



NETWORK FOR CERTIFICATION AND CONSERVATION OF FORESTS (NCCF)

Ecotourism Standard (ET) Version (V0.1)/15-12-2022

NCCF-STD-ET-0.1/2022 15 December 2022

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| About NCCF | 3 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Scope of Standard | 6 |
| List of Abbreviations | 7 |
| Theme of the Standard | 8 |
| Theme A: Legal Compliance and Business ethics (Principle 1 & 2)..... | 8 |
| Theme B: Ecotourism Management Plan, Implementation, Monitoring, and Update (Principle 3 & 4) | 8 |
| Theme C: Knowledge, Communication, and Interpretation (Principle 5 & 6) | 8 |
| Theme D: Environmental Sustainability and Optimum Utilization of Natural Resources (Principle 7 & 8)..... | 8 |
| Theme E: Social and Cultural Responsible Ecotourism (Principle 9) | 8 |
| Principle, Criterion, Indicators of the Standard | 10 |
| Principle 1: Compliance with national, state Ecotourism policies and local laws and international regulations | 10 |
| Principle 2: Adherence to responsible/ethical business and fair-trade management practices..... | 12 |
| Principle 3: Ecotourism Management (EM) plan for destination management..... | 15 |
| Principle 4: Identification, mitigation & periodic monitoring, and assessment of management operations | 16 |
| Principle 5: Visitor management system, strategy, and skill for the destination | 18 |
| Principle 6: Interpretation, Education, Communication and Awareness | 20 |
| Principle 7: Sustainable utilization and management of Energy, Air, and Water with appropriate waste pollution control measures..... | 22 |
| Principle 8: Conservation of Biodiversity, Ecosystems, Habitat, and Landscapes | 23 |
| Principle 9: Socio-Cultural management of stakeholders including community-based/managed ecotourism for service providers, tourist and local community with mutual arrangement/managed by legal body or entity | 25 |
| Glossary | 27 |

About NCCF

The Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests, is a registered society of experts, professionals, and stakeholders of natural resources, engaged in the development of India-specific and globally benchmarked sustainability standards, as its core working area, apart from working for policy advocacy, training and capacity building through multi-stakeholder engagement. It is a member of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) Alliance from India, a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Global Evergreening Alliance (GEA) and has got an Observer Status with the UNCCD and UNFCCC as a Civil Society Organization (CSO).

NCCF has developed the first ever Indian Certification Standard for Forest Management and that has been endorsed by the leading international certification organization, the PEFC, giving it global recognition. This scheme is being used by many states for forest certification. NCCF has launched its Trees outside Forests (ToF) Certification Scheme, which is the first of its kind and is currently under the process of endorsement by PEFC. NCCF has launched Safeboards Standards for certifying the products with low formaldehyde emission levels. NCCF has developed a Carbon Registry-India (CR-I) to provide a platform for carbon tracking and trading for verified net Green House Gases emissions reductions and removals enhancement with Sustainable Development Contributions. It would offer listing and tracking facilities for projects sequestering carbon and issuance of carbon credits. NCCF's Certification standards for Non- Wood Forest Resources, Quality Planting Material, and Protected Areas and Wetlands are at advanced stages of development.

Introduction

In India, the tourism sector has significant potential given its rich culture, heritage, and diversity in ecology, terrains, forest types, landscapes, places of natural beauty, and also its unparalleled biodiversity richness. Tourism is a potentially large employment generator and source of livelihoods, besides being a significant source of foreign exchange.

Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.” The sector faces the number of challenges in the absence of specific guidelines and sustainable management such as inadequate support infrastructure, lack of cleanliness of the destination, lack of conservation of ecotourism sites, the safety of tourists, and the conflicts of interest amongst the ecotourism industry and locals, etc. that leads to excessive exploitation of local natural ecotourism sites/ecosystems.

There is increasing demand, particularly from the travelers and the service providers, and destination management entities, to have mechanisms in place for ensuring eco-friendly travel and tourism (ecotourism). That is where the need for the certification system has come to be recognized. Such certification standard gives the customers a well-informed choice to visit a truly eco-practiced destination, besides pushing the management to achieve a minimum level of sustainability, economic viability, and social needs and commitments. Many standards for sustainable tourism have been formulated and practiced the world over. There has been a felt need in India also to have such a Standard, that is India specific and at the same time internationally benchmarked.

NCCF constituted a multi-stakeholder Standard Development Group under the Chairpersonship of Mr. AK Varma, IFS (retd), ex PCCF &HoFF, Karnataka for developing an Ecotourism standard, that will promote responsible tourism and improve the degrading quality of ecotourism destination entities in the country, making them economically viable, environmentally responsible, and socially beneficial in accordance with the national policies, rules and guidelines, and also incorporating international best practices.

Zero Draft of Ecotourism Standard (V01), finalized in active consultation with the esteemed Members, following an open, transparent and consultative process, was hosted on website for public consultation, which is a mandatory requirement of the Standard Setting Procedure. The stakeholders involved in the process include WWF India, Responsible Tourism Society of India, Asian Adventures, The Corbett Foundation, Weldon Tours and Travels Private Ltd., TOFTigers and state government organizations - Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board, and Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board, Madhya Pradesh Ecotourism Development Board, etc. The Draft Standard comprises 5 themes, 9 principles, 29 criteria, and 119 indicators, addressing diverse environmental,

legal, economic, and social aspects of ecotourism.

The certification standard of Ecotourism developed here, efforts have been made to align this standard with other certification programs and at the same time making the Indian Ecotourism Sector compete at the global level and accepted widely. NCCF Ecotourism standards would be internationally acceptable and nationally implementable. The international endorsement would be sought from Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

Scope of Standard

The scope of the standard covers the ecotourism sector of destination. Hence, the sustainability impacts to be addressed, and stakeholders to be involved, should be related to the ecotourism sector. The standard is for assessment and award of the certificate for destination management entity and its management organization. Other organizations and companies such as only accommodation providers and tour operators in the destination are not part of the scope of the standard and therefore not entitled to use the logo / name of the standard as promotion of their own company. Individual enterprises are advised to pursue a relevant, GSTC recognized /approved, standard and certification system for purely accommodations or tour operators.

This standard shall be used to certify Ecotourism Destination Management Entities/organizations/Departments in public, private and joint sector in the country. The standard is applicable for certification of ecotourism destinations that are responsibly managing their sites in accordance with the developed standard. The certification standard is only applicable for those entities falling under the category of Ecotourism and following its main principles of travel to natural destinations, minimizes negative impact on the surrounding areas, builds environmental awareness, and provides direct financial benefits to the involved communities for conservation with prime motive of sustainability that is not allowed to be overshadowed by the financial profitability irrespective of change of ownership.

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| DME | Destination Management Entity |
| NOC | No Objection Certificate |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| PPP | Polluters Pays Principle |
| SOPs | Standard Operating Procedures |
| GHG | Greenhouse Gases |
| USP | Unique Selling Proposition |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| HR | Human Resources |

Themes of the Standard

Theme A: Legal Compliance and Business ethics (Principle 1 & 2)

This theme deals with the legal existence of the Destination Management Entity (DME) engaged in ecotourism activities. Major issues covered in this theme include the legality of the operations undertaken by the DME, compliance to national, state, and local laws, regular payments of duties and levies, compliance to international agreements to which India is a signatory, clear and documented ownership of lands in destination along with rights. The theme also deals with responsibilities for ensuring legal compliance as well as the resolution of disputes of ownership and rights. It also considers the nature, frequency, and severity of regulatory violations and non-compliances and the way they have been addressed. Another important issue addressed is the availability of resources – human, financial, and physical, to ensure compliance with relevant laws and statutes.

Theme B: Ecotourism Management Plan, Implementation, Monitoring, and Update (Principle 3 & 4)

The theme deals with the development and implementation of the management plan for the Ecotourism operations by the Destination Management Entity (DME) in a defined management plan with emphasis on needs to include practices for the sustainable management of destinations and its biodiversity, encompassing the social, economic and ecological dimensions. It also deals with regular monitoring of the plan, its impact, and updates.

Theme C: Knowledge, Communication, and Interpretation (Principle 5 & 6)

This theme deals with the development of the system for visitor's management using strategy and skill for the destination to promote and support interpretations, knowledge, education, communication, and awareness among stakeholders with a system to protect and preserve culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites along with social-economic aspects.

Theme D: Environmental Sustainability and Optimum Utilization of Natural Resources (Principle 7 & 8)

The theme deals with the diverse and optimum utilization of natural resources and produce sustainably and to conserve Biodiversity, Ecosystems, Habitat, and Landscapes.

Theme E: Social and Cultural Responsible Ecotourism (Principle 9)

This theme deals with the socio-Cultural management of stakeholders including

community ecotourism with their participation in planning and decision making with appropriate sensitivity towards usage of heritage, cultural, religious, and natural sites. It also deals with the need to protect appropriately locals' and communities' land rights and usage. Planning and decision-making ecotourism, service providers, tourists, and the local community. The theme also deals with the need to encourage local entrepreneurs for economic growth and to assist in the skill development of the local community.

Principles, Criterion, Indicators of the Standard

Principle 1: Compliance with national, state ecotourism policies and local laws and international regulations

Criteria 1.1: Destination Management Entity (DME) follows all relevant documented National and State ecotourism policies, guidelines, regulations (including related international conventions/regulations to which India is a signatory), and applicable laws including labor conventions, health, safety, and environmental aspects, besides principles of good governance with the periodic update, monitoring, and reporting.

Indicator 1.1.1: Destination Management Entity and its destination managers shall have access to up-to-date versions of all applicable international conventions, central, state, and local laws, regulations, guidelines, and policies related to ecotourism destination management and are aware and/or knowledgeable of the regulatory framework for destination management operations.

Indicator 1.1.2: The DME shall comply with all laws applicable to destination management, including laws related to destination management practices; nature, water, air, environmental protection; periodic update, monitoring, and reporting; ecotourism destination dependent local communities; health, labor, quality, and safety issues; comply with certificates like ISO 14001 and Environmental Audit.

Indicator 1.1.3: The DME shall resolve any case of non-compliance with these laws and regulations, which are brought to its notice with the appropriate authorities.

Indicator 1.1.4: When violations are brought to its notice, DME shall have procedures in place to correct and remediate circumstances associated with violation with the appropriate authorities/legal mechanism.

Indicator 1.1.5: Records of all violations of these laws and there medial, punitive, or mediatory actions undertaken to address them are maintained.

Criteria 1.2: The DME ensures that all applicable and legally prescribed levy, appropriate taxes, duties, tolls, fees, and other charges are paid regularly.

Indicator 1.2.1: The DME of the destination shall maintain an up-to-date list of all legally prescribed fees, royalties, taxes, and other charges.

Indicator 1.2.2: The DME shall demonstrate evidence that payments of taxes, royalties, and other charges are made regularly and timely.

Indicator 1.2.3: The DME shall maintain up-to-date records of all payments and charges.

Criteria 1.3: DME ensures compliance with local land acquisition, land purchase, construction, design, land rights legislation, local zoning, and protected area requirements for setting up designing, and construction of its buildings/facilities.

Indicator 1.3.1: The DME shall have clear and legally secure land tenure and use rights for buildings and Ecotourism operations which shall be acquired respecting traditional rights and local legislation including local zoning norms, regulations, and No Objection Certificate (NOC) from local bodies which shall ensure community's social, economic, and environmental needs, balanced with long-term sustainability.

Indicator 1.3.2: The DME shall use local/national/international standards of sustainable building material (e.g., engineered wood, engineered bamboo, earthen materials, rice husk ash concrete, etc.), construction and design with minimal/zero or no carbon footprint while respecting and not disturbing the archaeological, spiritual, natural cultural surroundings and protecting local identity, wildlife habitat and ecosystem, existing natural tree cover, incorporating rainwater harvesting mechanism in building design, promoting plantations of local species of trees, shrubs, herbs, and grasses.

(The above indicator is not applicable to old building structures that are already existing in the destination. The above indicator would come into force for any new construction or retrofit/renovation of the existing buildings.)

Criteria 1.4: DME ensures appropriate and legal mechanisms for resolving disputes over tenure claims and tenurial rights.

Indicator 1.4.1: DME shall ensure that conflicts over land tenure and rights are resolved systematically through appropriate legal mechanisms.

Indicator 1.4.2: The DME shall record all such conflicts and their mode of resolution along with outcomes to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

Indicator 1.4.3: The DME shall ensure that the circumstances and present status of the dispute and all steps/mechanisms engaged in dispute resolution are documented.

Criteria 1.5: DME has obtained EIA approval and abides by the EIA process wherever legally applicable before major ecotourism operations including design and construction and are implemented to determine both project feasibility and potential impacts on the natural environment and social and cultural aspects of local communities.

Indicator 1.5.1: DME shall use the EIA process to determine appropriate management tools as "mitigation" measures.

Indicator 1.5.2: DME shall obtain EIA permission and approval under Environmental Clearance notification.

Indicator 1.5.3: DME endeavors to incorporate the concept of the Polluters Pays Principle (PPP) in its operations.

Principle 2: Adherence to responsible/ethical business and fair-trade management practices

Criteria 2.1: DME endeavors for increased traveler's awareness and adheres to responsible/ethical business practices along with receptivity towards sustainable behaviors.

Indicator 2.1.1: DME shall have a responsible/ethical code of practice for its destinations covering aspects of ecology, society, economy, and animal welfare.

Indicator 2.1.2: DME shall encourage its destination visitors to follow a responsible/ethical code of practice.

Indicator 2.1.3: Travelers awareness shall cover information significant to the destinations' characteristics, natural, cultural, heritage and archaeological, etc.

Indicator 2.1.4: DME maintains an accessibility checklist for differently abled guests (wheelchair friendly, designated handicap parking with a priority location in the parking lot, provide assistance to visually impaired guests, step free access (level or ramped) and/or lift access to main entrance, automated door opening, elevator to above ground accessible accommodation, etc).

Indicator 2.1.5: DME maintains an inventory of items at local level (e.g., grocery inventory, goods inventory, repair, and operating supplies) reflecting financial soundness of the destination.

Criteria 2.2: The management entity has a risk management plan which includes an emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination; the plan establishes procedures and provides resources and training for staff, visitors, and residents.

Indicator 2.2.1: DME shall ensure that the Emergency management team establishes SOPs for emergency response procedures to be followed in events of emergencies and the Emergency Management Team shall have CPR, First Aid, AED Certification & Training.

The SOPs may include but not limited to:

- a. Structural hazards
- b. Natural Disaster
- c. Fire
- d. Chemical/Gas Leaks
- e. Human-wildlife conflict
- f. Any others

Indicator 2.2.2: Maintaining inventory of all emergency resources (necessary equipment, supplies and contact details), to be updated periodically.

Indicator 2.2.3: On-site evacuation and safe route plan for visitors, staff, and residents.

Indicator 2.2.4: Emergency communication policy, strategies, and procedures.

Indicator 2.2.5: Emergency documentation and drill plan. Records are periodically updated and monitored.

Indicator 2.2.6: Restoration and recovery plan, covering a preliminary assessment followed by a detailed assessment, to include details of the damage, carry out clean-up and salvage operations including waste management /disposal plan, etc.

Indicator 2.2.7: In case the ecotourism destination is located at a dangerous geographical location or offers high-risk adventurous activities that are likely to create physical injury/health risk to the visitor. DME shall ensure tourist's health and safety and provide disclaimers regarding the major risk factors.

Criteria 2.3: Occupational Safety and Security – The management operations do not affect adversely the social well-being of local communities, and indigenous people/tribals and contribute in maintaining and enhancing the same along with safety against crime and health hazards.

Indicator 2.3.1: The ecotourism operators shall comply with all relevant workplace health and safety management practices which include.

- a. Identification of associated health and safety risks and adopting working conditions that do not endanger the health or safety of local communities and visitors.
- b. Consultation with destination workers and their representatives on workplace health and safety.

Indicator 2.3.2: The DME shall have up-to-date written guidelines and policies for health and safety policies for ecotourism operations and the same should be publicly available.

Indicator 2.3.3: The DME shall maintain up-to-date accident/workplace injury/safety records along with action undertaken.

Indicator 2.3.4: The DME shall establish a grievance redressal mechanism for complaints related to poor or inadequate working conditions.

Indicator 2.3.5: DME shall have a clear framework for feedback mechanism, which is

being monitored by the higher authorities as well.

Criteria 2.4: Responsible Marketing and promotional practices are followed by DME so that realistic expectations are formed.

Indicator 2.4.1: DME shall ensure promotions and packages provide an honest representation of services offered including sustainable strategies used and accurate information to meet customer satisfaction.

Indicator 2.4.2: Setting up a marketing engine promoting the USP of the site, keeping in mind the four (4) pillars of environment, social, cultural, and sustainability, using online platforms, fairs, roadshows, travel marts, etc.

Criteria 2.5: DME encourages the use of responsibly sourced, locally grown products; Preference should be given to certified/sustainable/organic products in its operations.

Indicator 2.5.1: DME ensures the development and use of a formal procurement/sourcing policy.

Indicator 2.5.2: DME ensures the purchase of responsibly sourced, locally grown products.

Indicator 2.5.3: DME helps small/local growers/suppliers getting their produce/products attain certifications/eco-labeling to enhance principles of sustainability and market for locally sourced products.

Criteria 2.6: DME establishes a mechanism for benefit sharing with local communities.

Indicator 2.6.1: DME shall have a mechanism, preferably a written agreement to ensure benefit-sharing provisions as per applicable laws and or as per mutual understanding. The roles and responsibilities of DME and local communities shall be spelled out in the benefit-sharing mechanism.

Indicator 2.6.2: Benefit-sharing shall cover all the stakeholders as applicable including but not limited to local communities, women, etc.

Indicator 2.6.3: DME assists the concerned authority in benefit sharing and other government-sponsored welfare programs.

Principle 3: Ecotourism Management (EM) plan for destination management

Criteria 3.1: DME shall have a written ecotourism management plan based on the principles of sustainability, economic, social, and ecological benefits and equity with best practices in alignment with existing rules and guidelines provided by concerned authorities.

Indicator 3.1.1: Long-term plan or strategy that is up to date with focus on sustainable ecotourism and includes environmental, economic, social, cultural, quality, health, and safety issues covering following aspects: -

- a) Ecotourism Management Plan with detailed description of the area, boundaries, flora, and fauna, etc.
- b) Dedicated team to strengthen the fundamentals, land/infrastructure management, safeguarding operations and maintaining ecotourism activities.
- c) Environmental risks–Identification of environmental risks and system to address them.
- d) Conservation of Natural areas – includes buffer, protected, non-protected areas. Areas of high conservation value /sensitive environment are identified and preserved.
- e) Protection of biodiversity and socio-cultural aspects.
- f) Prevention of introduction of invasive species.
- g) Protection of Wildlife, conservation of habitats, species, and ecosystems and ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws.
- h) Low carbon footprint and use of solar/wind energy, electric vehicles, etc.
- i) Policy to minimize waste and use of harmful substances and/hazardous chemicals.
- j) Proper waste management system for disposal, composting, reuse and recycle.
- k) Proper management and disposal of bio medical waste to the Common Biomedical Waste Treatment and Disposal Facility (CBWTF) for complete treatment and disposal as per Biomedical Waste Management (BMWM) Rules, 2016.
- l) Developed and maintained hazardous waste recycling program to recycle some or all of the following: batteries, paint, print cartridges, CFL-bulbs, oil or lubricants, and/or E-waste.
- m) Guidelines to remove any oil, grease, soap or any other by product. The wastewater is captured or filtered before being discharged to the environment.
- n) Ecotourism Management Plan should include maintenance of Interpretation Center.

Indicator 3.1.2: The long-term plan is accessible to the public along with the benefit sharing mechanism.

Indicator 3.1.3: Implementation of the long-term plan and evidence of implementation through the active monitoring system, the results of which are utilized to update the plan.

Indicator 3.1.4: DME should involve itself in conservation activities (e.g., earmarking certain percentage of its profit) as part of its benefit sharing mechanism

Principle 4: Identification, mitigation & periodic monitoring, and assessment of management operations.

(Periodic monitoring ordinarily refers to at least annual monitoring)

Criteria 4.1: DME has an array of ‘targets’ of achieving projected positive impact (on the surrounding environment) of the conservation activities included in its Ecotourism Management Plan and an active and transparent monitoring system of the environmental, economic, social, and cultural impact of activities under its specific control and responsibilities along with mitigatory actions to address these.

Indicator 4.1.1: Creation of a monitoring system that shows the statistics of objectives and key results of each of the components, taking into account benefits of local stakeholders, destination managers, local populace, and visitors. This will result in foolproof and simple access to the data, for improvement.

Indicator 4.1.2: DME does periodic updates, and assessment of impacts of management operations/ activities like trekking, boating, night walk, safari, etc. and identifies/ mitigates any adverse effects.

Indicator 4.1.3: DME monitors impacts of its activities on the protected areas and surrounding wildlife, eco-sensitive, archaeological, and heritage sites, both physical (carrying capacity) and biological aspects.

Indicator 4.1.4: DME ensures that the traditional customs of indigenous people and dependent communities are respected.

Indicator 4.1.5: DME ensures, through an educational programme, adherence by visitors to guidelines or code of behavior for visits to above eco-sensitive sites/communities, minimize visitor impact, and maximize non-intrusive enjoyment.

Indicator 4.1.6: DME shall monitor economic impacts on local stakeholders/communities and suppliers.

Indicator 4.1.7: DME ensures the compliance of accommodation providers with regulations and legislation with reference to the methodology from accommodation standards already existing. The role of the destination manager for a specific destination shall be defined within the boundary of operations.

Indicator 4.1.8: Carbon footprint of its own operations and those of visitors are

monitored and adaptive/mitigatory actions are taken to ensure lower carbon and other GHG emissions from its operations and there is an educational programme for this.

Indicators 4.1.9: DME should ensure that mitigation procedures are active and effective and evaluated by a third party, if need be, by calling external experts for better appreciation of the measures; the monitoring system is regularly reviewed internally.

Indicator 4.1.10: Code of behavior for hosts is chalked out and implemented.

Principle 5: Visitor management system, strategy, and skill for the destination

Criteria 5.1: DME has in place programs and information in the context of ecotourism destination to enhance understanding and behavior of visitors towards the natural and cultural significance of these destinations to motivate them for the preservation and conservation of the same.

Indicator 5.1.1: DME shall ensure collection and public reporting of data on visitor satisfaction which includes visitors' experiences, training, and measures to protect, preserve and enhance natural assets.

Indicator 5.1.2: DME has an appropriate training programme for locals as well as its own staff on the above entities based on technical skills and be able to display their training manual or any other collateral to visitors.

(Training related but not limited to ecological, cultural, and/or historical aspects (e.g., multicultural communication, cultural sensitivity training, responsible environmental and/or ecosystem training), for regular and relevant professional development their employees.)

Indicator 5.1.3: DME shall provide destination guidelines and improve visitor satisfaction based on monitoring information.

Indicator 5.1.4: DME has the policy to help visitors get acquainted with the values and customs of the place, minimize visitor impact, and to foster a more sustainable travel experience. It has guidelines for visitors' behavior including educational programs as well.

Indicator 5.1.5: DME has appropriate subscripts, graphics, paintings, and photographs to ensure that the visitor understands the concept of ecotourism.

Criteria 5.2: The destination has a list of general Do's and Don'ts for the sensitization of tourists or guidelines for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, to minimize visitor impact and to foster a more sustainable travel experience.

Indicator 5.2.1: Detailed listing of all possible ways of possible damages and preservation of the site is done like graffiti, littering, photography in light-sensitive areas, film and wedding shoots, unnecessary use of cement and plastic extensions and accessories (such as gaudy plastic dustbins, streetlights) along with historical sites.

Indicator 5.2.2: Clear signages specifying guidelines such as code of conduct (including appropriate behavior, attire, habitat and ecosystem conservation) directions, and instructions, for all visitors. The signages stating their benefits and takeaways from visitors' visits if rules are followed. Ensure that the signages are representative of the theme of the destination, and do not look out of place.

Indicator 5.2.3: The above guidelines should be implemented jointly by local

stakeholders and destination managers, to render an appreciative and immersive experience to visitors including the USP of the site.

Indicator 5.2.4: Designated areas for waste disposal and clear indications on setting up these areas, including types and locations of containers, required signages, and any penalties involved to help visitors understand and appreciate the importance of cleanliness, inculcating a sense of pride in the destination.

Indicator 5.2.5: Clear and detailed directions to visitors with regard to do's and don'ts, e.g., giving alms to beggars, feeding stray and domestic animals in and around the site(s), animal cruelty, plucking of plants and their flowers and fruits, appropriate attire when visiting shrines, etc.

Criteria 5.3: DME provides authentic information, leading to strengthening the visitors' belief in the destination, its people, their knowledge level, commitment to serve and pre-assessment of their actual visit for visitor's satisfaction and sustainable economic benefits.

Indicator 5.3.1: DME should/as much as possible take up the seasonal variability into consideration. The DME dedicates resources to mitigate seasonal variability of Ecotourism where appropriate making the destination unique and prestigious, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultures, and environment, to identify year-round tourism opportunities.

Indicator 5.3.2: The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available inventory and assessment of its Ecotourism assets and attractions, including natural and cultural sites.

Indicator 5.3.3: Changing trends are internalized through a feedback system (including sustainability aspect), periodical friendly and tactful surveys, and meaningful engagement with visitors, local communities, and stakeholders.

Indicator 5.3.4: The DME provides a unique and reassuring experience for visitors which urges them to return and relive their experiences. Staff and local guides are trained to conduct tours in multiple languages, creating a sense of ease with visitors, as well as providing visitors with accurate information along with show casing the traditional customs, attire, value systems, and etiquette whenever possible.

Indicator 5.3.5: DME empowers and encourages tour operators to make use of such elements to engage visitors, into understanding the importance of local arts and crafts and organizes live traditional dances, plays, light and sound shows, and other such performances that also results in economic benefits including those from the sale of home objects and souvenirs and repeat visits to the destination.

Indicator 5.3.6: Small tours are organized to local weaving factories, jewelry manufacturers, wood workers, and other curio-makers, creating a deeper appreciation for art and culture. An online system should be set up to highlight such tours, and

allow prebooking, making it easier for visitors to plan in advance.

Indicator 5.3.7: Accommodations and food outlets to highlight local dishes and cuisine, as well as the use of local ingredients, showcasing traditional foods and ensuring fresh and unique ingredients. Activities such as cooking classes will also give a deeper insight into local traditional gastronomy.

Principle 6: Interpretation, Education, Communication and Awareness

Criteria 6.1: Destination Management Entity promotes the aspect of interpretations or supporting education, communication, and awareness among stakeholders.

Indicator 6.1.1: DME has a system to protect and preserve culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites along with social-economic aspects, including but not limited to Monuments | Shrines | Mountain | Waterbody - River Body - Pond | Sacred Spots and Groves, Community Parks | Learning Schools – Gurukuls.

Indicator 6.1.2: A clear strategy is developed, defining the USP of the site(s), the responsibilities and deliverables of local stakeholders and destination managers, benefits accrued by local stakeholders and visitors, and sustainable management thereof.

Indicator 6.1.3: Developing a repository (may be in the form of a designated interpretation center, flyer, pamphlets, booklets, registry, maps, coffee table book etc) of features, benefits, and advantages of each site, for the benefit of stakeholders and visitors, taking into account the six (6) dimensions of profit, health, emotion, spirituality, relations, and conservation/preservation.

Indicator 6.1.4: Training, capacity-building, and regular participatory and immersive workshops are conducted for local people to enhance the experience of the visitors and ensure greater involvement of local stakeholders at the ground level management.

Indicator 6.1.5: An appropriate interpretive information center for a virtual tour, instructing on code of conduct, dos and don'ts, basic navigation is provided at cultural and natural sites which are communicated in languages relevant to visitors and are developed with the involvement of the local community.

(A virtual tour is a simulation of an existing location, usually composed of a sequence of videos, still images or 360-degree images.)

Criteria 6.2: Setting up a framework of each site for holistic management of environmental, social, and cultural aspects for a greater sense of belonging with the destination, very clear expectations for the visitors, and increased mutual respect and appreciation by locals.

Indicator 6.2.1: Visitors' confidence in site management is enhanced by building a repository of collaterals, including handout literature, videos, social media engagement, and storytelling.

Indicator 6.2.2: Visitors are educated at every step regarding safe disposal of all kinds of waste thus lessening the burden of the entire framework of waste collection and disposal.

Indicator 6.2.3: Number of visitors are kept within destination handling capacity and sites are kept less crowded, foot and vehicular traffic and their carbon impact, disturbance to flora and fauna, and littering are minimized. In extremely sensitive areas, eco-friendly disposable shoe covers and/or gloves are compulsorily provided to visitors. Strict guidelines are in place for visitors' access to sites. Reduced erosion of stone steps and access to all walking areas.

Indicator 6.2.4: Privacy of conducting local's regular rituals with minimal disturbance from visitors is ensured.

Indicator 6.2.5: Access to all including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements to the sites including those of natural and cultural importance.

Principle 7: Sustainable utilization and management of Energy, Air, and Water with appropriate waste pollution control measures

Criteria 7.1: DME has a sustainable energy management system to reducing dependency on fossil fuels while promoting the use of renewable/alternative sources of energy.

Indicator 7.1.1: Training program to promote energy-efficient practices and also to measure, monitor, reduce, recording and reporting energy consumption.

Indicator 7.1.2: Policy to reduce dependency on fossil fuels, improve energy-efficient practices and encourage the use of renewable energy technologies (e.g., solar, wind, micro- hydro and biomass).

Indicator 7.1.3: Incentives to apply the above policy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations as well as all the sources controlled by them.

Criteria 7.2: DME establishes systems or technologies at collective or village level for sustainable water usage for its use without hindering traditional accessibility to people along with subsidy if any.

Indicator 7.2.1: Program to assist the enterprise to minimize water usage and adopt water conservation and rainwater recharge measures (e.g., Save water sign boards, Using recycled water for outdoor gardening, toilets etc).

Indicator 7.2.2: DME adopts measures for reducing waste streams, has clear guidelines and, regulations for the wastewater management including maintenance, siting, and testing of discharge from tanks, wastewater treatment systems and also has a system to monitor water quality (drinking & recreational), its water resources to ensure that use by the business entity is compatible with the water requirements of the destination.

Indicator 7.2.3: Monitoring results shall be publicly available, and the destination has a system to correspond to it in a timely manner to water quality issues.

Criteria 7.3: DME has a robust waste disposal system. All steps in the disposal of all kinds of waste to be addressed in totality.

Indicator 7.3.1: DME has a programme and policy to ensure proper disposal/treatment/of all solid and chemical wastes and safe reuse or release with minimal adverse effects on the health, hygiene and environment.

Indicator 7.3.2: The destination may consider elimination and curtailed promotion and sales of non-biodegradable and/or environmentally harmful products.

Criteria 7.4: The DME encourages Low Impact Transportation and discourages Air, Water, Noise/Photo pollution in its operations.

Indicator 7.4.1: The DME has a program and policy for using less fossil fuel by using

more public transport, achieving fuel efficiency, reducing the overall amount of travel, and adopting alternative modes (electric/hybrid, muscle power, biodiesel/low noise vehicles).

Indicator 7.4.2: DME has put signages in prominent places regarding selfie zones and facilities for cycling/walking.

Indicator 7.4.3: DME makes efforts as far as possible for a similar understanding for the adoption of the policy of Low Impact Transportation by its partners and collaborators.

Indicator 7.4.4: Regulations and guidelines in place to minimize the adverse effects of photo pollution and noise pollution (e.g., use of generators).

Principle 8: Conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems, habitat, and landscapes

Criteria 8.1: Utilization of natural resources is carried out in an environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient manner.

Indicator 8.1.1: DME shall use native species for restoration and takes appropriate measures to prevent the introduction of invasive species.

Indicator 8.1.2: Harvest and extract only permitted natural resources as part of a regulated activity that ensures sustainable utilization.

Indicator 8.1.3: Interaction with wildlife shall not hinder the viability of the population; disturbance of landscape, habitats, and its ecosystem is minimized; identify the alternative place and activity to interact with wildlife without compromising the tourists visit such places. Intrusive means for wildlife sighting including night drives and the use of powerful searchlights are prohibited.

Indicator 8.1.4: Creation of hides, artificial waterholes, feeding tables, and bird calls for bird photography is not encouraged. Throwing domestic animal carcasses, leftover food, etc is discouraged.

Criteria 8.2: Sustainable construction and design and policy for adopting cultural ethos and traditional methods in construction works of the community for conservation and interpretive collaterals and interfaces with visitors.

Indicator 8.2.1: DME shall adopt the appropriate principles of sustainable construction and design for new and existing buildings to carry out their operations.

Indicator 8.2.2: Policy for appropriate use of local tools and materials for construction of buildings using indigenous architecture styles and traditional material and technologies keeping in mind the intellectual infringement, and feasibility. Conservation and preservation expertise should be factored into any type of restoration or new construction.

Indicator 8.2.3: Accommodations, restaurants, and tourist facility buildings should

showcase local artwork, in the form of murals, paintings, sculptures, or any other local art form possible, using traditional materials wherever possible.

Indicator 8.2.4: Training and programme to use the materials, technologies, tools for sustainable construction.

Principle 9: Socio-Cultural management of stakeholders including community-based/managed ecotourism for service providers, tourist and local community with mutual arrangement/managed by legal body or entity

Criteria 9.1: DME ensures the legal protection of employees is respected.

Indicator 9.1.1: DME ensures international and national (including ILO convention ratified by India) protection of Employees and basic rights including food, wage, health, care, shelter, and education for improving their quality of life as well as to increase productivity.

Criteria 9.2: DME ensures that the Ecotourism business is equitable in hiring and provides equal career opportunities to the local community.

Indicator 9.2.1: DME ensures employment to the local residents, including in administration and required training and capacity building for local residents offered to them.

Indicator 9.2.2: DME, through appropriate HR policy, would seek the establishment of a long- term stable relationship between the local community and business ownership for vertical mobility of employees with verifiable equitable and proportionate opportunities to locals.

Indicator 9.2.3: DME ensures hiring of women and local minorities too and encourages the equitable distribution of benefits by providing equal access to job opportunities.

Criteria 9.3: DME shall endeavor to put in place a framework to offer opportunities to encourage local entrepreneurs for economic growth, assist in skill development of the local community, and policy for use of indigenous knowledge, design art and culture in Ecotourism operations, while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities and promoting the destination's unique character.

Indicator 9.3.1: Opportunities for economic benefits are created by DME by providing means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products besides promoting local culture and stimulating the purchase of local handicrafts, goods, and services.

Indicator 9.3.2: Local people should be encouraged financially and intellectually to revive and display traditional art and handicrafts, depicting history, culture, and social values.

Indicator 9.3.3: Additional means of income for local artists are provided by showcasing local skills and ethical monetization thereof: tribal song and dance, plays, light and sound shows and other performance arts, traditional architecture, food, ancient wisdom, the spirit of the land: and to help maintain heritage keeping in mind the

authenticity of cultural, social, and economic values.

Indicator 9.3.4: Fairtrade practices are adopted by the DME for local small Entrepreneurs and the groups mentioned in 9.3.1,9.3.2 and9.3.3 above.

Criteria 9.4: DME shall actively support programs and initiatives in accordance with community priorities for social and infrastructure community development including community participation, planning, and decision making with sensitivity, permission to access natural sites, for construction and to purchase land.

Indicator 9.4.1: DME ensures participation of the local community in Destination management and Ecotourism Development for improving local residents' quality of life and sustainable conservation of Ecotourism Destination.

Indicator 9.4.2: The business shall provide funding, resources, training, education, sanitation, or any kind of financial assistance and support initiatives for local community development to improve the local livelihoods.

Indicator 9.4.3: DME shall follow Norms or agreement to access natural sites and obtain permissions for religious sites.

Indicator 9.4.4: Permission from local communities (panchayats etc.) for land purchase, construction, fencing, and activities that may/may not intrude on their welfare or access to places/water etc.

Indicator 9.4.5: DME should demonstrate a commitment for utilization of an appropriate portion of CSR spending for the welfare of the local community and towards conservation and sustainability aspects.

Indicator 9.4.6: DME shall regularly monitor record and publicly report Local communities' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction in a timely manner.

Indicator 9.4.7: The DME shall endeavor to assess and mitigate negative impacts of tourism on local social-cultural aspects which may include individual behavior, traditional ceremonies, and community organization.

Criteria 9.5: The Destination Management Entity shall have measures to ensure the safety, security, and privacy of the local community along with the visiting tourists to prevent exploitation.

Indicator 9.5.1: Implementation of Policy against abusive labor practices, commercial and sexual exploitation of tourists and local people including Children, adolescents, women, and minorities.

Indicator 9.5.2: Destination management shall have regulations to address and prevent exploitation against tourists and the local community.

Glossary

Ecotourism- Ecotourism refers to forms of tourism which have the following characteristics:

1. All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.
2. It contains educational and interpretation features.
*Interpretation Features/Room does not necessarily have to be a designated room; it can be any opportunity to better present and understand the natural or cultural heritage of the destination. E.g., coffee table information center, bookshelf, library, any graffiti or map wall art etc.
3. It is generally, but not exclusively, organised by specialized tour operators for small groups. Service provider partners at the destinations tend to be small, locally owned businesses.
4. It minimizes negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.
5. It supports the maintenance of natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions by:
 - o Generating economic benefits for host communities and organizations.
 - o Authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes.
 - o Providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities.
 - o Increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.

(Source: [The British Ecotourism Market, UNWTO 2002](#))

Destination Management- Destination management consists of the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a tourism destination. Destination management takes a strategic approach to link up these sometimes very separate elements for the better management of the destination. Joined up management can help to avoid overlapping functions and duplication of effort with regards to promotion, visitor services, training, business support and identify any management gaps that are not being addressed.

Destination management calls for a coalition of many organizations and interests working towards a common goal, ultimately being the assurance of the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism destination. The Destination Management Organization's (DMO) role should be to lead and coordinate activities under a coherent strategy in pursuit of this common goal.

(Source: <https://www.unwto.org/policy-destination-management>)

Biodiversity Conservation– Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, it includes all organisms, species, and populations; the genetic variation among these; and their complex assemblages of communities and ecosystems.

(Source:

https://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/BIODIVERSITY_FACTSHEET.pdf)

Conservation– Active management of the biosphere to ensure the survival of the maximum diversity of species and the maintenance of genetic variability within species. It includes the maintenance of biosphere function e.g., nutrient cycling and ecosystem function. The term also includes the concept of sustainable resource use so that the environment may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to current generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations. Conservation of species and biological processes must be simultaneous with conservation of abiotic resources, or it is unlikely to succeed.

(Adapted from Oxford Dictionary of Ecology 2010 and World Resources Institute (WRI), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) & United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 1992)

Carbon Footprint– The total amount of greenhouse gases that are emitted into the atmosphere each year by a person, family, building, organization, or company.

(Source: United States EPA)

Carrying Capacity– Maximum number of organisms of a particular species, which a given part of the environment can maintain indefinitely.

(Source: Biodiversity Glossary, Convention on Biological Diversity)

Certificate– A document issued under the rules of a certification system, providing confidence that duly identified product, process, or service, is in conformity with a specified standard or other normative document.

(Source: ISO Guide 2)

Capacity Building– A process of developing and strengthening human resource, scientific & technological capabilities, organizational & institutional capabilities.

(Source: http://www.who.int/tobacco/control/capacity_building/background/en/)

Criteria/Criterion– A category of conditions or processes through which sustainable Ecotourism management can be assessed. A criterion is characterized by a set of related indicators, which are monitored periodically to assess change.

(Source: Montreal Process, 1995; Bhopal India Process Glossary of Technical terms)

Community-Based Ecotourism– Community-based ecotourism is a form of ecotourism that emphasizes the development of local communities and allows for local residents to have substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community. Community-based ecotourism should foster sustainable use and collective responsibility, but it also embraces individual initiatives within the community.

(Source: <http://www.endruralpoverty.org/cen-tours-homepage/142-Programs/tourism/409-what-is-community-based-tourism>)

Destination– A destination is a geographical area consisting of all the services and infrastructure necessary for the stay of a specific tourist or tourism segment. Destinations are the competitive units of incoming tourism.

(Source: <https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/glossary/>)

Destination Management Entity (DME)– Is the local territorial entity, local entity or unprovincial autonomous community that governs and manages an Intelligent Tourist Destination (ITD) with sufficient responsibility and authority to establish, implement, maintain and improve the Management System (MS) of an ITD.

(Source: <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/destination-management-entity-dme/83267>)

Dispute Resolution– The process adopted to resolve a conflict, dispute or claim. Dispute resolution may also be referred to as alternative dispute resolution, appropriate dispute resolution, or ADR for short. Dispute resolution processes are alternatives to having a court (state or federal judge or jury) decide the dispute in a trial or other institutions decide the resolution of the case or contract. Dispute resolution processes can be used to resolve any type of dispute including family, neighborhood, employment, business, housing, personal injury, consumer, and environmental disputes. In addition, utilize the dispute resolution processes to assist government employees and private citizens resolve complaints and disputes in many areas including workplace, employment, and contracting matters.

(Source: American Bar Association, Section of Dispute Resolution: www.americanbar.org/groups/dispute_resolution/resources/DisputeResolutionProcesses.html)

EIA– UNEP defines Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a tool used to identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of a project prior to decision-making. It aims to predict environmental impacts at an early stage in project planning and design, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts, shape projects to suit the local environment and present the predictions and options to decision-makers.

(Source:

<https://www.cbd.int/impact/whatis.shtml#:~:text=UNEP%20defines%20Environmental%20Impact%20Assessment,project%20prior%20to%20decision%2Dmaking>)

Grazing Land– Grazing lands are lands where grass or grass-like vegetation grows and is the dominant form of plant life and are used mainly for animal production. Grazing lands cover a broad range of land use types and include:

Pastureland– A field covered with grass or herbage and suitable for grazing by livestock. **Savannahs**– Flat grassland in tropical or subtropical regions with scattered trees.

Steppes– Temperate or tropical grassland that only has trees near lakes and rivers; located in places including southern Russia, central Asia, southern South America, the Central United States and Western Canada.

Grasslands– Used, either partially or exclusively, as grazing land.

(Source: UNCCD Knowledge Hub)

ISO 14001– is an internationally agreed standard that sets out the requirements for an environmental management system. It helps organizations improve their environmental performance through more efficient use of resources and reduction of waste, gaining a competitive advantage and the trust of stakeholders.

(Source: ISO14001:2015)

Polluter Pays Principle– The "Polluter Pays Principle", essentially a principle of economic policy rather than a legal principle, states that the polluter should bear the expenses of carrying out pollution prevention measures or paying for damage caused by pollution.

(Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD– 1995) OCDE/GD (95)124)

"The 'polluter pays principle' states that whoever is responsible for damage to the environment should bear the costs associated with it." (Taking Action, The United Nations Environmental Programme)

Indicator– A quantitative or qualitative parameter which can be assessed in relation to a criterion. It describes objectively and unambiguously a relevant element of a criterion.

(Source: PEFC terms and definitions)

Landscape– A geographical mosaic composed of interacting ecosystems resulting from the influence of geological, topographical, soil, climatic, biotic and human interactions in a given area.

(Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature Glossary of Definitions)

Monitoring and Evaluation– Monitoring can be defined as a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. An ongoing intervention might be a project, programme or other kind of support to an outcome. (Source: Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results, United Nations Development Program) Evaluation is a selective exercise that attempts to assess progress systematically and objectively towards and the achievement of an outcome. Evaluation is not a one-time event, but an exercise involving assessments of differing scope and depth carried out at several points in time in response to evolving needs for evaluative knowledge and learning during the effort to achieve an outcome. All evaluations—even project evaluations that assess relevance, performance, and other criteria—need to be linked to outcomes as opposed to only implementation or immediate outputs.

(Source: Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results, United Nations Development Program)

Protected Area– A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

(Source: IUCN, 2008)

Shrublands/Scrubland– Shrublands are characterized by a plant community dominated by woody shrubs, with a height of less than 3–5m and mostly including grass, herbs, and geophytes as a thin herbaceous understory.

(Source: Module in Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences, 2016)

Wetlands– Areas of marsh, fen, peatland, or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish, or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters.

(Source: Ramsar Convention, 1971, Article1.1)