

“Booking helps!”

Putting marketing ahead of sustainability for tourism in South Asia

A closer look at the rehabilitation of the tourism industry
following the tsunami

Commissioned by the EED (Church Development Service) and the
Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT)

May 2007

Church Development Service -
An Association of the Protestant
Churches in Germany (EED)

The Church Development Service (EED)
promotes programs of partner organisations,
monitors development policies of
Governments and Multilateral Institutions
with an aim to ensure Peace, Justice and
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Preface

The findings presented in the following report, written more than two years after the tsunami catastrophe, are significant for two reasons: 1. The travel industry took part in disaster relief efforts and deserves recognition for this. 2. It was an illusion to believe that the tsunami disaster would result in travel concepts and strategies that place greater emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility.

For the tourism industry, responding with quick-fix marketing strategies and avoiding these issues and other related questions will come with a tall price to pay in the middle-term. Why – yet again – did the poor suffer the most? While the tidal wave could not have been prevented, couldn't the catastrophic effects have been kept in check? What are the solutions for short, medium and long-term disaster protection? Is it enough to put our trust in technological solutions? How can catastrophes be prevented? Is enough being done to minimize disaster risk? These are questions that not only the tourism industry needs to consider.

Just how “catastrophic” the effects of a natural disaster prove to be ultimately depends a great deal on the vulnerability of the population. Poverty significantly increases a population's vulnerability.

Climate plays an important role in tourism - sun, water and snow are the basic elements of tourist “products”. The United Nation's global climate report lays out bleak scenarios for the future: the global temperature increases by up to 6.4 degrees, oceans flood major portions of coastline, islands disappear, droughts wipe out thousands of people. “Only a complete halt of CO₂ emissions will enable us to avoid the worst.” Up until now, the tourism industry has seen itself more as a victim of these climate prognoses and has mainly focused on alternatives and adjustments that can be made within the industry. At the same time, the tourism industry's own contribution to climate change is a subject that tends to be avoided. Today, air traffic around the world is already responsible for ten percent of man's total contribution to the greenhouse effect. And given the projected growth figures for the tourism industry, a tripling of airplane emissions can be expected by 2050. In the next twenty years, the costs for overcoming climate-change-induced catastrophes worldwide will increase to ten times the amount of development aid. In the next twenty years, the Millennium Development Goals will be “swept away by the hurricane force winds of a warming planet” (New Economics Foundation).

Poorer population groups, people on the social and economic fringes, people in unstable situations without any safeguards and those in the informal sector - these are all people who are

particularly at risk. They are simply unprotected from the effects of these kinds of catastrophes. They are the victims in need and they have neither a political voice nor a lobby representing their interests. Particularly vulnerable groups include children, seniors, the disabled or people marginalized either because of their ethnicity or for other reasons (e.g. the illegal Burmese workers in Thailand). Women are significantly more at risk than men because of the disadvantages they face socially and because of the double burden they often carry as participants in both the productive and reproductive sectors. Moreover, crisis situations put women at greater risk for sexual assault.

But it's not just the poor that are at risk; it's also the "rich" tourists in places like Thailand or Sri Lanka, who stay at hotels in ecologically damaged coastal areas.

The EED supports an Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) program that develops community-oriented concepts for preparing for and responding to disaster, reduces the vulnerability of people at risk and strengthens their ability to overcome catastrophes. EED's Tourism Watch and ECOT cooperate on lobbying efforts and share the following goals and principles.

Community-oriented disaster prevention:

- increases environmental awareness and promotes sound environmental practice on the part of all involved;
- is built upon the available skills and talents in a community and strives to further develop these resources;
- relies on traditional community elements such as care and solidarity;
- fights against the root causes of vulnerability and aims to change the basic structures responsible for inequality and under-development;
- considers the involvement of the people directly affected by catastrophes as crucial to effective methods of prevention and crisis management;
- sets the goal of self-organization by strengthening/building-up the necessary structures which recognize the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

The following report provides a starting-off point for disaster prevention, climate protection and social responsibility in the tourism industry.

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EED TOURISM WATCH

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Introduction

With its destruction of Thailand's coastal region, the December 26, 2004 tsunami had a devastating effect on one of the world's most popular vacation destinations. In Sri Lanka and southeastern India as well, the tsunami laid waste to popular coastal destinations – areas that were very important to the respective national tourist industries. Countless vacationers experienced the deadly force of the tidal waves along with their local (and non-native) hosts. Along with the tremendous – and previously unimaginable – destruction caused by the tsunami, this bond to the West, formed by the steady stream of Western tourists over the years – many of whom were loyal return customers – is cited as another reason for the unprecedented wave of aid and flow of money to the coffers of relief organizations.

The tourism industry saw it as their duty to provide immediate aid to the affected regions after the quake. It supplied transport capacity for aid flights and employees collected donations that they were often able to forward directly to contacts of theirs in the disaster areas. In addition, the industry along with the national tourism boards in the region as well as international tourism policy representatives appealed to tourists to return to the affected coastal regions as soon as possible under the motto: “Booking helps!”. And in the countries themselves, tourism officials made an effort to rebuild the ruined infrastructure as quickly as possible in order to attract tourists to their respective coastal regions as soon as possible.

In reaction to this, organizations critical of tourism – including the initiators of this study – expressed their concern that an overly hasty, uncontrolled reconstruction of the area would not only re-introduce many of the social and environmental problems associated with mass tourism, but might even result in these problems on an even greater scale. Already before the tsunami disaster, tourism in southern Asia had generated not only income and jobs; it had also been the source of significant cultural, economic, environmental and social problems. Farmers had lost their land and fishermen had lost their access to fishing waters; families had become impoverished as their income could not keep pace with the rising cost of living in tourism regions; women and children were forced into the prostitution industry.

Development organizations such as the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (Church Development Service) appealed therefore to international tourism industry representatives to take ad-

vantage of this period of reconstruction to create a new, more socially-conscious and environmentally-friendly kind of tourism in these regions.¹

Chapters 2 and 3 of this report will look at how the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the government of Sri Lanka went about rebuilding the tourism regions. Chapter 4 examines aid projects that were supported by German tour operators and looks at the issue of whether these ideas for a new, socially-conscious and environmentally-friendly approach to tourism played a role in these projects. Chapter 5 looks at whether relief agencies were aware of the fact that their involvement in the reconstruction effort was at times in areas that had been used very heavily for tourism. But first, Chapter 1 will outline a few of the main points of contention that arose early on in the reconstruction process between tourism companies and local populations.

¹ EED (Church Development Service - An Association of the Protestant Churches in Germany) press release, 27 January 2005. See also both Global Tourism Intervention Forum (GTIF) articles listed in the bibliography: “Solidarity with the Victims...” and “Tsunami Call for Action”

1. Tourism and Reconstruction: An overview

1.1 The coastal protection zones

The central point of conflict during reconstruction was the decision on the part of officials to keep the coastline in practically all affected countries free from new construction. The idea behind these so-called “coastal protection zones” is to provide local inhabitants with better protection against future floods. The result, however, is that families – in particular fisher families – cannot rebuild their houses along the coast, creating the need to move entire villages into temporary camps and later into newly created villages further inland.² The creation of the coastal protection zones made way for the implementation of long-cherished plans of the national tourism boards: They very quickly produced plans for the creation of large spaces devoted to tourism which would modernize the tourist areas which had previously been built-up in a more random, unorganized fashion. But as the example of Thailand’s Phi Phi Island shows (see info-box), they ran up against massive resistance from local inhabitants and many of these concepts could not be implemented as planned (see also the example of Arugam Bay in Chapter 3, page 15).

A new beginning for tourism without the local population? The example of Ko Phi Phi

Phi Phi Island (the Thai word “Ko” means island) in southern Thailand became a magnet for Thailand's tourism industry in the 1980's. In a very short period of time, the once secluded island became a “vacation paradise” for travelers throughout the world. The rapid development of the island brought with it countless environmental problems as well as social conflicts, as reported by geographers Martin Friese and Evelin Selau: “The construction of necessary infrastructure, including water supply and waste disposal systems, was never able to keep up with the rapid expansion of tourism. The flow of untreated waste water into the ocean, water-supply deficiencies, problems with trash disposal as well as an ever-greater concentration of buildings caused Ko Phi Phi to look more and more like a slum. [...] The illegal development of beach property continued to increase, as did land disputes between locals, investors and the government forestry agency.”³

After the tsunami had destroyed the island’s tourism center, the “Tonsai Village” and, according to official estimates, taken the lives of at least 750 people, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) set about implementing land-use changes on Ko Phi Phi and turning the island into a “luxury destination”: As part of the “orderly rebuilding” approach, the waste disposal problems were to be addressed and issues of land conservation and disaster protection were also to receive greater attention.

² The report by Action Aid “Tsunami Response” documents numerous human rights abuses following the resettlement.

³ Friese and Selau. “Der Wiederaufbau von Ko Phi Phi.”

But at the same time the plans included measures to dispossess some of the local landowning elite of their land and to resettle other island residents. At the same time, tourists who had been regular visitors to the island over many years, organized rebuilding efforts on behalf of the local population. They founded the “Help International Phi Phi”⁴ organization and some joined in the actual rebuilding effort.⁵ It did not take long for the foreign volunteers to get involved in the conflict between the local hotel owners and the national-level officials and, seemingly out of a sense of loyalty to the local operators, weighed in on behalf of local interests. The strong local resistance forced the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to relinquish its control of Phi Phi’s reconstruction to the local government.⁶ While the interests of the local population now seem to be better protected, it remains unclear whether a more environmentally-friendly and sustainable tourism strategy for Ko Phi Phi will ever be realized.

1.2 Growth of cheap vacation packages and tourism to disaster regions

Immediately after the tsunami disaster, the travel industry offered a 40% reduction in package prices for travel to the affected regions. And beginning in February 2005, charter flights once again offered service to Thailand and Sri Lanka, even though the number of travelers was modest at first. With travel to the affected areas slowly growing, locals talked about the arrival of a new kind of tourist: Store owners, gift/souvenir shop and diving school owners complained to the BBC, for example, that the post-tsunami tourists were different from their old customers. According to them, most tourists were now coming to the tsunami disaster region because of the cheap package deals and were hardly willing to spend any money beyond the price of their travel. The owner of a diving school in Krabi described it this way: “The number of tourists is gradually increasing, but they are a different kind of tourist. They have come here on cheap package deals and they don’t want to go diving.”⁷ The BBC also reported that many of the cheap-package tourists seemed to be unduly curious about the destruction and the flood victims. “Some areas of the devastated landscape are proving particularly popular with visitors. Displaced people living in camps along the coast are getting used to seeing bus-loads of Thais and foreigners.”⁸

⁴ www.hiphphi.com

⁵ Quote from Friese and Selau, op. cit.: “In den Monaten nach dem Tsunami räumten die Freiwilligen nicht nur Hunderte von Tonnen Trümmer beiseite, sondern reparierten die Schule, das Inselkrankenhaus, legten Wege an und pflanzten Palmen.” (In the months following the tsunami, the volunteers not only cleared tonnes of debris, but also repaired the schools, the island’s hospital, constructed pathways and planted trees.)

⁶ Selau. “Thailand - Verzögerungstaktiken und Widerstand”.

⁷ “Thailand’s tsunami-hit tourism”, *BBC*, 25 March 2005.

⁸ *Ibid.*

1.3 Sex tourism and sexual exploitation of children

According to media reports, one effect of the tsunami was to redirect the wave of sex tourists to other parts of the world. The seaquake led to a dramatic increase in prostitution in Brazil, for example. “Since the tsunami laid waste to Asia's popular sex tourism destinations, the ocean resort on Brazil's northeastern Atlantic coast has become a new center for sex tourism,” reported Gottfried Stein, South American correspondent for the German television network ARD.⁹ Similar reports come from the Philippines: According to a report by kipa, the international Catholic press agency, sex tourism, including child prostitution, has increased significantly in the Philippines.¹⁰

Several of the areas hit by the tsunami had already established their (sad) reputations as the most sought-after tourist destinations for the sexual exploitation of children on a commercial scale. Child relief organizations such as UNICEF and local child protection organizations were aware of the fact that in crisis situations children are most at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. This was the reason for the push to register all children in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe. In November 2005, UNICEF reported that the much-feared international trade of tsunami orphans, as well as the rise in child prostitution, was able to be prevented – something that UNICEF attributed mainly to the fact that orphans were taken in by relatives and friends.¹¹ Nevertheless, the Sri Lankan tourism agency together with UNICEF announced in July of 2006 a “Zero Tolerance” campaign against child prostitution. Initiators of this campaign, however, do not present it as being related to the tsunami.¹²

⁹ “Brasilien will gegen Sextourismus vorgehen,” *Tagesschau*, 21 August 2005.

¹⁰ “Auf Philippinen nimmt Kindesmissbrauch zu,” *kipa*, 24 August 2006.

¹¹ UNICEF. “Children and the Tsunami.”

¹² “Sri Lanka campaign promotes ‘zero tolerance’ for child sex tourism”, www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sri_lanka_34933.html.

“Attention: The Return of the Sex Tourists!” – a SWR documentation

“The filmmaker Wolfgang Luck and his team of cameramen set out to observe the “turnaround” (in the direction of a more gentle form of tourism – author’s note) in Phuket. Instead he experienced “up close” the no-holds-barred return of the sex industry. No sooner had the corpses been cleared from the beach, than the sex tourists were flying in again. Prostitution bosses have replaced the prostitutes who died in the tsunami with bar girls smuggled into the country illegally from Vietnam and Cambodia. The young women tell openly of their bleak existence and their encounters with mostly drunk German retirees. And these men talk unabashedly about why they see no shame in buying girls 40 years younger than themselves.”¹³

It can furthermore be assumed that many women, who had earned their living in tourism-related facilities (hotels, etc.) before the tsunami, were forced into prostitution after the catastrophe had taken away their source of income. Statistics that might demonstrate such a rise in the number of sex workers are, however, unavailable (officially, prostitution is illegal in Thailand). According to a press report, the number of prostitutes in Phuket since the tsunami struck has grown and international aid workers warned of an explosion in the HIV/AIDS infection rate.¹⁴ A representative of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which supports an educational/empowerment program run by a local self-help organization for sex workers, fears that since the number of tourists is still very low a year after the tsunami, the women and girls are in no position to be able to institute and enforce the use of condoms among the few clients that they do have.¹⁵ Liz Hilton, also from the ILO, points out that the sex workers have been excluded from the government's aid measures. “The government talked about tourism and the tourists but nobody talked about the sex workers. They talked about hotels and entertainment places, but still didn't talk about the people who worked in these places, so initially there was no way for sex workers to access any kind of assistance or help.”¹⁶

¹³ Excerpt from SWR network film footage. www.swr.de/betrifft/2006/05/29/index.html

¹⁴ “More women in Phuket turning to sex work after tsunami”, *Channel News Asia*, 26 December 2005.

¹⁵ “Empowering Sex workers”, *The Nation*, 20 November 2005.

¹⁶ “Tsunami Aid Maroons Thai Sex Workers”, *WomenNews*, 1 August 2006.

2. The UNWTO Tsunami Task Force

“So, when the horrific tsunami hit Indian Ocean Tourism destinations in December 2004, UNWTO was again ready to demonstrate its leadership.”¹⁷

2.1 The Phuket Action Plan

Immediately following the tsunami catastrophe, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, set up an emergency task force together with the governments of the affected countries and other organizations with the goal of minimizing the negative impact of the tsunami on the tourism industry. One of the first jobs of the task force was to develop an action plan, which was reviewed (and voted on) together with tourism experts from government ministries, the private sector and other international organizations in January 2005 at special session of the UNWTO held on the island of Phuket in Thailand.

UNWTO's main goal was to achieve a return to normalcy as soon as possible. In one of its first announcements after the seaquake, the press department emphasized that the effects of the tsunami on tourism should not be overestimated – that ultimately it was only individual regions that were affected and that in many other areas tourism could simply continue on as before.¹⁸

Nonetheless, UNWTO General Secretary Francesco Frangialli still recalled one of the UNWTO's declared goals: to support sustainable tourism. Frangialli explained, “WTO leads a broad international campaign, aiming at the normalization of tourist flows according to last year's growth and, where necessary, shifting the tourism products in the region towards the principles of sustainable development.”¹⁹

The 13-point action plan²⁰ agreed to in Phuket makes suggestion for five different operational areas:

1) Marketing / Communications

Governments, tour organizers and communications media should be provided with “clear, detailed and abundant” information in order to “recover the confidence of the marketplace.”

¹⁷ UNWTO working paper RAMG/2/6.

¹⁸ UNWTO press release: “The Tsunami will not sink tourism – 7 reasons that the disaster will have only a limited impact on world tourism,” 7 January 2005.

¹⁹ UNWTO press release: “WTO action plan to accelerate tourism recovery in Southeast Asia,” 24 January 2005.

²⁰ www.world-tourism.org/tsunami/reports.htm

2) Community Relief

Micro-credit programs should provide small and medium-sized companies either directly or indirectly active in the tourism sector with financial resources to enable them to rebuilding their businesses and reclaim their livelihoods.

3) Professional Training

Tourism industry employees should be offered training programs that will help them find new jobs or help them to update their skills while waiting to return to their former jobs. New employees also need to be trained to replace those who died in the tsunami.²¹

4) Development of Sustainable Tourism

The Phuket Action Plan recognizes that the post-tsunami development is an opportunity to correct the mistakes made in the past. There are new opportunities in areas such as environmental conservation and getting local communities involved in the planning process.²²

5) Risk Management

The coastal destination should be made safer by establishing communications channels and through increased cooperation between the tourism industry and the public safety authorities. Risk management analysis should be included in the existing management plans and risk analysis training workshops will be recommended for relevant companies and public authorities.

A subsequent chapter includes concrete suggestions for implementing the “Marketing-Communications” operational area. This includes organizing a global advertising campaign, free airline ticket promotions similar to a recent Thai Airways campaign and inexpensive package deals. But concrete steps or suggestions for the action plan’s other four operational areas are largely missing from the document. While there is a section with recommendations for Sri Lanka and Thailand, this offers little in the way of concrete details and resembles more the information on the five operational areas already outlined in the previous section. Other than acknowledging the issue of “sustainable redevelopment”, the action plan provides no recommendations on how the private sector could go about addressing this challenge and how they could actually redevelop the destroyed resorts in line with higher environmental and so-

²¹ Quote: “Likewise, new employees for the tourism industry need to be trained to replace those who perished.”

²² Quote: “Post-tsunami development offer the opportunity to correct the mistakes of the past and make the re-emerging destinations among the best in the world in terms of environmental conservation and community involvement in the planning process.”

cial standards. It also contains no recommendations on a more environmentally sound coastal protection strategy, which could serve the interests of both the local population (e.g. fishermen) and tourism industry interests. There are also no recommendations on establishing social insurance for tourism sector employees.

2.2 Implementation

In its search for programs to help to sponsor and implement the Phuket Action Plan, the World Tourism Organization's website (www.world-tourism.org/tsunami/eng.html), a site devoted entirely to the tsunami, contains only the one announcement that the UNWTO organized two tours for journalists in February 2005 to affected travel destinations in Thailand and Sri Lanka as well as to vacation destinations in Indonesia. The goal of the trips: “to research the actual damage caused by the natural disaster in tourist resorts, to provide balanced and honest information to their audiences and thus restore confidence of the consumers as well as the travel trade”; those invited included “prominent journalists from major tourism generating markets such as United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Russia.”²³

Two reports published by UNWTO at the end of 2005 on overcoming the tsunami destruction also failed to mention the existence of any international UNWTO-organized programs for implementing the action plan. Considering the more generous donations from other institutions²⁴, the measures initiated by the UNWTO for implementing the Phuket Action Plan are noticeably scant.

- The study entitled “**Post Tsunami Re-Assessment – Growing Demand, Limited Supply**” reviews more than anything else the current status of rebuilding efforts in the affected tourist destinations. Detailed travel statistics for the individual regions are listed, e.g. for hotel bookings and arrival of tourists. “Marketing and Communications” and “Risk Management” are also covered in detail in each of the chapters devoted to an individual country. The three remaining “operational areas” from the Phuket Action Plan are covered only briefly and lumped together under the header “Further Needs”. This section mainly discusses current difficulties. For example, in Thailand the training courses for the hotel employees lack financial support and have so far received funding from only the International Labor Organization. In Sri Lanka

²³ UNWTO press release: “WTO organizes press trips to four affected countries,” 23 February 2005.

²⁴ The Action Plan lists funding commitments from (among others) the Netherlands Development Cooperation Ministry in the amount 1 million euros and the World Bank subsidiary International Finance Corporation in the amount of 2.5 million euros. The Republic of Korea has also committed to 400,000 euros in aid.

the credit programs have gotten a slow start because the central bank lacks the necessary capital.²⁵

- From the report “**Tsunami: One year on – a summary of the Phuket Action Plan**”, one learns of the two UN studies that investigate ways to ease access to micro-credit programs for small and medium-sized tourism companies.²⁶ The studies find that many of these companies are not registered and could therefore not benefit from aid programs. In general, aid organizations had failed to develop special aid programs for smaller tourism companies. The UNWTO is said to have called upon micro-credit organizations to get involved in the re-building of the tourism industry. The chapter on sustainable redevelopment measures is even less concrete. According to this chapter, the UNWTO sees the creation of coastal protection zones as the way to achieve the concept of sustainable tourism and recommendations submitted by the UN to the government of Sri Lanka in May 2005. The layout of the report is downright cynical: repeatedly showing an image of a crashing wave in front of a brilliant blue background.

3. Government-backed Reconstruction and Tourism: Example Sri Lanka

“In the tourism industry, within two weeks of the tsunami we were ready for the challenges ahead, having developed an aggressive ‘Bounce Back Sri Lanka’ programme designed to restore tourism as quickly as possible.”²⁷

3.1 TAFREN / RADA

Immediately following the tsunami catastrophe, President Chandrika Kumaratunga called in the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN). TAFREN was granted special authority and was not required to coordinate or seek approval for its decisions with other ministries, although its ten members could not exactly claim longstanding experience in development aid or redevelopment work. Rather, the task force was composed mainly of people from the business world. Along with two government officials, the special task force team was composed of two bank directors, a textile-industry entrepreneur and five top managers of large tourism companies (among them the CEO Aitken Space, a partner of TUI). As one of their first

²⁵ Quote:“(…) it is still difficult to obtain these loans because the Central Bank fund has run out of money and is searching for another financing source.”

²⁶ Listed in the appendix of the implementation report: www.world-tourism.org/tsunami/reports.htm.

²⁷ Sri Lanka Tourism Board press statement: “Sri Lanka, one year on, after the tsunami,” 12 December 2005.

measures, the task force addressed the highly controversial 100-meter or 200-meter wide coastal protection zone²⁸, within which rebuilding was forbidden (with exceptions). TAFREN was first awarded a budget of 1.5 million US dollars, which was later increased to 2.1 million dollars.²⁹

According to the task force³⁰, its areas of focus included:

- The rebuilding of homes (“Getting People Back into Homes”)
- Income support
- Rebuilding of hospitals and schools
- Environmental protection programs
- Infrastructure measures

In November 2005, the newly elected President Mahinda Rajapakse dissolved the TAFREN task force, which was essentially replaced by another special agency, namely the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA). According to a RADA press release, this new redevelopment agency would also shift the focus of the redevelopment efforts – while the measures introduced in 2005 were characterized largely by the need for immediate/emergency aid, in 2006 the government would concentrate on “sustainable reconstruction and development activities”, intended to benefit equally victims of both the flood and the conflict.³¹

At this same time – one year after the tsunami – the national tourism agency, the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB), was again optimistic: “With the help of the international media and travel community we have recorded tourism figures close to the numbers we recorded in 2004, helping us maintain tourism as the fourth largest generator of foreign exchange in our country, provide countless jobs and put that famous Sri Lanka smile back on the faces of our people.”³² Sure enough, four-fifths of the hotels in the tsunami-affected areas had resumed normal operations by the end of 2005.³³ But as officials glowed about the recovery of the tourism industry a year after the tsunami, the outlook for the majority of the Sri Lankan people affected by the tsunami was far less rosy.

²⁸ Tourism Concern reports that the exact definitions were unclear and at the end of 2005 there were rumors that the restrictions had been relaxed; according to press reports, some places as little as 40 meters from the coast were already being resettled. (“Post Tsunami Reconstruction...”)

²⁹ Medico International et.al.: Tsunami...

³⁰ TAFREN/RADA News: “The Role of TAFREN in Post-tsunami recovery in Sri Lanka,” 14 November 2005.

³¹ TAFREN/RADA News: “Establishment of the Reconstruction & Development Agency (RADA),” 21 December 2005.

³² Sri Lanka Tourism Board press statement: “Sri Lanka, one year on, after the tsunami,” 12 December 2005.

³³ www.indiadisasters.org. “WTO report upbeat about tourism in tsunami-hit areas,” 20 April 2006.

Surveys conducted by the US-based Fritz-Institute in Sri Lanka in October 2005 revealed that:³⁴

- Almost 80% of the people rendered homeless by the tsunami were still living in temporary camps or with friends and family.
- About 60 percent of the people affected by the tsunami suffered income losses of over 50% in the first nine months of 2005.
- Only around 8 percent of the people in need considered the government aid to be satisfactory.

Already in the summer of 2005, an international team under led by the Germany-based GTZ had turned to the task of developing new guidelines for the redevelopment process that would, among other things, increase the degree to which the local population was integrated into the process.³⁵ A report from a Swiss observer points out the weaknesses of the earlier redevelopment measures. The employee of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich reports that “very hastily constructed” houses and apartment buildings remain uninhabited “because the future occupants were ignored in the planning and construction phases.”³⁶ The new guidelines are supposed to guarantee that “construction projects be more oriented to the needs of the community, since that is where the problems are most palpable.” And along with the construction of houses, apartments and infrastructure, income opportunities need to be created and social networks strengthened. The guidelines also require that the affected people be allowed to participate in the decision making process and that redevelopment efforts be based on comprehensive planning.³⁷ In order to increase the chances that these guidelines get implemented, the first step is to provide training, above all for employees in administrative roles. The first pilot projects would then kick off starting in May 2006.

3.2 Redevelopment program for the tourism industry

According to RADA, the government has created a “Tourist Marketing Recovery Program” with a total budget of 5.3 million US dollars.³⁸ The special agency (RADA) would receive a portion of this, which would be used to fund several programs specially designed for the tour-

³⁴ Fritz Institute. “Recipient Perceptions of Aid Effectiveness: Rescue, Relief and Rehabilitation in Tsunami affected Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka,” 2005.

³⁵ TAFREN/RADA-News: “GTZ: Working together to develop sustainable housing and settlement,” 24 August 2005.

³⁶ Report from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology’s online newspaper *ETHlife*: “Neue Richtlinien für Wiederaufbau,” 23 December 2005.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Financial support for the rehabilitation of the tourism sector was provided by the following countries and organizations: Great Britain gave roughly 100,000 US dollars, the USA through USAID approx. 3 million USD and the American Red Cross 40,000 USD.

(www.rada.gov.lk/portal/index.jsp?sid=1&id=83&pid=0&subpid=101&subpid=83).

ism industry. Accordingly, hotel owners were promised access to a low-interest credit program and the purchase of new luxury goods, furnishings and other equipment was made easier by the temporary suspension of import duties.³⁹ In addition, the agency created a micro-credit program designed to benefit, among others, the smaller hotel operators. According to the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB), the central bank made one billion rupees available to the tourism industry for rebuilding loans. The national chamber of commerce awarded 1.8 billion rupees⁴⁰ in micro-credit loans, which included loans in the tourism industry; and the non-governmental organization “Seeds” offers micro-credit programs for small businesses in the tourism industry.⁴¹

In a workshop conducted jointly by the SLTB and the UNWTO, however, it was found that small businesses in particular had considerable problems rebuilding their businesses. Among the reasons for this were that these businesses were often heavily in debt to begin with. Also, the credit applications involved a significant amount of bureaucratic effort and several of the loan conditions were difficult for the small businesses to meet. Moreover, the creation of the coastal protection zones meant that many small business owners were denied permits for rebuilding their businesses.⁴²

Participants in the workshop therefore appealed to all responsible institutions to do help tourist businesses win the right to rebuild within the coastal protection zones.

In addition, TAFREN/RADA together with the government initiated a Tourism Resort Zoning plan containing plans for 15 “tourist-centric towns”. The first of the detailed plans – apparently having been drafted well before this time – were presented for Unawatuna and Arugam Bay (see info-box).

A new beginning for tourism without the local population?

Example: Arugam Bay⁴³

The Arugam Lagoon in eastern Sri Lanka is a very popular vacation destination, especially for surfers. Similar to Phi Phi Island in Thailand (see Chapter 1), Arugam Bay saw the growth of a local tourism industry over the years. Following the tsunami it was confronted with modernization plans coming from the capital. TAFREN selected Arugam Lagoon, whose population is mainly Muslim, as one location for the planned de-

³⁹ TAFREN/RADA news: “The Role of TAFREN in Post-tsunami recovery in Sri Lanka,” 14 November 2005.

⁴⁰ 130 Sri Lanka rupees equals roughly 1 euro (as of March 2005).

⁴¹ SLTB/UNWTO press release: “Microfinance and Assistance to SMEs in the Tourism Sector – Conclusions and Recommendations,” 13 July 2005.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Summary of “Justice to Tsunami Victims!” (MONLAR) and “After Tsunami, Sri Lankans Fear Paving of Paradise” (*Washington Post*, 5 June 2005).

velopment of a total of 15 tourism regions. The “Arugam Resource Development Plan: Reconstruction towards Prosperity” pilot project considered the small town of Arugam Bay together with the surrounding land (an area of 17 by 5 kilometers) as a potentially new vacation paradise and developed a strategy for turning around what was considered to have been a “disorganized” development⁴⁴ of the tourism business up until the time of the tsunami. Aspects of “sustainable” tourism, including the creation of a natural eco-tourism zone, were to play a central role, with both ocean views and ocean access guaranteed. At the same time, a helicopter landing pad, a new bridge and a Western-style shopping center were to help to better meet Western demands; the construction of new, high-end hotels for wealthier travelers was also part of the plan. Realization of the plans would have required that between 3,500 and 5,000 families be resettled further inland. Protests from fishermen as well as local tourism operators were ultimately enough to put a stop to implementation of the plan.⁴⁵

4. Reconstruction Aid: The German tour operators

4.1 Deutscher ReiseVerband (DRV)

“After the aid crews have done their work and gone home, the DRV “Help without Borders” association stayed behind and remains active. This association for the relief of innocent victims in need of emergency assistance took over organization of relief efforts for the entire industry on behalf of the countries affected by the tsunami.”⁴⁶

The Deutsche Reiseverband (DRV German Travel Association) founded the "DRV Hilfe ohne Grenzen" (DRV Help without Borders) association in 2002. The association's mission, according to their own Internet presence (www.driv.de), is to “provide immediate and non-bureaucratic emergency assistance to victims of such things as natural catastrophes, terror attacks and wars.” Companies in the travel industry participate by making available their logistics network, including the “transport vehicles of tour operators and airlines.” The association's funds come from donations as well as member contributions from individuals, organizations and (tourism) companies. The chairman of DRV Hilfe ohne Grenzen is Jürgen Marbach, CEO of German tour operator LTU.

Immediately following the tsunami catastrophe, the association appealed to companies, tourism industry employees and also to evacuees and other travelers returning home from the dis-

⁴⁴ “(The Bay’s) ramshackle charm has been threatened in recent years by poor sanitation and unchecked, if small-scale, building,” (*Washington Post*, op. cit.).

⁴⁵ Tourism Concern: “Post tsunami reconstruction.”

⁴⁶ DRV press release: “Beständige Hilfe für Südostasien,” 13 October 2005.

aster areas⁴⁷ to make a donation. According Leonhard Reeb, CEO of DRV at the time, contributions had exceeded 520,000 euros by June 2005 and another 250,000 euros had been pledged.

According to a DRV press release⁴⁸ and statements by Reeb, DRV supports the following tsunami-area projects:

- Rebuilding of kindergartens and preschools in Sri Lanka; sponsor: probably He-mas (partner of Rewe Touristik)
- Construction of a water treatment facility in Sri Lanka; sponsor: Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (German Red Cross)
- Establishment of a children’s clinic in Marwella, Sri Lanka; sponsor: Caresrilanka (Care Sri Lanka)
- Rebuilding efforts in the Tangalle hospital, Sri Lanka; sponsor: Caresrilanka (Care Sri Lanka)
- Reconstruction/Sanitation of the Kandy children’s home in Sri Lanka; sponsor: Caresrilanka (Care Sri Lanka)
- Rebuilding efforts in Thai village Ban Pak Trium; sponsor: Rotary Club Patong
- Support for the local relief measures provided by the Palm Paradise Cabanas hotel complex in Sri Lanka.
- Construction of a fishing village in Negombo, Sri Lanka on the grounds of a Catholic convent; sponsor/director: Father Rozario

Details on the relief measures initiated by actress Esther Schweins and her association “Gute Aussichten” (Good Prospects) could not be obtained. According to a report in Germany’s “ZEIT” newspaper, there is a close cooperation with DRV.⁴⁹

Further details on the individual projects were not provided by DRV and are not available on the association's website. However, Internet research did turn up further information on Ca-

⁴⁷ The following praise comes from the Austrian water sports portal *Nullzeit*: “Auf allen Rückflügen nach Deutschland ruft die LTU Fluggesellschaft (...) ihre Passagiere an Bord zu Spenden für die Flutopfer auf.(...) Die Erlöse fließen vollständig dem gemeinnützigen Verein ‚Hilfe ohne Grenzen‘ zu.” (On all return flights to Germany, the airline LTU appeals to all its passengers on board to donate money for the flood victims.... The proceeds then go entirely to the non-profit organization ‘Hilfe ohne Grenzen’.) URL: http://tauchen.nullzeit.at/Content.Node/tsunami/ltu_fliegt_weiter_nach_suedostasien.php

⁴⁸ “Beständige Hilfe für Südostasien”, op. cit.

⁴⁹ “Fiberglas, Lacke, Schuhe – Fragen an die Schauspielerin Ester Schweins zu ihrer Hilfe für Sri Lanka,” *ZEIT*, 16 June 2005. According to the article the actress Ester Schweins experienced the tsunami first-hand and, along with her organization “Gute Aussichten”, joined forces with DRV after meeting LTU CEO Jürgen Marbach on the airplane.

resrilanka (see info-box) and Hemas (see section 4.4). Information on whether and how the relief funds and their use are monitored for efficiency and whether the association plans to evaluate its own relief measure could also not be obtained.

DRV helps: Caresrilanka (Care Sri Lanka)

The organization's Internet site contains the following information on the organization's founding: "Caresrilanka consists primarily of LTU employees who felt the need to lend a hand in Sri Lanka and were able to do so thanks to DRV e.V. Hilfe ohne Grenzen and LTU."⁵⁰ The following is also taken from the Caresrilanka website: "We want to help all population groups, both Tamils and Singalese. (...)

The projects described here are currently sponsored by DRV and LTU, in some cases with significant financial resources. Unfortunately, some of the originally conceived projects proved to be unfeasible and in some cases, we were forced to cancel projects because we did not have enough confidence that the funds would be used responsibly."⁵¹

Elswhere one reads: "Caresrilanka strives to provide assistance directly to the people in need – on location and with as little administrative costs as possible. Our team has local knowledge of the country, we are regularly in the country and therefore in a position to constantly monitor and review our projects."⁵² The expenditures for the individual projects are listed on the website as well. As of February 2006, approximately 275,000 euros had been spent,⁵³ 123,000 of which came from DRV funds donated up until July 2005.⁵⁴ Caresrilanka also reported that it transported "45 tonnes of relief supplies in approximately 6,500 parcels" into the country. The organization had called for contributions of goods (including sunglasses).⁵⁵

⁵⁰ "Wer ist Caresrilanka" (Who is Caresrilanka). www.caresrilanka.de/pdf/Projektuebersicht.pdf.

⁵¹ www.caresrilanka.de/projekte.htm

⁵² "Wer ist Caresrilanka." www.caresrilanka.de/pdf/Projektuebersicht.pdf.

⁵³ www.caresrilanka.de/Abrechnung.htm.

⁵⁴ www.caresrilanka.de/pdf/ProjektubrechnungDRV.pdf.

⁵⁵ www.caresrilanka.de/spenden.htm.

4.2 TUI Germany

“Aid with an eye towards sustainability is urgently needed so that people can begin to rebuild their lives and secure their futures, beyond the emergency ‘first-aid’ phase. As an international travel company, we think we have a responsibility to actively support the recovery of the affected areas.”

(TUI Board Chairman, Michael Frenzel)⁵⁶

Immediately following the tsunami catastrophe, the company resolved to start a relief program for the crisis region in Southeast Asia, for which 1.25 million euros was made available over the course of 2005. Detailed information on the relief activities can be found on the website www.tui-aid.de. The main focus of the TUI aid effort is the rebuilding of the village Yayawatta with the help of the relief organization “Plan International Deutschland e.V.”⁵⁷ (see info-box). The company also supports the rebuilding efforts of its Sri Lankan business partner Aitken Spence & Co. Ltd. This tourism and logistics company has created its own relief fund which is helping to construct around 100 houses in four locations. TUI contributed 200,000 euros to help finance construction of 46 houses in two villages. TUI also donated 150,000 euros to the DRV association “Hilfe ohne Grenzen” (Help without Borders), to be used for the Negombo fishing village project.

Visit to the TUI-village Yayawatta

A visit in July 2005 to the “plan” field office in the Tagalle District helped provide some insight – beyond the information provided on the TUI website. The future residents of the village were still living in temporary camps and were taken to the site in separate groups (women, men and children) so that they could take part in the planning process. In conversations with the region’s flood victims, it became clear that most of the families in the Tangalle area would have preferred to return to their villages. But as it was, these villages were not allowed to be rebuilt because of their proximity to the coast. The families being resettled now in Godigomuwa Yayawatta village were those that had declared their consent to move into a village 2 km away from the coast and, according to the plan, there were in fact more families that wanted to live in Yayawatta than the project could actually accommodate. But one must consider that these families had at that point already lived for over six months in temporary camps and saw no other alternative than to move to the village. During their/the visit, it was also reported that a vacation paradise would be constructed in the immediate vicinity of the village, between the lagoon and the beach. It will not be easy to explain to the future residents of the village why they have to live 2 kilometers from the coast while construction of a new vacation paradise is being permitted just 100 meters from the beach. And there’s the question

⁵⁶ “Projekte in Südasien” (Projects in South Asia), www.tui-aid.com/ta/de/projekte_suedasien/.

⁵⁷ <http://www.plan-deutschland.de/helfen-mit-plan/kooperationen/tui/>.

of whether fishermen would be forced to dock their boats on the grounds of the tourist resort – whether they would have no choice but to become “part” of the vacation paradise. The construction of the new village presented the project planners with an additional problem: The development area that the plan received from the government was located between a main commercial street and the lagoon, in a belt of mangrove trees that would be worthy of protecting. On their respective Internet site, TUI and Plan talk about the problem of having to build on an ecologically sensitive tract of land and report that the original plan for 500 houses had to be abandoned because of environmental restrictions. The clearing work for the remaining 200 houses was eventually conducted under the supervision of the bureau for environmental protection; “larger trees” were left standing and measures were taken to insure that the topsoil was not removed during the course of the construction work.⁵⁸

4.3 Thomas Cook AG

“We want to make sure that an economic catastrophe does not follow on the heels of the natural catastrophe. The region lives from tourism. With the early resumption of Condor flights and the immediate availability among the intact hotels, we are creating an important basis for the rehabilitation of the region. Which is why we are appealing to our customers to take advantage of these offers. Travel and lend a hand!”
(Wolfgang Beeser, CEO)⁵⁹

One of the company’s employees initiated a relief project, which the company then made into its own. Harry Johnson collected around 107,000 euros in donations from employees and customers, which the DRV association “Hilfe ohne Grenzen” (Help without Borders) then passed along to a doctor in Pottuvil, Sri Lanka. In a telephone interview, Johnson said he had met the doctor, Dr. Issadeen, while on a visit to Sri Lanka following the tsunami. On Thomas Cook’s website, the project for the redevelopment of Pottuvil is presented with just a few words: “The goal of the project is to ensure the reconstruction of medical facilities, schools, homes/apartments and jobs.”⁶⁰ Research did not uncover any additional information.

4.4 REWE-Touristik

The company website does not contain any information on the tsunami catastrophe. The tsunami and the company’s subsequent relief measures are mentioned only in the “Tourismus

⁵⁸ www.tui-aid.com/ta/de/projekte_suedasien/tui_dorf_in_yayawatta/hintergruende/umweltvertraeglichkeit.html

⁵⁹ KarstadtQuelle press release: “Sri Lanka und Phuket wieder im Programm,” 18 January 2005.

⁶⁰ www8.thomascook.de/tck/TC_Deutschland_Engagement_soziales.jsp. A Google search revealed that the hospital physician Issadeen is apparently chairman of the “Pottuvil and Arugam Bay Fisherman Association”, which took part in support programs for fishermen (www.humanitarian-srilanka.org/CPRP/map/ampara24-03-05.pdf).

mit Zukunft” (“Tourism with a Future”) brochure (in which the company presents its activities in the area of “Environment, Culture and Society”) as well as in the company’s 2005 annual report. Information on the actual monetary amounts made available for relief efforts is not provided.

In a press release (no longer available online) the company reports, however, that its employees raised 310,000 euros for the victims of the catastrophic flood in Sri Lanka.⁶¹ Among the organizations that benefited from the funds was “DRV Hilfe ohne Grenzen”; one project mentioned is the construction of eight kindergartens/preschools through Hemas, a business partner of REWE. Hemas brings experience in this area, having been actively involved – even before the tsunami – in the development of a holistic approach to kindergarten/preschool education. Directly following the catastrophe, the REWE partner constructed 27 temporary preschools/kindergartens in the temporary encampments and, according to the company, has today completed 20 additional permanent preschools.⁶²

5. Relief Organizations

“Our mission lies not only in the provision of short-term, emergency aid, but also in our ongoing work in longer-term, development-oriented projects which focus on people's needs in the context of cultural, social, economic, environmental and, not least, political realities.”

(Aktion Deutschland hilft)⁶³

The tourism industry is traditionally not an area of focus for emergency relief organizations and other development organizations. It is commonly assumed that this business sector – especially due to the foreign exchange revenue that it generates – has sufficient capacity to develop on its own. In addition, development and aid organizations tend to regard with skepticism the idea that tourism industry generates “added-value” from the developmental policy point of view and other benefits for disadvantaged population groups.⁶⁴ But because some of the regions hit hardest by the tsunami, particularly in Sri Lanka and Thailand, were also those in which tourism played such a large role, relief organizations were faced with the question of how to approach the destruction in this industry: Was attention paid to the role of tourism and

⁶¹ Rewe-Touristik: “Sri Lanka - das Lächeln kehrt zurück,” 22 February 2006.

⁶² The “Learning and Laughter” program is introduced on the “Social Responsibility” section of the company’s website: www.hemasholdings.com.

⁶³ ADH: “Tsunami, ein Jahr danach,” November 2005 (p. 21).

⁶⁴ see Backes and Goethe: “Meilensteine und Fallstricke...”

its effects on poor and otherwise marginalized population groups? Were reconstruction, training and development aid offered to small and medium-sized businesses in the industry?

As part of this study, a questionnaire was sent out to ten relief organizations affiliated with “Aktion Deutschland hilft” (ADH) as well as eight additional emergency aid organizations.⁶⁵ Seven out of the 18 relief organizations responded to the survey, but none indicated that they were involved in relief efforts targeting the tourism industry in particular – although they would certainly participate in several of the programs described, such as the small-business assistance or training. Still, World Vision and Care – both ADH members – pointed out that their micro-credit, income support and business start-up programs were presumably benefiting individuals and businesses in the informal tourism sector.

It would be in keeping with ADH’s stated purpose – that their aid be used for “lasting, development-oriented” projects – if the relief organizations affiliated with ADH would represent the interests of local populations in the face of the tourism industry’s plans for construction and development – by providing legal aid support for victims of land rights disputes or resettlement measures as well as support for greater civil participation and civil action. In India, as well as in Sri Lanka and Thailand, there are civil society organizations that work on these very issues.

An example of civil participation: the PPC⁶⁶

The People’s Planning Commission for Recovery after the Tsunami (PPC) was founded in Sri Lanka in October 2005 and consists of scientists and civil activists. Representatives of the commission toured the tsunami-affected regions and conducted a total of 24 surveys of the local people regarding the acute problems they faced during the reconstruction phase. The commission presented the results⁶⁷ to the government, calling on the government to involve the people in all future redevelopment planning. In their report, the PPC criticized, among other things, the comparatively poor treatment of war refugees (as compared to tsunami victims) and devoted a good deal of attention to the coastal protection zone problem. The commission also recommends the creation of a “People’s Plan” which would give first priority to the needs of the people.

⁶⁵ Caritas International, Deutsches Aussätzigen Hilfswerk (German leprosy relief organization), Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (German Red Cross), Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (German humanitarian aid), DRV Hilfe ohne Grenzen (Help without Borders), Kindernothilfe (Christian children’s aid organization, Germany), Terre des Hommes, Unicef

⁶⁶ PPC is also supported by European relief organizations, including “medico international” and “Brot für die Welt” (Bread for the World).

⁶⁷ People’s Planning Commission for Recovery after the Tsunami: “Report 2006”. www.medico-international.de/projekte/suedasien/tsunami/monlar_ppc.asp

6. Summary

6.1. Modernization plans vs. the interests of residents

Two years after the devastating seaquake in South Asia, one can conclude that the tourism industry did not take advantage of this opportunity to promote and establish a new course of sustainable development in tourism. This criticism is based first and foremost on the fact that local populations were not integrated into the planning process when it came to redevelopment and rehabilitation of the tourism areas.

At the same time it becomes clear that tourism officials in India, Thailand and Sri Lanka saw the catastrophe as a chance to finally implement longstanding plans for the modernization of their tourist regions. The creation of the coastal protection zone (exclusion zone), for example, was used to clear the way for large-scale construction projects, the plans for which had been in existence for a long time. But as shown by the examples of Ko Phi Phi and Arugam Bay the national-level government officials ran up against loud protest by local inhabitants – especially local tourism operators – when they tried to implement their plans. In both cases, this led to the national officials handing over the planning process to tourism officials on the regional level. It is not yet clear how this conflict of interests will play out – the conflict between those wanting to modernize the tourism industry and tourism policy and the local inhabitants who want to be able to voice their interests and play a role in shaping the future of their own land, communities and homes.

6.2. Putting marketing ahead of sustainability

While the World Tourism Organization conducts PR campaigns to rejuvenate tourism in the affected regions, it apparently finds it difficult to initiate effective programs and campaigns that could help promote sustainable tourism. In particular, the UNWTO has failed to implement the plans laid out in the Phuket Action Plan for the training of tourism employees and the development of sustainable tourism concepts.

6.3. Quick-fix emergency relief instead of sustainable tourism

Following the tsunami catastrophe, the German travel industry made a significant contribution to the relief effort. But beyond providing aid, the industry ultimately did not take advantage of the opportunity to promote social or environmental standards at its locations or in its travel programs. The concerns and questions of the local tourism-industry employees regarding

social security and other social issues have not yet been heard; it is a challenge that has not yet been recognized. The rehabilitation aid is limited to (logistical) support for emergency relief, the collection of monetary donations and providing financial support to the reconstruction projects. TUI Germany's decision to raise funds among its own customers and employees to help an established relief organization with a specific project is certainly worthy of praise. Rewe-Touristik's support for the relief projects conducted by its partner Hemas – a company which can certainly claim extensive experience in the area of social development projects – also seems to have been effective. But taken together, it becomes clear that the projects supported by these tourism companies failed to integrate the local tourism sector or to contribute in any recognizable way to the development of a sustainable tourism for the future. It is this way across the board in the emergency-relief and development aid industry: providing emergency aid as well as fast and non-bureaucratic financial help is always well-received and an achievable short-term goal. Longer-term development programs and strategies for the development of sustainable structures usually cannot demonstrate this kind of short-term success. These projects often mean having to introduce change and set a new course. And this often requires rethinking – sustainable rethinking – which is a challenge not only to the tourism industry. To stop talking about the catastrophe, to continually point out the potential of the various travel regions, to simply trust that the market will take care of the rest and otherwise continue with business as usual – this is short-term (wishful) thinking, not a basis on which real improvements can be made.

Promoting tourism: The Weerawila hotel school

A fine example of this is the cooperation between the Dutch branch of “terre des homes” and TUI Netherlands: With financial backing from TUI Netherlands, the child protection and development organization “terre des homes”, is supporting the construction of a hotel professional school in the south of Sri Lanka. This cooperation could be seen as a pilot project – all the more because providing training is a way to introduce and promote social and environmental concerns in tourism. TUI Germany does refer to the project: “This unique construction project near Weerawila Lake is an already existing Terre des Hommes project. Market leader TUI Netherlands showed a special interest in this project, in part because of the aspect of sustainable tourism. This hotel school gives island residents affected by the tsunami (especially young fishermen) the chance to get started on a new career.”⁶⁸

But despite the good intentions of relief efforts (including several initiated by company employees themselves), there is good reason, from the developmental policy point of view, to doubt the sustainability of these measures. While it might appear sensible to make use of ex-

⁶⁸ www.tui-aid.com/ta/de/projekte_suedasien/projekte_konzerngesellschaft/tui_nederland.html

isting contacts to pass along aid to the needy, past experiences with cooperative agreements – not to mention debates about the difficulties involved with emergency aid – have shown that well-intentioned relief measures can end up harming the people in need rather than helping them. With this in mind, one could just as well question the level of professionalism when relief initiatives started by tourism-company employees find immediate, arguably indiscriminate support from the company management .

Especially when one considers the work of “Hilfe ohne Grenzen” (Help without Borders) and the involvement of its partner “Caresrilanka” (Care Sri Lanka), the effectiveness of the relief work can be called into question. First, the association does not make clear that roughly half of its tsunami funds went to a single relief organization, Caresrilanka, which was founded by LTU employees. Second, it is not clear which criteria DRV’s funding decisions were based on and whether it had conducted any kind of evaluation of the ways in which Caresrilanka made use of the funds. Also striking is the fact the “Hilfe ohne Grenzen” website contains no reference to the rather elaborate and extensive website of its partner organization. It may indeed be the case that DRV does not regard the association’s web presence as appropriate or even professional. Or maybe updating DRV’s own website after the tsunami was considered worth the effort.

Moreover, industry representatives declared practically in unison, that their advertising campaigns for the reconstructed travel destinations should be seen as a form of assistance. It may be that resumption of travel prevented the economic collapse in several of the tourist regions, but working to avoid this is clearly a major interest of the industry. To characterize these efforts as a contribution to the relief effort leaves somewhat of a bad taste in the mouth.

6.4 Relief organizations without a concept for tourism

The organizations providing emergency aid after the tsunami paid little attention to the fact that large portions of their work took place in regions where tourism plays an important role. They more or less accepted the plans laid forth by government officials, which said that fisher villages should be reconstructed up to 2 kilometers inland from the coast. There were no relief programs specifically for local tourism-sector employees. Local organizations that did listen to the interests of the local people (in the face of the large-scale “modernization” tourism projects) found support – if at all – from development cooperation organizations.

“Community based Tourism” in Unawatuna⁶⁹

Unawatuna is among the first-class tourist areas on Sri Lanka's southern coast. In the early days of tourism, international guests were received more like family members than paying guests. They lived in village homes and took part in day-to-day life. But in the last thirty years, the quality of tourism in Unawatuna has declined steadily – due in part to environmental strains (pollution) as well as lack of planning and coordination of tourist activities. As local tourism operators began to realize the seriousness of the situation, they initiated talks with the Sri Lanka Tourist Board and the Sewalanka Foundation, a domestic non-governmental organization. Together they developed the “Golden Beach Unawatuna Community Development Project”. The goal of this project is to involve the local community in the development of tourism. Financial support is provided by Sewalanka, which, together with the tourism board, finds sponsors for individual projects. An on-location office coordinates activities on the ground. Among the activities begun in 2003 are training courses for local tour guides, artisans and vendors. Projects in the planning phase include a micro-credit program, waste-removal/sanitation projects and the construction of an environmental center.

The Italian NGO “Istituto Cooperazione Economica Internazionale” (ICEI) is among the sponsors of Sewalanka’s training program for tour guides – a program which also integrates coastal protection issues.⁷⁰

Related Links

www.akte.ch

www.asienhaus.de

www.ecotonline.org

www.equitabletourism.org

www.medico-international.de/projekte/suedasien/tsunami

www.rada.gov.lk

www.sewalanka.org

www.trouble-in-paradise.de

www.tsunamiresponsewatch.org

www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org

www.tsunami-evaluation.org

www.tourismconcern.org.uk

www.tourism-watch.de

www.unwto.org

⁶⁹ www.sewalanka.org/newsletter5/news5_south_unawatuna_community.htm

⁷⁰ www.sewalanka.org/newsletter13/tourism_east.htm

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Climate protection and disaster care in tourism

Tourism immediately brings to mind the natural world, sunshine, water or snow. The recent world climate report issued by the UNO paints a somewhat bleaker picture, however. Thanks to global warming hurricanes, cyclones, floods and droughts will become more frequent in the tourist regions of developing countries around the world. This means increased risk and danger for humans in these areas. Particularly at risk are the poor, socially and economically marginalized population groups in these areas. The impact on these groups is profound. This became even more evident in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami that hit Southeast Asia's tourist areas.

Even after the rebuilding efforts, people are still without rights in these areas; discrimination is common, employees have no social securities, land rights issues remain unresolved and coastal and resource protection is still inadequate.

And the sexual exploitation of women and children continues unchecked.

While tourism has made a quick comeback in these regions, many of the local people, still living in emergency shelters, remain without assistance.

EED TourismWatch (Bonn) and ECOT, the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (Chiang Mai) advocate effective disaster prevention in the tourism industry. Our efforts focus primarily on the following issues:

- Climate protection through the reduction of CO₂ emissions
- Empowerment of at-risk population groups and promotion of their self-organization
- Promotion of environmental and social responsibility in tourism

Global warming increases with every airplane flight. The choice not to fly is therefore a pro-active step in climate protection. But for some people, air travel is a necessity, while others simply prefer to fly. This is why we work together with "Atmosfair", a program that allows tour operators and air travel passengers to curb climate damage by making a monetary contribution that is invested directly, by Atmosfair, into solar, hydro, biomass or energy saving projects, thus helping to cancel out aircraft CO₂ emissions.

So if you're going to fly - make sure it's *atmosfair*!

www.tourism-watch.de

www.econtline.org

Church Development Service (EED)
Special Desk TOURISM WATCH

Travelling to so-called Third World countries offers numerous opportunities to meet people from Southern countries. Together with its ecumenical partners, EED promotes sustainable, environmentally sound and socially responsible tourism development by

- Raising awareness among tourists for responsible travelling
- Consultancy for ecumenical study-tours
- Showing commitment to human rights and social standards
- Maintaining dialogue with the travel industry
- Cooperating with media and policy-makers
- Promoting tourism alternatives, and
- Publishing the "TourismWatch" newsletter (available in German only)