hour food digester generates highly fertile compost from the restaurants' food waste.

Tourism for biodiversity research

The atoll is a protected marine sanctuary, with strict limits on human activity. Coral reef conservation and restoration programs contribute to conservation, scientific research and climate action. One of the atoll islands is completely predator-free, allowing native birds to return and thrive. A share of visitor revenue is allocated towards supporting the Teti'aroa Society's research program, which has attracted some of the world's leading scholars in areas as diverse as island and coral reef ecology to digital science, and oceanography to archaeology.[26]

Global outreach

The Brando actively invests in community engagement and runs educational programmes with local schools. The exclusive nature of the resort brings several advantages for communicating the importance of urgent action on climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Guests who stay at the resort include influential personalities from politics, film and business. They are attracted to the atoll for its beauty, and it is not uncommon for visitors to leave significant donations to further support the Teti'aroa Society's research program. The reach of the resort is global thanks to high media interest and extensive coverage, including through documentaries.

Learnings and challenges

Whilst the exclusive nature of the resort might be prohibitive to many, most of the resort's innovations and systems are replicable. The high cost associated with being a 'first mover' are covered by a luxury resort, which serves as a test bed for innovations adopted by other businesses.

[26] Teti'aroa Society (2025). Research. Available here: https://www.tetiaroasociety.org/programs/research

3.5   Community

Transformative tourism principles may be implemented through community-level initiatives, community-led and centred around delivering outcomes to the community, including marginalised groups.

Case Study 12:
Vanuatu Women's Associations

In Vanuatu and the Pacific region, marketplaces have historically played a central role in women's lives, serving as hubs for economic and social exchange. For Ni-Vanuatu women, marketplace trading is the primary source of income. Marketplaces not only sustain livelihoods but also function as crucial sites for women's empowerment, particularly within the development sector. The handicraft industry stands out as an essential niche in this context, interwoven with Indigenous cultures and traditions, offering women opportunities for entrepreneurship in tourism through handicrafts (like woven baskets, mats, bags, and earrings, created using local materials and traditional skills passed down through generations), food products, and services like tour guiding with minimal barriers.

Empowering women

The Vanuatu Handicraft Association exemplifies the collaborative and entrepreneurial spirit of women in Vanuatu. The association organises food markets as fundraisers to support the vendors' needs and provide essential training, including bookkeeping, leadership, livelihood diversification, and management skills. As such, the association is an important example how female entrepreneurship can be fostered and supported.

Strengthening networks and increasing resilience

Women's associations in marketplaces have demonstrated activism as a response and recovery strategy in a multi-hazard environment. For instance, members of a Vanuatu Arts and Crafts Association lobbied against Vanuatu Government plans to relocate vendors to areas with fewer customers. Their successful negotiation with local agencies enabled them to share space at existing marketplaces, preserving their access to customers. Additionally, community labour and support initiatives focused on gardening and roadside market preparation allowed vendors to continue selling food and handicrafts during the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining their livelihoods.

Through individual and collective efforts, such as livelihood diversification, financial risk-sharing, and fundraising, these women proactively respond to economic and environmental challenges, ensuring the sustainability of their enterprises and communities. For example, their financial risk-sharing savings program allows members to pool resources, which are later distributed among the women to enhance their resilience. Despite being overlooked in formal response and recovery strategies, handicraft vendors in Vanuatu's informal sector show remarkable resilience and agency due to their individual and collective capacities.[27]

[27] Clissold, R., Westoby, R., McNamara, K.E. & Obed, V. (2024). The Realities of Peripheral Handicraft Livelihoods in the Face of Disasters in Vanuatu. Tourism Cases, CABI. Available here: https://doi.org/10.1079/tourism.2024.0005

Key Principles:

Outcomes:

Entry point:
Community

Target audience:
Communities and Businesses

Case Study 13:
Samoa Beach Fales

Beach fales in Samoa are a unique form of sustainable tourism that blends traditional Samoan hospitality with environmentally friendly practices. These simple, open-air huts—often built with natural materials like timber, coconut fronds, and pandanus leaves—provide low-impact accommodation along Samoa's beaches. They have long been recognised as a high value, low cost, form of tourism.

Most beach fale businesses are family-run or community-owned, ensuring that tourism revenues stay within local villages. These businesses create employment opportunities in rural areas, helping to reduce urban migration. In addition, research has found that operators of fales tend to prioritise local goods and services, thus maximising local benefits.

Making tourism more resilient

Beach fales have been found to assist families in diversifying their livelihoods and thus spread risk.

Because beach fales align with traditional Samoan architecture and the local culture, they are attractive to diverse markets, including both international and local visitors.

Further, beach fales are resilient by design. Their open design lets wind pass through and the construction method of using coconut fibre to bind posts and the roof makes the structure more flexible under wind pressure. Because of their natural and locally available materials, simple design, and the fact that they are often built by family or village members, constructing beach fales is relatively low-cost. This reduces the risk of positioning them in exposed, beach-front locations, as if they are damaged, owners can usually repair or replace them without the assistance of bank loans or insurances.

[28] Scheyvens, R. (2004). Growth of Beach Fale Tourism in Samoa: The High Value of Low-cost Tourism. Chapter 12. In Hall, C.M. & Boyd, S.W. (eds) Nature-Based Tourism in Peripheral Areas. Development or Disaster? Channel View Publications. Chapter DOI: doi.org/10.21832/9781845410025-014

[29] Scheyvens, R. (2006). Sun, sand, and beach fale: Benefiting from backpackers – the Samoan Way. Tourism Recreation Research, 31, 75–86. doi: 10.1080/02508281.2006.11081507

[30] Parsons, M., Brown, C., Nalau, J., & Fisher, K. (2017). Assessing adaptive capacity and adaptation: insights from Samoan tourism operators. Climate and Development, 10(7), 644–663. Available here: https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2017.1410082
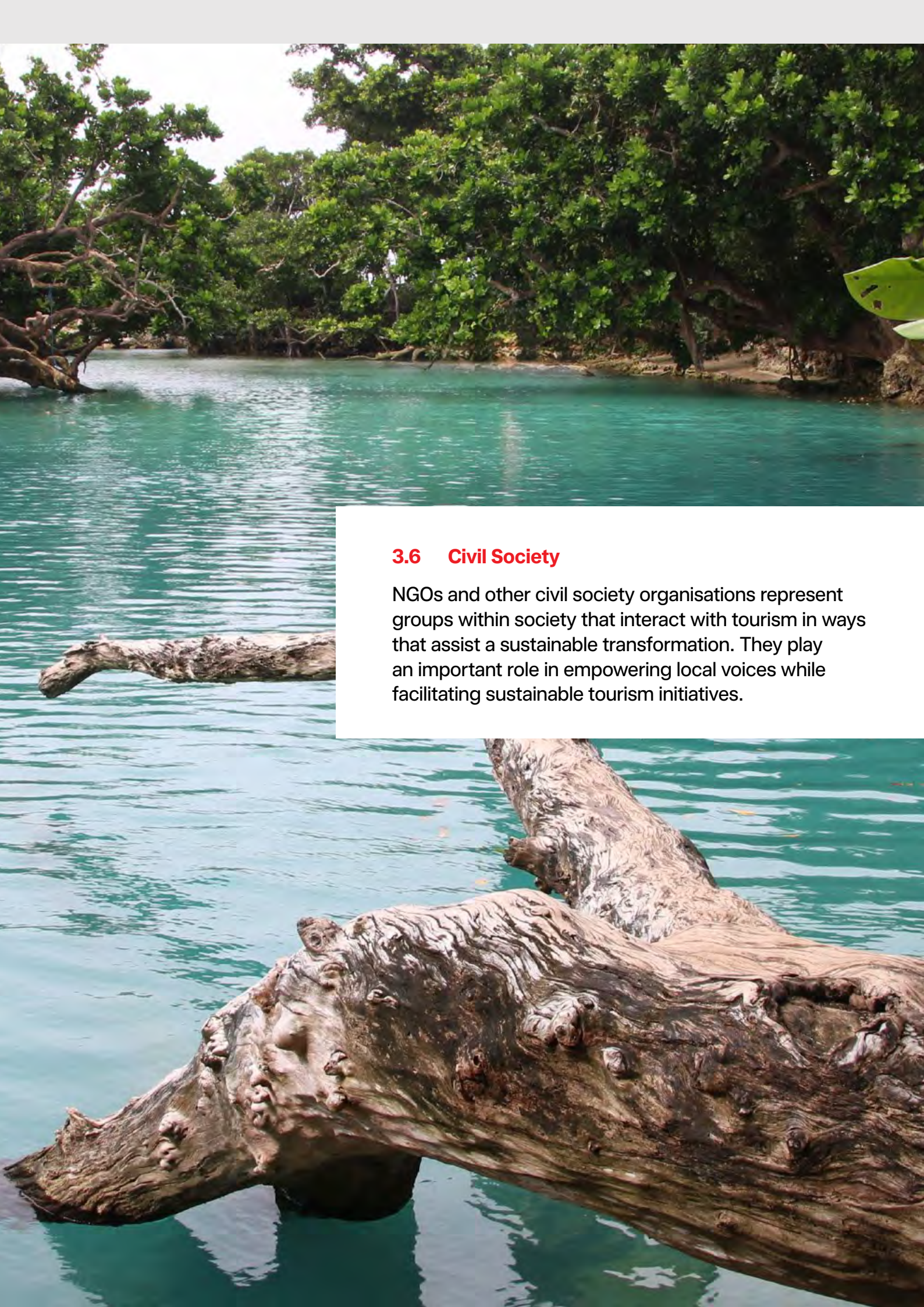
3.6   Civil Society

NGOs and other civil society organisations represent groups within society that interact with tourism in ways that assist a sustainable transformation. They play an important role in empowering local voices while facilitating sustainable tourism initiatives.

Key Principles:

Outcomes:

Entry point:
Civil Society

Target audience:
Visitors,
Producers,
Communities,
NGOs

Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu (ACTIV) Association is a non-profit organisation based in Vanuatu, which aims to empower marginalised and excluded Ni-Vanuatu communities. It achieves this by promoting sustainable development through facilitating Fair Trade. ACTIV also has a commercial arm through ACTIV Limited and holds majority shares in Aelan Chocolate Makers.

The Association has the following branches of work:

ACTIV Forum: Promoting access to local and international markets for communities and members.

ACTIV Community: Realising production opportunities for disadvantaged communities.

ACTIV Earth: Facilitating social and environmental projects.

ACTIV's strength lies in its 115+ members, which include small producers, women's groups, associations, and cooperatives across Vanuatu. These members represent over 4,000 people who produce handicrafts, chocolate, spices and oils, and arts and carvings, and who benefit directly from ACTIV's fair trade initiatives.

The ACTIV Centre hosts the Aelan Chocolate factory and Aelan Shop, where tourists can buy products from small-scale Ni-Vanuatu producers.

Supporting small-scale and remote producers

The ACTIV business development arm assists local individuals, associations, cooperatives, and small businesses in remote areas to promote and sell their products by connecting producers to local and international markets. This work involves creating demand for local products, and hosting events to raise funds. The work of the organisation supports economic self-sufficiency, and at the same time promotes traditional skills.

By taking a small commission on each sale, ACTIV generates income to finance various projects while ensuring transparency and accountability. Such projects involve workshops to enhance women's handicraft-making skills, facilitate product trade, and diversify skill sets to enable disadvantaged individuals, including women, to generate a sustainable income.

Improving living-conditions for rural communities

ACTIV focuses on improving rural livelihoods by developing and coordinating environmentally sustainable projects. The organisation promotes solar power, reforestation initiatives, and strategies to mitigate the impact of natural hazards like cyclones, earthquakes, and tsunamis. These initiatives help communities benefit from sustainable technology in an economically viable way.

Case Study 15:
Te Ipukarea Society Inc

Te Ipukarea Society (TIS) is a non-government environmental organisation managed by a president and voluntary committee, which is comprised of a cross section of the community. Te Ipukarea translates as "our heritage" and TIS is the oldest environmental non-governmental organisation in the Cook Islands, operating since 1996.

Improving the sustainability of tourism businesses

One of the priorities of TIS is to reduce the environmental impact of tourism, including for example, through improved waste management by resorts and upgrades to wastewater treatment to reduce marine pollution. By advocating for reusable water bottles and promoting 'Bring Your Own' practices at local markets, TIS seeks to create awareness and change behaviours, even for those on holiday.

Businesses directly work with TIS on programmes such as bird counts or pest eradication activities and the Society recognises the potential of regenerative tourism and the positive contribution tourism can make to nature conservation.[31]

Advocacy, awareness creation and education

The work of TIS addresses a broad range of environmental issues in the Cook Islands beyond tourism, whereby key focus areas are biodiversity, including ocean health, waste, ecologically sustainable development, youth and climate change. Initiatives may address several of these focus areas. For example, local schools' programmes such as composting and worm farming also engage young people in applied environmental education.

TIS representatives are active in participating in international events and negotiations, advocating for ocean health and Indigenous heritage. An area of strong advocacy is in opposition to deep sea mining, organising high profile protests and actively participating in public for a, such as those organised by Te Puna Vai Mārama Cook Island Centre for Research.[32]

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[31] SPTO (2022). Te Ipukarea Society Leads Sustainable Tourism Efforts in the Cook Islands. Available here: https://southpacificislands.travel/te-ipukarea-society-leads-sustainable-tourism-efforts-to-preserve-paradise-in-the-cook-islands/

[32] See: https://www.tepunavaimarama.com/

Case Study 16:
Kōrero O Te ` Ōrau

Kōrero O Te ` Ōrau (KO) is an environmental non-profit, non-governmental organisation made up of Cook Islanders who are passionate about protecting the culture, environment and natural resources of the nation. Kōrero o te ` Ōrau in Cook Islands' Māori translates to "knowledge of the sky, land, and sea". The organisation focuses on several key areas of work, including marine and terrestrial scientific research. Its core purpose is to incorporate Traditional Knowledge on marine and terrestrial governance into resource management. KO strives to ensure sustainable development is pursued in tandem with the safeguarding of cultural heritage and values.

Youth education and passing on traditional knowledge

KO's regular education programme for young people demonstrates how important it the organisation views reconnecting young Māori Cook Islanders with nature and topics such as agriculture, botany, climate change, ecology, marine biology, taxonomy, research skills, and life skills. One focus is on promoting an integrated management approach that mixes traditional/local knowledge with modern science. A Ridge to Reef approach reflects the holistic framing.

KO is also active in sharing such knowledge, for example by showcasing articles and videos for local and international audiences and promoting research discoveries in the Cook Islands for the rest of the world to view. The organisation also hosts school groups from overseas, for example New Zealand, to share their stewardship approach beyond the Cook Islands.

Voyaging – a form of travel

Pacific Islanders have always engaged in travel, yet discussions on 'tourism', rarely talk about domestic travel, both in its modern and traditional forms. In 2021, Kōrero O Te ` Ōrau co-organised a unique educational and advocacy project, where a small team took part in a two-month 'Vaka' voyage travelling to the 'Pa Enua' or outer islands of the Cook Islands. Vaka voyaging is an ancient tradition of Polynesian islanders, where long-distance ocean journeys are taken on traditional outrigger boats, using navigation techniques that have been passed down from generation to generation. This trip saw the crew visit eight outer islands, where they conducted education, advocacy, and ecological surveys.

Case Study 17:
Agape in Action

AGAPE in ACTION meaning 'love in action', is a registered charity that funds and runs schools and orphanages and other community projects in many countries, including Africa, India, Pakistan and the Pacific. Its funds are drawn mainly from the Christadelphian community around the world and is based in Australia.

In Vanuatu they fund and assist in the operation of the Kapalpal Christadelphian School beside Mt Loniarlu in central Tanna.

A committee of volunteers from Australia and New Zealand oversaw the commencement of the construction and management of the school in 2008. Resources were gradually built up to the school. Results from Year Ten national exams regularly place Kapalpal School among Vanuatu's leading schools.

There are sixteen teachers employed in full or part time capacities as well as teachers aides and a groundsman. The school also employs a First Aid worker at the schools dedicated clinic which also services the nearby local communities.

Tanna Kofi Sop

Like many Pacific Island countries and territories, hospitality is a major employer in Vanuatu. It was felt that the school needed to provide some vocational skills training for those students who were unable to go on to Years 11/12 and the concept behind Tanna Kofi Sop (Tanna coffee shop) was put forward in the early 2020's. The plan is to train suitable students from remote communities on Tanna at a commercially run coffee shop in central Lenakel (Tanna's largest town). AGAPE in ACTION are seeking Vanuatu Qualifications Authority accreditation to offer Certificate 1 in Hospitality Practises.

Progress has been slow, with first the COVID-19 restrictions and also many delays arounds local custom land ownership issues. However, land has now been secured and building work commenced. An existing damaged building is being refurbished for the shop and accommodation and plans have been submitted for an amenities block. AGAPE in ACTION are committed to ensuring the project in its construction design and operation, is environmentally and ethically responsible and sustainable.

The plan is for Tanna Kofi Sop to be operational in 2026.

4. Conclusion

This Better Practice Guide was created to inspire tourism stakeholders in the Pacific to be innovative and brave, and to use tourism in ways that contribute positively to the long-term future of the region. This guide highlights that best practice examples addressing transformative tourism principles already exist across different entry points ranging from regional to local, whereby most cases address more than one principle. Cases presented also address a wide range of outcomes, most frequently economic/livelihoods, community, environment and climate change. The case studies presented in this guide deliver useful insights for those inspiring to transform the sector, including lessons learned, and opportunities to support future tourism in Pacific Island countries and territories.

Some best practice examples featured in this guide apply a holistic approach and go beyond tourism. This includes shaping tourism policy at the national entry point to support environmental and cultural priorities in Fiji and Vanuatu or using tourism together with other sectors to deliver conservation and social outcomes in Palau, PNG and the Cook Islands. Many inspiring examples across a variety of Pacific Island countries and territories featured in this guide deliver net positive outcomes across most entry points. Many cases presented are able to use tourism to deliver environmental outcomes while also considering community well-being.

While less frequent, some initiatives presented here work on reviving Indigenous Knowledge systems, ranging from using Indigenous worldviews and knowledge to inform tourism's national policy direction in Vanuatu, to drawing on Indigenous Knowledge to inform conservation in Fiji and promoting Indigenous Knowledge with young people in the Cook Islands. Such initiatives can become a source of growing local identity, contribute to a Pacific voice, and, even if not the primary focus, create a competitive advantage as a tourist destination.

Several cases focus on empowering communities or individuals. In Vanuatu, cases focus on empowering women and young people by generating livelihood opportunities. In Fiji and Samoa, the focus lies on empowering communities through diversified livelihoods and as responsible stewards. Often, these initiatives also addressed the principle of networks. Some examples presented were identified as best practices in addressing the principle of localisation. While almost all cases generate benefits at the local level, several cases in Vanuatu and Samoa focus on using and prioritising local food, materials, architecture and vendors stand out as these not only contribute to sharing the benefits of tourism locally but also contribute to preserving local skills and traditions. Many cases across all entry points addressed the network principle, drawing on and bringing together varied stakeholders often connecting the local tourism sector with communities, NGOs, donors, national and international agencies. Examples presented were able to form collaborations and partnerships to address social or environmental challenges more effectively. Network focused initiatives contribute to the flourishing of all involved (local and external), including the visitors.

Tourism needs a more regional focus, where in a world of excess mobility, people choose to localise their travel aspirations and experience regions in more depth. This is a call to tourists to spend more time exploring the rich and vibrant Pacific tapestry of places and their people. For example, we would urge visitors to travel less often but for longer and with more purpose. A more conscious tourism experience in the Pacific is readily available for the astute tourist and we would encourage the sector to promote such experiences.

To close, the examples provided in this guide remain the exception rather than the norm. Yet demand for tourism to be transformative continues to grow. It is incumbent upon all those involved in tourism, from policy makers, to businesses, to non-governmental organisations and community groups and to the tourists themselves to embrace the opportunity to create the type of tourism the world needs – tourism that is sustainable (balancing economic, social and environmental needs), regenerative (restoring ecological and societal harms) and conscious (encouraging a deeper understanding of people and place).

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